

The Eagle and the Wolf
An Analysis of U.S. and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle
East and Eurasia

Russell Guajardo
Research Assistant
Turkish Industry and Business Association U.S. Representative Office
TÜSİAD-US

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Introduction

Established in the early 1950's as a result of the Cold War, the alliance between the United States and Turkey originally almost solely focused on the containment of the Soviet Union and the ideology of communism. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent chaos and reordering of states in Turkey's neighborhood, both countries have reevaluated their respective foreign policy positions and launched new policies in the Middle East, Caucasus, and elsewhere around the world. These changes have become especially acute in the last decade as Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) government attempts to fully realize its "zero problems with neighbors" policy and the U.S. adjusts to the shifting balance of world power.

Indeed, there has been a lot of talk in Washington in recent months about the status and trajectory of U.S.-Turkey relations. After the May 31 raid on the Turkish humanitarian aid ship Mavi Marmara by Israeli forces resulting in the deaths of nine Turkish citizens (one also held U.S. citizenship), the repercussions were felt as far away as Washington, DC, as the United States saw relations quickly deteriorate between two of its most important allies. In addition to this fallout, Turkey's vote (along with Brazil) against new sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program on June 9 added to the hysteria in Washington and led to speculations of an 'axis-shift' in Turkish foreign policy away from its traditional allies in the West and toward alternative partnerships in the East. This paper will argue that this perception of a change in axis is not only an overreaction but dangerous for the continuation of constructive U.S.-Turkey relations. It will examine U.S. and Turkish foreign policy regarding significant issues for both countries in the Middle East, the Caucasus, Afghanistan/Pakistan, and Cyprus. Through this systematic look at both countries' policies this report aims to identify areas of convergence and divergence between the United States and Turkey and determine if and how the differences can be reconciled. It will examine the relationship between the "isolationist" tactics of the United States and Turkey's policy of engagement. A mutually beneficial relationship remains critical to the interests of both states, and policymakers on both sides would do well to take this into account. And although friction in the so-called "model partnership" does indeed exist, Turkey and the United States must remember that they largely do agree on a broad platform of peace, stability, and economic development.

The Middle East

Israel and the Palestinians

Because the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has garnered probably the most attention in regards to the relationship between the U.S. and Turkey recently, it shall be examined first in this report. Current U.S. and Turkish policies in this realm do in fact diverge in some respects but in many others remain parallel to one another. Indeed, in recent years Turkey has taken "positions at odds with the United States on issues such as Israel's targeted killings of Palestinian militants, the Israel-Lebanon war in the summer of 2006, and the diplomatic isolation of Hamas."¹ These divergences have been compounded by Israel's actions during Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009 and the Gaza flotilla raid at the end of May, which led to Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's infamous actions at the World Economic Forum in Davos and a strong deterioration in the Turkish-Israeli relationship, including the withdrawal of the Turkish

¹ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey: How America, Europe, and Turkey can Revive a Fading Partnership*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 50

ambassador and exclusion of Israel from the annual "Anatolian Eagle" joint military exercises. The current crisis in Turkish-Israeli relations cannot be rectified easily, but if the United States desires to continue its positive and important alliances with these two Middle Eastern states it must strike a careful balance between providing for Israeli security and demanding adherence to universal standards of human rights from both countries.

On the positive side, both United States and Turkish policies have been pushing the Israeli government and the Palestinians towards direct talks (including the new round started in early September) leading to a peace accord based on a two-state solution. The basic parameters for such a solution have largely been agreed upon by the international community, including Turkey and the U.S. In addition, both countries recognize that the Islamist group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, must be included in any sort of peace deal, just as Hezbollah has been incorporated into the government of Lebanon. The key difference on this question is that Turkey is willing to negotiate with Hamas now without any preconditions while U.S. policy lies more in line with the Israeli position, demanding that Hamas renounce violence and recognize Israel before it can be included at the negotiating table.

Since the Justice and Development Party came to power in 2002, the Turkish government has been critical of American and Israeli policies in the West Bank and especially Gaza, including U.S. and European dismissal of Hamas after it won parliamentary elections in 2006. Indeed, according to Steven A. Cook, "Erdogan and others within the Justice and Development Party view Hamas as an organization that won a free and fair election, and resorted to violence only because it has been repressed."² Many current AKP deputies are former members of the Refah, or Welfare, Party and thus feel empathy with Hamas and see a parallel with their own situation in 1997, when the democratically elected Welfare Party government was brought down in a post-modern coup. The conflict over the legitimacy of Hamas has caused and will continue to cause problems within the U.S.-Turkey-Israel triumvirate, but these crises will by no means destroy the substantial economic and political relationships established among the three countries. And although the AKP has maintained contact with Hamas leaders and invited a number of them to Turkey, it has also held numerous meetings with Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority in the government's attempts to reconcile Hamas and Fatah as well as mediate between all sides in the conflict.

In addition, the rhetoric flouted by Erdogan and some AKP ministers in response to the flotilla incident has been exceedingly hostile and inflammatory towards Israel, alarming many in Washington as well as Tel Aviv. The force behind this rhetoric is directly linked to Turkish domestic politics. According to the International Crisis Group, "Under any Turkish government, Ankara's relationship with Israel is indexed to popular perceptions of Israeli treatment of Palestinians."³ This means when there is much popular anger towards Israel among the Turkish public, the government harshly criticizes Israel and its policies, while when popular opinion views Israel's policies toward the Palestinians as fair and humane, the government tones down the rhetoric and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict becomes less of a "campaign issue". However, one must make a distinction between the rhetoric used by Erdogan and other members of the Turkish government and the actual policies the country follows and implements in respect to Israel. Bilateral trade has boomed in the period following the Gaza War, despite the political tensions. And although Ankara has cancelled several joint military exercises with Israel and banned Israeli military flights through Turkish airspace, the arms trade and also some

² Cook, Steven A. "Turkey's Cooling Ties with U.S., Israel." Interviewed by Bernard Gwertzman. *Council on Foreign Relations*. 13 July 2010. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/22624/turkeys_cooling_ties_with_us_israel.html>

³ "Turkey's Crises over Israel and Iran." Crisis Group Europe Report No. 208. *International Crisis Group*. 8 September 2010. Pg. 2-3 <[http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/208%20Turkeys%20Crises%20over%20Israel%20and%20Iran.ashx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/208%20Turkeys%20Crises%20over%20Israel%20and%20Iran.ashx)>

intelligence sharing continue apace. Israel has already fulfilled several of the demands made by the Turkish government in order for it to normalize relations, including the return of the passengers and ships involved in the flotilla and cooperation with the UN investigation set up by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (in contrast to the investigation mandated by the UN Human Rights Council, which Israel sees as biased and has refused to cooperate with). Turkey continues to demand an official apology and compensation for the families of the victims from Israel, but it remains to be seen for how long Ankara and Jerusalem are willing to maintain this antagonism.

In addition to the distinction between rhetoric and policy, it remains crucial that one differentiate between the attitude of the Obama administration and that of Congress over this issue, as well as all of the matters dealt with in this report. Thus far, the current administration has appeared more willing to work to understand Turkey's actions and policies over Israel than Congress, which remains focused on maintaining Israel's security above other considerations and where talk of an 'axis shift' in Turkey is rampant. Indeed, Congress continues to hold up the confirmation of President Obama's candidate for U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Francis Ricciardone, because some members see him as 'too soft' to effectively represent American interests in Turkey. Some members in the House have also spoken of blocking arms sales to Turkey which are fully supported by the administration.⁴ These differences between U.S. government officials demonstrate the need for a nuanced view of Turkish and United States policies in regard to Israel. Washington continues to do all it can to achieve a rapprochement between its two allies, but the ultimate responsibility remains with Israel and Turkey themselves. Overall, the United States may be more forgiving of Israeli policies in favor of maintaining the country's security than Turkey, but Turkey is seeking essentially the same long-term objectives to strike a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

Iran and Nuclear Proliferation

While differences between U.S. and Turkish policy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remain troublesome, the issue of Iran's nuclear program may be even more salient. Accusations continue to fly on both sides as the United States and Europe impose increased unilateral sanctions while rejecting the Turkish and Brazilian-brokered nuclear swap deal as inadequate. The deal, signed on May 17 in Tehran, would allow Iran to swap 1,200 kilograms of its low-enriched uranium for fuel rods for medical use in its Tehran Research Reactor. Fresh talks on the issue with the P5+1 loom on the horizon, and Turkey and Brazil still believe they can play constructive roles in the negotiation process. What are the real sources of mistrust and divergence on America and Turkey's policies on nuclear proliferation, especially in regards to Iran?

First, it must be underscored that Turkish and American long-term objectives remain the same. Neither the United States nor Turkey wants to see Iran obtain nuclear weapons (American diplomats in Ankara believe Turkey's sincerity on this point),⁵ and both are committed to the idea of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East (with the exception of Israel, which the Americans are willing to overlook, at least while Israel's security remains under threat).⁶ Turkish fears are more geared toward the possibility of a nuclear arms race in the region, while those of the U.S. remain centered on Israel's security. The main policy arguments

⁴ Krieger, Hilary Leila. "US congressmen: Turkey's new stance on Israel welcome." *The Jerusalem Post*. 31 August 2010. <<http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=186518>>

⁵ Turkey's Crises over Israel and Iran." Crisis Group Europe Report No. 208. *International Crisis Group*. 8 September 2010. Pg. 12 <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/208%20Turkeys%20Crises%20over%20Israel%20and%20Iran.ashx>>

⁶ Johnson, Rebecca. "Rethinking Security Interests for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East." *The Acronym Institute*. No. 86, Autumn 2007. Accessed 3 August 2010. <<http://www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd86/86nwfzme.htm>>

come about when one examines the viewpoints on how to tactically achieve this long-term objective. The U.S. believes sanctions will work to coercively pressure Iran to enter into a satisfactory agreement through negotiation, but if that does not happen, all options, including military action, remain on the table. In contrast to differences between the Obama administration and Congress in regard to Israel as noted above, the two branches have been relatively convergent on how to deal with Iran.

On the other hand, Turkey thinks sanctions are an ineffective tool and will only lead to economic hardship on its part (Iran supplies about a third of Turkey's natural gas requirements), increased resolve on Iran's part to obtain a nuclear weapon, and possibly even military action and thus instability in the region.⁷ In this regard, Turkey sees a parallel with the international isolation of Iraq with crippling sanctions during the 1990's which eventually led to military action and massive instability on its border. Turkey does not want to allow this scenario to repeat itself in Iran, and largely for this reason has fought so vigorously for a diplomatic solution.

In addition to this more general argument, the AKP government truly believed that a letter sent by President Obama to Prime Minister Erdogan and Brazilian President Lula in April actually encouraged the two countries to strike the uranium swap deal with Iran, and was taken completely by surprise when the U.S. administration brushed aside the deal and continued pushing for sanctions.⁸ This reading of the letter is dismissed by the U.S. which continues to point to the Obama administration's expression of doubt in the letter that a negotiated settlement could be achieved. However, at the same time this misunderstanding exemplifies Turkey's willingness to work with the U.S. on the issue and fervent desire to achieve a nuclear weapons-free Iran.

In regard to Turkey's "no" vote on sanctions in the UN Security Council, in defiance of U.S. efforts to persuade it otherwise, the AKP government felt it had "... no choice but to vote 'no' to the sanctions in order to protect its reputation as an honest broker. Standing behind the deal, Brazil and Turkey's intent was to send a message to Iran that channels of negotiation were still open."⁹ However, in Washington the "no" vote was largely perceived as a vote against American interests in the region, rather than a vote on the specific policy of sanctions on Iran in the context of the fuel-swap agreement. Turkey must do a better job representing and explaining its actions and policies in the U.S. in order to stave off misperceptions like this. Turkey has stated repeatedly that it will comply with the UN sanctions but not with the additional sanctions implemented unilaterally by the United States and the European Union. Multiple delegations of U.S. officials have recently traveled to Turkey to discuss implementation of the sanctions, and have reported favorable reactions from Turkish banks. In the larger debate on the Iranian nuclear issue, Turkey sees its role as a facilitator in support of the P5+1 and Vienna Group in resolving the crisis, not as a protagonist.¹⁰ Indeed, it is important to remember that the May 17 deal was initiated by Brazil, not Turkey.

In terms of the idea that Turkey wants to enter into some kind of nefarious alliance with Iran, it is important to analyze the foundation of the Turkish-Iranian relationship. Turkey views Iran as a strategic competitor in the region, and any talk of the AKP 'turning' towards Iran should be taken with this in mind. It is not Islamism that has brought the two countries closer

⁷ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 53

⁸ Klinghoffer, Judith Apter. "Obama's bluff alienated Brazil and Turkey." *World Security Network*. 23 June 2010. <http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/showArticle3.cfm?article_id=18328>

⁹ Ustun, Kadir. "Turkey's Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sactions." *Insight Turkey*. Vol. 12 No. 3. SETA Foundation. 2010. Pg. 22

¹⁰ Turkey's Crises over Israel and Iran." Crisis Group Europe Report No. 208. *International Crisis Group*. 8 September 2010. Pg. 14 <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/208%20Turkeys%20Crises%20over%20Israel%20and%20Iran.ashx>>

together, but overlapping national interests: "The rapprochement between the two long-standing geopolitical rivals has been driven by two factors: a common interest in combating Kurdish separatism and Turkey's rapidly growing energy needs... The hypothetical threat of a nuclear Iran, moreover, is considered modest next to the reality of the threat of Kurdish separatism."¹¹ The Kurdish issue again remains the trump card for Turkey and it is important not to ignore its impact on the Iranian nuclear issue.

This newfound cooperation has also led to an increase in bilateral trade between Turkey and Iran, not only in the field of energy but also in tourism and consumption goods. But one must not make the mistake of viewing this collaboration as the beginnings of a lasting alliance. According to a recent International Crisis Group report, "AKP leaders' statements of friendship for Iran or their actions in support of a diplomatic settlement of its nuclear ambitions do not signal an intention to ally with Iran... Such an alignment would fly in the face of centuries of Turkish and Iranian diplomatic tradition and regional rivalry."¹² In the discussions over the American-proposed NATO missile defense system, Turkey has demanded NATO not name any single country as a target of the system, for fear of alienating not only Iran but perhaps more importantly its top trading partner, Russia. Ankara still maintains its traditional partners in the U.S. and Europe, and although it would like to continue its friendly relationship with Tehran, it would almost certainly give this up in favor of preserving its ties with the West.

In conclusion, an important divergence between the United States and Turkey in tactical policy on Iran and the nuclear issue does exist, however it is critical to recognize the reasons behind these differences and determine where they can be resolved. In the end, the strategic goals of both America and Turkey in regards to Iran and the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons remain largely in alignment and a big divergence on this vital international issue in the long-term remains unlikely.

Iraqi Kurdistan and the PKK

Since 2003, Iraq has served as a barometer for the evolution of U.S.-Turkey relations. Beginning with the failure of the vote in the Turkish parliament to allow American forces to invade Iraq through Turkish territory, a large gap grew between U.S. and Turkish foreign policy in the country. This was exacerbated by the formation and consolidation of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq with American support, as the Turks viewed the establishment of this autonomous region as a threatening model for Turkish Kurds in southeastern Anatolia. The Kurdish region also served as a base from which PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) fighters could launch attacks into Turkey. However, these problems have been somewhat ameliorated in recent years due to the Turkish government's recent 180-degree turn in policy leading to a deep engagement with Massoud Barzani's administration in northern Iraq.¹³ This drastic turnaround may be significantly attributed to the Bush administration's eventual allowance of Turkish bombing of PKK sites in the north of the country. In fact, if the United States had not agreed to allow Turkish military forays into the Kurdish autonomous region, the rapprochement between the Turkish government and the KRG may never have occurred. But now that it has happened economic cooperation has grown by leaps and bounds, and as stated by Phil Gordon and Omer Taspinar, "Iraqi Kurds need Turkish investment, trade

¹¹ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 54-55, 57

¹² "Turkey's Crises over Israel and Iran." Crisis Group Europe Report No. 208. *International Crisis Group*. 8 September 2010. Pg. 10-11

<<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/2008%20Turkeys%20Crises%20over%20Israel%20and%20Iran.ashx>>

¹³ Barkey, Henry J. "Turkey's New Engagement in Iraq: Embracing Iraqi Kurdistan." *United States Institute of Peace*. 14 July 2010. Pg. 2 <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR237_Turkey%27s%20New%20Engagement%20in%20Iraq.pdf>

and cooperation in the energy field.”¹⁴ The Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline has provided an important avenue for dialogue and cooperation between the two parties, and there are ongoing talks on Iraqi gas being sent through Turkey as part of the ambitious Nabucco project. The prospects for renewed antagonism between the Turkish government and the KRG appear dim. In an additional convergence, both Turkey and the U.S. want to limit Iran’s influence in Iraq and see a broad-based government established in Baghdad inclusive of all of Iraq’s sectarian and ethnic groups.

Although the United States welcomed and heartily supports the increased engagement between Turkey and the KRG, the most important factor of their relationship in regards to Iraq remains the renewed PKK campaign against Turkey for increased autonomy in southeast Anatolia and greater rights for Turkish Kurds. The end of the group’s unilateral ceasefire in June and consequent increase in attacks against Turkish soldiers led to amplified involvement by the Turkish military, with its air force bombing targets in northern Iraq and a threat of overland cross-border incursions. Hostilities have died down recently due to an uneasy unilateral PKK ceasefire, and American and Turkish policies largely converge on this issue, as “... the United States has since late 2007 been taking a stronger line against the PKK, both by backing limited Turkish military action and by providing more intelligence to the Turks.”¹⁵ Both countries’ primary objective in Iraq is to achieve stability and both see the PKK as a grave threat to that stability, a dynamic which has led policies to converge, including cooperation on a tripartite intelligence sharing mechanism with the KRG. Within Turkey itself Washington supports the recently launched but now stalled “democratic initiative” of the AKP to help solve the Kurdish issue, and both governments recognize that a political solution must be implemented for the resolution of the conflict.

Related to policies regarding the KRG is the still undecided status of the city of Kirkuk, an important issue as the city remains a large source of oil and natural gas and cultivates an ethnically-divided population of Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen. A census followed by a referendum on Kirkuk’s status, originally scheduled to be held in 2007, remains indefinitely postponed due to major concerns from the different ethnic populations comprising the city as well as the KRG and the national governments of the United States, Iraq, and Turkey. Traditionally Turkey has supported the Turkmen’s demand to save Kirkuk as their symbolic capital, or at least gain special status, and has opposed holding a referendum on its future for fear of a result favorable to the Kurds. Ankara’s other concern is that the significant oil revenues from the city will “only spur the Kurdish Regional Government to seek greater autonomy, which may spill over into its own borders and spark unrest among Turkey’s own 12 million Kurds.”¹⁶ This fear has become less salient with the rapprochement between Turkey and the KRG, however. Turkey believes Kirkuk should fall under the purview of the central government in Baghdad and not be assimilated into the Kurdish autonomous region. U.S. policy, on the other hand, determines the issue to be an internal Iraqi affair and has pursued a hands-off approach, discreetly allowing the referendum to be delayed but not overtly pushing for it. Although Turkey would like the United States to use its hand to resolve the issue in the Turkmen’s favor and the United States has so far refused to do so, this divergence in policy remains minor in comparison to U.S.- Turkey cooperation on the PKK and the maintenance of stability in Iraq.

¹⁴ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey: How America, Europe, and Turkey can Revive a Fading Partnership*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 66

¹⁵ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 63

¹⁶ Beehner, Lionel. “The Challenges in Iraq’s Other Cities: Kirkuk.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. 30 June 2006. Accessed 13 August 2010. < http://www.cfr.org/publication/11036/challenge_in_iraqs_other_cities.html#p5>

Syria, Lebanon, and Hezbollah

One can see a running theme emerging around the policy differences between the United States and Turkey in their respective policies in the Middle East: isolation versus engagement. American policy has focused on isolating regimes and political organizations it sees as threats to regional stability and peace while Turkey has (at least recently) based its policies on resurgent political and economic engagement with those same parties. No example better illustrates this emerging dynamic than that of Syria. Following the assassination of Lebanese politician Rafiq Hariri in February 2005, the U.S. has pursued a policy of seclusion and disengagement with the Assad regime, citing Israeli security interests and leading to Syria's inclusion on America's "State Sponsors of Terrorism" list.¹⁷ Despite recent gestures by the Obama administration such as naming a new ambassador to the country, Syria remains diplomatically isolated from the United States. Turkey, on the other hand, has opened up to its once bitter enemy after tensions peaked with the massing of Turkish forces at the Syrian border and the expulsion of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1998. Like Iran, the main force behind the Syrian-Turkish rapprochement remains a common interest in managing Kurdish separatist aspirations.¹⁸ This policy has led to significant improvements in economic ties as well as lifting visa requirements for Turkish and Syrian citizens traveling across the border, which some experts believe may help marginalize the PKK by increasing economic opportunities in the border region.¹⁹ To sum it up, "Although the United States has pressed Turkey not to deal with the Syrian regime, Turkey seeks a more independent role, as it does in its relations with Lebanon and Palestine."²⁰ This divergence in policy has not led to any large amount of antagonism between Turkey and the United States in regard to Syria (and in fact some in U.S. policy circles have seen Turkish engagement as an opportunity), but when applied to other organizations cracks begin to emerge.

In contrast to the Assad regime in Syria, Turkey's engagement with Hezbollah has caused much more serious concern among American officials. Dialogue with Hezbollah and approval of its inclusion in the fractious Lebanese national government has raised eyebrows in Washington, which lists Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. However, like the U.S., Turkey's main interest in Lebanon lies in maintaining stability, exemplified by its personnel and logistical contributions to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) since October 2006.²¹ And the Turkish government has calculated that the only way to achieve this stability is to include Hezbollah, without which the country could spiral down into another bloody civil war, a scenario which would portend negative consequences for Turkey as well as Israel and the United States. Similar to its policy on Hamas, the U.S. holds that Hezbollah must renounce violence and recognize Israel as a precondition to engagement. Turkey in no way supports Hezbollah over other actors in Lebanon, but it does believe dialogue is the key to resolving the multiple issues facing the country, no matter the group's ideology.

¹⁷ "Background Note: Syria." *U.S. Department of State*. Accessed 13 July 2010.

<<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3580.htm#foreign>>

¹⁸ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 58

¹⁹ Cook, Steven A. "Turkey's Cooling Ties with U.S., Israel." Interviewed by Bernard Gwertzman. *Council on Foreign Relations*. 14 July 2010. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/22624/turkeys_cooling_ties_with_us_israel.html>

²⁰ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 58

²¹ "UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)." *Turkish General Staff*. Accessed 4 November 2010.

<http://www.tsk.tr/eng/uluslararasi/BM_UNIFIL.htm>

Eurasia

Nagorno-Karabakh: The Frozen Conflict

Since the ceasefire agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia went into effect in 1994, the United States has played a leading role in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Minsk Group to resolve the conflict over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, including becoming a co-chair in 1997. America views this conflict as an extremely destabilizing and negative force in the South Caucasus and would like to resolve it quickly and peacefully through international mediation. Turkey has largely supported the OSCE's efforts to find a resolution to this conflict through a negotiated settlement with the Minsk Group guidelines but maintains a role weighted toward Azerbaijan as a fellow Turkic state and significant source of natural gas. Indeed, it was as a consequence of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, not historical animosity emanating from the events of 1915, that Turkey closed its border with Armenia. Overall, the U.S. and Turkey largely agree on the basic principles of a resolution to the conflict.

There does remain a source of divergence between U.S. and Turkish policy in regards to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, namely Turkey's special relationship with Azerbaijan and that relationship's negative effect on both the rapprochement process with Armenia and efforts to forge a peace accord in the South Caucasus. Both the United States and Turkey maintain an interest in resolving the conflict over Karabakh thereby greatly increasing the stability of the region. According to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, "Turkey acts in solidarity with Azerbaijan on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which is Azerbaijan's most important foreign policy issue and actively participates in the work of the Minsk Group established under the auspices of OSCE for finding a peaceful, just and lasting solution to this issue without further delay. Turkey considers the OSCE Minsk Process as the appropriate platform for finding a solution to this problem."²² Although Turkey favors Azerbaijan by supporting its embargo on Armenia, U.S. and Turkish policy largely converge on the resolution of the conflict through the Minsk process and friction between the two over this issue remains minimal.

Armenia: Normalization and Genocide

The issue of Armenian-Turkish relations sometimes appears intractable, a longstanding feud that will never be resolved due to mutual distrust and enmity. The rapprochement process remains intimately tied up with the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh,²³ but if the Turkish government can find the willpower to take the first step and ratify the protocols over the protests of Azerbaijan the Armenian government will have little choice but to follow suit. Since the Turkey-Armenia border closed in 1993, the country has had little recourse but to turn to Russia for economic and political support. U.S. policy in all of the former Soviet states is based on strengthening sovereignty and giving these newly independent countries multiple alternatives to dependence on a single power. Thus the United States has a vested interest in the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia: opening the border would provide vital access for businessmen and spur economic development on both sides, thereby lessening Armenia's dependence on Russia for survival. For Turkey too, the border region remains largely underdeveloped and normalization would line up directly with the AKP's stated policy of "zero problems with neighbors".

²² "Turkey's Political Relations with Azerbaijan." *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. 5 August 2010. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-political-relations-with-azerbaijan.en.mfa>

²³ de Waal, Thomas. "Nagorno-Karabakh and the Minsk Group Negotiations." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 6 May 2010. Accessed 13 August 2010. <<http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=40764>>

The U.S.-Turkey relationship would appear to converge almost perfectly on the rapprochement, but one must also take into account American domestic politics and the issue of the Armenian genocide. The powerful Armenian lobby retains much influence in the U.S. Congress and has continued its perennial springtime efforts to pass a bill recognizing the events of 1915 as genocide. These attempts serve to "... alienate and anger Turkey, undermine efforts to promote reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia, and exacerbate Turkish nationalism."²⁴ This is another area in which the American administration's policy differs from Congress, as it is largely due to the efforts of successive administrations that the genocide resolution has not yet been brought to a full vote in the House or the Senate. U.S. foreign policy has so far prioritized the relationship with Turkey over pleasing the Armenian constituency, but this may change in the near future as the 100th anniversary of the "Great Catastrophe" approaches.²⁵ The protocols call for a "joint commission, also including international experts, to examine the 'historical dimension' of the two countries' relations."²⁶ This idea has been widely accepted by Turkey but has caused furor in Armenia and among Americans of Armenian descent who want wholesale recognition of genocide, exemplifying a divergence between the U.S. and Turkey on this issue. Both countries would like to see the rapprochement solidify (which would also likely lead to progress on Nagorno-Karabakh) but face a difficult reconciliation over the genocide issue. Thus far Washington has been flexible in this regard but the more time that passes, the harder it will become to stay on the path of convergence.

NATO Enlargement: The Case of Georgia

What once was a key point of convergence between the United States and Turkey in Georgia has become complicated due to Turkish dependence on Russian energy supplies (see below). For example, during the brief war between Georgia and Russia in 2008, Turkey refused to bow to U.S. demands for the passage through the Dardanelles and Bosphorus Straits of American military vessels carrying humanitarian aid to the country that weighed more than the maximum allowed by the 1936 Montreux Convention governing international use of the Straits.²⁷ This has largely been interpreted as due to concerns over sparking a negative reaction from Russia, but may also be viewed as the Turkish policy of following the Convention objectively, without regard to its current foreign relations.

Turkey also supports Georgia's territorial integrity, along with the United States. No real divergence appears in Turkish and American foreign policy in relation to Georgia, although Turkey has taken a slightly less harsh line with Russia over Georgia's conflict with the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. According to Philip Gordon and Omer Taspinar, "... Russia is trying to exploit its new relationship with Turkey to complicate American support for Georgia's membership in NATO."²⁸ The question of NATO enlargement also remains a significant area of convergence in American and Turkish policy. Unlike many European states, both the U.S. and Turkey strongly support the accession of new members to the military alliance, as long as they fulfill the obligations of belonging to the club. According to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, "Turkey supports the idea that NATO's door should remain open to European democracies

²⁴ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 76

²⁵ de Waal, Thomas. "Stuck in 1915." *Foreign Policy*. 15 April 2010. Accessed 3 August 2010.
<http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/04/15/stuck_in_1915?page=0,1>

²⁶ "Armenia and Turkey Normalize Ties." *BBC News*. 10 October 2009. Accessed 3 August 2010.
<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8299712.stm>>

²⁷ "Russia Says US Aid is Dubious." *Turkish Maritime*. 23 August 2008. Accessed 13 August 2010.
<http://www.turkishmaritime.com.tr/news_detail.php?id=947&uniq_id=1280213595>

²⁸ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 53

willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership."²⁹ Although the recent increase in Turkish-Russian relations may cause some friction between Turkey and the United States within NATO and over Georgia, there remains no significant impediment to full cooperation between the two countries in this area.

Energy: Supply and Demand

Since the end of the Cold War the Turkish economy and population have grown exponentially, resulting in a greatly increased demand for energy. As another part of its "zero problems with neighbors" policy, the AKP government has increased Turkey's ties to Russia and Azerbaijan as well as Iran, three extremely important suppliers of oil and natural gas. Indeed, gas from Russia accounts for more than 70 percent of Turkish imports.³⁰ Turkey follows an energy policy based on diversification of suppliers and transit routes to Europe, a strategy wholeheartedly endorsed by the United States and European Union in their efforts to find alternative supply routes to the rather volatile paths through Ukraine and Belarus from Russia. Additionally, Turkey remains the key player in the Nabucco project to bring natural gas from Azerbaijan and Central Asia through an east-west corridor to Central and Western Europe. There have also been proposals to build a pipeline to route Egyptian gas through the Levant and bring in Iraqi gas from the southeast. Indeed, the Arab Gas Pipeline "currently links Egypt with Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and a new 62 km link between Syria and Turkey was signed in 2009 to be completed in 2011."³¹ Iran, too, continues to export large quantities of natural gas to Turkey, one of the major reasons for Turkey's vote against sanctions in the UN Security Council. With a growing number of energy sources and plans to emerge as a leading "energy transit" country in the near future, Turkish energy policy has largely synchronized with that of the United States in the region.

While U.S. and Turkish policy converge on diversification and transit issues, there is growing concern among U.S. officials on Turkey's dependence on Russia to meet its energy needs. Policymakers in Washington fear this could lead to Russia leveraging its control of gas to influence Turkish policies in the Caucasus and beyond, similar to what it did regarding Ukraine in the winter of 2006.³² Symptoms of this divergence have already seemed to appear, as in the case of Turkey's muted criticism of Russia during its war with Georgia in the summer of 2008. But Russia is not the only problem facing the "model partnership" between the U.S. and Turkey in regards to energy. Indeed, "Iran is the second largest supplier of natural gas to Turkey... and energy ties between Turkey and Iran are increasing."³³ There does not appear to be any slackening of the pace in these ties, another divergence with the U.S. which would ideally desire to see Turkey importing the majority of its energy supplies from Central Asia through the Caspian Sea. It remains to be seen how large an effect Turkish dependence on Russian and Iranian energy has on the U.S.-Turkey partnership, but significant divergences due to this issue may occur in the future.

²⁹ "Turkey's Views on Current NATO Issues." *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. 14 July 2010. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/iii_turkey_s-views-on-current-nato-issues.en.mfa>

³⁰ Evin, Ahmet et al. "Getting to Zero: Turkey, its Neighbors, and the West." *The Transatlantic Academy*. 16 July 2010. <<http://www.transatlanticacademy.org/view/resources/uploaded/GettingtoZeroFINAL.pdf>>

³¹ Lin, Christina Y. "The Caspian Sea: China's Silk Road Strategy Converges with Damascus." *China Brief*. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. 19 August 2010. <<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/opedsPDFs/4c6ea2bc9cb97.pdf>>

³² "Ukraine gas row hits EU supplies." *BBC News*. Accessed 16 July 2010. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4573572.stm>>

³³ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 55

Other Primary Issues

The War in Afghanistan

While Afghanistan does not lie in either the Middle East or the Caucasus regions, it remains a central point in the foreign policies of both the United States and Turkey. American involvement in the war does not require extensive explanation here, and Turkish participation as part of the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) currently consists of more than 1,700 troops based in the provinces of Kabul, Wardak, and Jawzjan.³⁴ In addition to recently renewing its command in Kabul, Turkey has spearheaded a tripartite process with Afghanistan and Pakistan in an effort to increase security and provide important dialogue in the region, and is willing to keep its forces in the field for an extended period of time. The United States, in its recently designated AF/PAK approach to the conflict, embraces this same idea as well as focusing on a short term strategy of "surge, civilize (the mission), and exit." Both the United States and Turkey remain vehemently opposed to al-Qaeda and are working to defeat the organization and remove its bases in the remote mountain regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Although strong convergences exist in U.S.-Turkey cooperation in ISAF and the AF/PAK issue in general, Turkey has been much more willing to include the Taliban in negotiations about the future of the country, making reconciliation a top priority and not limiting its options to simply opposing the Taliban militarily as United States policy prescribes³⁵ (though in the last few weeks Washington has given tacit approval to negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban).³⁶ This is in line with the Turkish policies on Hamas and Hezbollah and the AKP's genuine belief in the effectiveness of diplomacy over military force. Additionally, this policy converges with that of most of the EU states, whose efforts in Afghanistan have been similar to or more limited than those of Turkey. There are signs that the U.S. viewpoint on the Taliban is changing as the violence in the country continues, but for now the Taliban remain classified as a terrorist organization with whom the U.S. will not negotiate directly. This divergence will not lead to significant friction between the United States and Turkey as Prime Minister Erdogan and Foreign Minister Davutoglu have repeatedly confirmed their dedication to NATO and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, following the lead of the United States on this critical issue.

The Cyprus Issue

Finally, when discussing U.S.-Turkey relations one cannot ignore the longstanding question on the resolution of the conflict on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. Obviously an extremely important issue for Turkish foreign policy, Cyprus also has importance for the United States as it creates a rift between key allies and complicates matters with the European Union and NATO. Official Turkish policy has long called for the lifting of the EU embargo against the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in order for Turkey to open its own ports to the Greek Cypriot controlled Republic of Cyprus. There has been some progress in this area, but "After the Greek Cypriots rejected the Annan plan, EU member states agreed to open direct, duty-free trade with Turkish Cypriots and to set aside some €259 million for infrastructure and private-sector development in the Turkish Cypriot north, but the Greek

³⁴ "Troop Numbers and Contributions: Turkey." *International Security Assistance Force*. NATO. 9 August 2010. <<http://www.isaf.nato.int/troop-numbers-and-contributions/turkey/index.php>>

³⁵ "Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan Confirm Taliban Inclusion Policy." *Rupee News*. 25 January 2010. Accessed 9 August 2010. <<http://rupeenews.com/2010/01/25/turkey-pakistan-afghanistan-confirm-taliban-inclusion-policy/>>

³⁶ Weitz, Richard. "Talking to the Taliban." *Project Syndicate*. 22 October 2010. <<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/weitz8/English>>

Cypriots blocked the agreement.³⁷ Indeed, Turkish policy on Cyprus is exemplified by this statement: "Prime Minister Erdogan made clear... that he is not prepared to open Turkey's ports to Greek-Cypriot-flagged vessels, as required by the EU, unless the EU fulfills its promise to ease the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots."³⁸ However, the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and subsequent increase in power of the European Parliament may provide an avenue to break the deadlock and open direct trade between the EU and TRNC, as Cyprus may longer be able to unilaterally veto the establishment of such a policy under the Union's international trade procedures. According to Nathalie Tocci of the German Marshall Fund, "Were this to happen, Turkey would in turn implement the Additional Protocol to its customs union agreement, the eight chapters blocked by the Council would be unfrozen, and Turkey could continue provisionally closing the chapters it has negotiated."³⁹ This is by no means a panacea for the dispute, but it would provide significant momentum to an issue that has appeared intractable for years. Additionally, the recently elected president of the TRNC, Dervis Eroglu, with the support of many government officials in Turkey, has stated his desire for a resolution of the issue by the end of 2010. If negotiations do not prove fruitful, there have been vague references to the unilateral adoption of a "Plan B" by the Turkish Cypriots, about which details remain elusive.

U. S. policy, on the other hand, views "UN-led intercommunal negotiations as the best means to achieve a fair and permanent settlement [on Cyprus]."⁴⁰ The United States also backed the adoption of the Annan Plan in 2004 but "... did not fulfill [its] promises to lessen the isolation of northern Cyprus..."⁴¹ to the great detriment of America's dialogue with Ankara over the issue. However, both countries continue to call for a negotiated settlement of the dispute. What that settlement would entail would of course be up to the parties, but generally speaking it would provide for a "bi-zonal, bi-communal federation" in which territory would be redistributed more fairly, Greek and Turkish troop levels would be drawn down significantly, and the isolation of each side by the other party would end. Details over property and compensation remain difficult to agree upon, but the United States and Turkey have reached consensus on the general need for a political solution that would unite the island in some fashion, a much more appealing solution than the alternatives of the maintenance of the status quo or de jure recognition of the TRNC by the international community.

Conclusion

Overall one can observe the theme of isolation versus engagement in how the United States and Turkey have approached Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah in recent years, among other actors. Turkish engagement of the Islamic Republic in the face of UN sanctions has created much criticism in U.S. policy circles. The acknowledgement of Hamas as a legitimate actor in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has increased anxiety in Israel. And the opening of dialogue with Hezbollah has done nothing to assuage the United States and Israel of Turkey's intentions. But these engagements do not necessarily mean Turkish support for Iran and Hezbollah, they simply mean that Turkey believes the right way to address these important issues involves talking with all invested actors while working towards objectives that usually parallel those of

³⁷ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 46

³⁸ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 47

³⁹ Tocci, Nathalie. "Unblocking Turkey's EU Accession." *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 12 No. 3. SETA Foundation. 2010. Pg. 30-31.

⁴⁰ "Background Note: Cyprus." *U.S. Department of State*. Accessed 10 August 2010.

<<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5376.htm#relations>>

⁴¹ Gordon, Philip H. and Taspinar, Omer. *Winning Turkey*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008. Pg. 80

the United States. Simply because differences exist tactically does not mean U.S. and Turkish policies are irreconcilable. For example, both countries want to see a peace accord signed between Israel and Syria and their long-term objectives include stability in Lebanon and the Middle East region as a whole, as well in Eurasia. Although there remains significant mistrust on both sides, there should be minimal cause for alarm and these divergent tactics may even support each other in reaching the same strategic goals.

Although some policies of Turkey and the U.S. do indeed diverge significantly, there are several important overall trends that one must take into account. A prime, if not the most important, objective is stability. A war or destabilizing conflict in Turkey's neighborhood is a chief fear of both countries, and their respective policies remain focused on at least maintaining ceasefires in the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh and between Israel and the Palestinians. Where Washington and Ankara do diverge, however, is in the means to achieve that stability. Whereas the United States follows a policy of isolation and sanctions on states and actors it views as detrimental to overall peace in the Middle East and the Caucasus, Turkey desires to engage those actors and bring them in to help solve these crises diplomatically. Iran, Syria, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Taliban all serve as great examples of this dynamic. With the combination of these two strategies in the historically volatile regions surrounding Turkey, perhaps lasting peace, or at least stability, may finally be achieved.

Turkey and the United States must not turn their backs on one another to pursue relationships and alliances elsewhere. In fact, they must engage even deeper with one another on all levels, political, economic, and social. This report has shown the majority of the differences between the two allies remain tactical or superficial, and that long-term objectives and overall strategies do converge on a great number of issues. These tactical differences may actually serve to strengthen the hands of American and Turkish foreign policy as alternative ideas are proposed and each country can serve as a mediator for the other. Turkey is not 'shifting its axis' but instead pursuing a policy of engaging all states in its neighborhood, including rapprochements with formerly hostile Greece and Serbia. Disengagement and condemnation of Turkey will only prove counterproductive and serve the interests of actual threatening states such as Iran. Nurturing political and business ties will help to bring about solutions to a number of seemingly intractable conflicts, including Nagorno-Karabakh and Cyprus. To this end, the United States should encourage Turkey's EU accession bid as well as its budding relationships with once overwhelmingly hostile neighbors such as Syria and Armenia. It should encourage the EU to end its unfair isolation of the Turkish Cypriots and work diligently with both communities on the island to achieve reunification. Turkey must not ignore U.S. concerns over its engagement of groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, and tone down the rhetoric over the flotilla incident to allow for the healing of Turkish-Israeli ties, thereby easing pressure on the United States. The U.S.-Turkey partnership continues to display its importance not only in Europe, the Middle East, and the Caucasus, but across to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Central Asia, and around the world, and it must not be allowed to crumble.

Summary Tabulation: Turkish and U.S. Policy Positions

Country/Issue	Convergences	Divergences
The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict	Direct Talks leading to a Negotiated Two-state Solution Including Establishment of Palestinian State in West Bank and Gaza	Resolution of the Flotilla Incident, Legitimacy of Hamas, Israeli Nuclear Capability
Iran and Nuclear Proliferation	Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Middle East Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone, Kurdish Separatist Terrorism	Sanctions versus Diplomacy as Avenue to Resolve Nuclear Issue, Engagement of Iranian Regime
Iraq, Kirkuk, and the PKK	Maintenance of Stability, Engagement with the KRG, Fight against PKK, Establishment of Broad-based Central Government	Final Status of Kirkuk
Syria and Hezbollah	Maintenance of Stability, Direct Peace Talks between Syria and Israel	Turkish Engagement of Hezbollah versus U.S. Isolation
Nagorno-Karabakh	OSCE Minsk Group as Forum for Final Peace Settlement including Return of Azeri Territory, Maintenance of Ceasefire in Absence of Peace	Turkish Solidarity with Azerbaijan
Armenia	Normalization and Opening of the Border via Protocols, Final Resolution of Genocide Issue involving both Parties	U.S. Congressional Genocide Resolutions, Turkish Link of Normalization to Progress on Nagorno-Karabakh
NATO/Georgia	Pro-NATO Enlargement, Territorial Integrity of Georgia	Turkish Dependence on Russian Energy may Cause Divergence
Energy Policy	Diversification of Oil and Gas Sources for the EU and Turkey, Nabucco Project	Worries on Turkish Dependence on Russian and Iranian Energy

Afghanistan/Pakistan	Long-term Stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Defeat of al-Qaeda	Status of Taliban in Afghan/Pakistani Politics
The Cyprus Issue	Negotiated Settlement Leading to a Unified Cyprus	Current Isolation of TRNC, Presence of Turkish Troops in Northern Cyprus