

## DOES THE US APPROACH DIFFER TOWARDS THE EU and TURKEY'S MEMBERSHIP TO THE EU?

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### ***Abstract***

*The relationship between United States and the European Union, one which consists of two economic, political and military giants, is arguably the most important bilateral relationship in the world. The issues in this relationship involves arguably covers the whole spectrum of the politics, including topics as disparate as energy, social development, international trade, and environmental issues. This relationship also occasionally involves issues related to third parties, from neighbors and political allies, to neutral or unimportant actors who do not have direct influence for either side.*

*One of the most important and frequently-discussed of these parties in the relationship is Turkey. Turkey has a unique position between Southeast Europe and the Middle East and Caucasus, in addition to another of other important characteristics including its Muslim majority population, secular constitution and political system, and close institutional ties to the West via its membership in the Council of Europe, NATO, European Court of Human Rights as well as its membership in various other European institutions.*

*This paper aims to scrutinize in detail the changing trends of American foreign policy and the ways in which it has affected and shaped the relationship between Turkey and the European Union.*

**Keywords: Turkey-US Relations, US Foreign Policy, EU-Turkey Relations**

***ABD'nin AB'ye ve Türkiye'nin AB'ye Üyelik Sürecine Yaklaşımı Farklılık Gösterir mi?***

### ***Özet***

*İki ekonomik, siyasi ve askeri dev olarak Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve Avrupa Birliği arasındaki ilişki dünyadaki en önemli ikili ilişki olarak tanımlanabilir ve de dâhil olduğu konular genellikle enerjiden sosyal gelişime, uluslararası ticaretten çevresel konulara politikanın tüm spektrumunu kapsamaktadır.*

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*Bu ilişki genellikle komşular, siyasi/askeri müttefikler, tarafsız ülkeler, diğer bölgesel bloklar ve hatta hiçbir tarafa direkt etkisi veya taraflar için önemi olmayan uzak ülkeler gibi üçüncü partileri kapsar.*

*İkili görüşmelerde Güneydoğu Avrupa, Orta Doğu ve Kafkaslar arasındaki emsalsiz konumuyla, Müslüman nüfusuyla, laik anayasası ve siyasi sistemiyle; Avrupa Konseyi, NATO, Avrupa İnsan Hakları Mahkemesi ve diğer pek çok Avrupalı kurum yoluyla Batı'yla kurumsal bağlarıyla en çok bahsi geçen üçüncü partilerden biri Türkiye'dir.*

*Bu makalenin amacı Amerikan dış politikasının Türkiye ve Avrupa Birliği arasındaki ilişkiye bakışı ve bu ilişkiyi nasıl şekillendirdiği çerçevesinde değişen eğilimlerini detaylı bir şekilde incelemektir.*

**Anahtar kelimeler: Türkiye-ABD ilişkileri, Amerikan Dış Politikası, AB-Türkiye İlişkileri**

### Introduction

The global political order established in the following aftermath of World War II has created strong political and economic relations between the United States and the Western European countries. As one of the two superpowers that emerged in the aftermath of the war, the United States controlled a dominating 50 percent of the world economy, and boasted impressive military power particularly given its acquisition of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, it experienced unprecedented economic growth and a major population boom following the war.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the European Union started as the European Coal and Steel Community, becoming European Economic Community and finally the European Union after the Maastricht Agreement in 1992.

Turkey has a special relationship with the European Union, one that stretches from 1959 to 2014 in various forms, and has had ups and downs throughout its course. In the second half of the 1990s, Turkey's nominations for a candidate, its achievement of official candidate status and the start of the accession talks sparked a great deal of global attention. A number of countries supported Turkey's bid to join the E.U., most notably the United States.

As a strategic ally of the United States and a member state of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Turkey enjoyed special relationship with the United States since its earliest days in the Western camp. Thus, American influence on the Turkish relationship the European institutions and potential membership in the European Union has been highly discussed.

Following a brief presentation of Turkish foreign policy and the history of the relationship between Turkey and the U.S., the paper will also briefly discuss the

<sup>1</sup> Alex Woolf, **A Short History of the World – The Story of Mankind from Prehistory to the Modern Day**, New York, Metro Books, 2008, pp.266.

relationship between Turkey and the E.U. in order to lay the framework on which to conduct its main analysis.

This will primarily be an in-depth examination of American foreign policy and the ways in which it has affected the Turkey-E.U. relationship in the administrations of three successive presidents: Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Upon concisely presenting the different administrations' approaches and dominant themes in their conduct of foreign policy, the main issue of the United States' approach to Turkish membership in the European Union will be analyzed in a detailed fashion.

In order to achieve this, the main body of the paper will consist of three sections, followed by a conclusion that will summarize the findings of the paper, as well as their future policy implications:

First, the U.S.-E.U. relationship will be briefly analyzed, followed by a short analysis of Turkey's relations with both these powers. In the following section, the main analysis of the paper will consist of in-depth scrutiny of three successive eras in the U.S.-E.U. relationships, that is, the Clinton, G.W. Bush, and Obama administrations' relationships with the E.U. vis-à-vis Turkish membership of the E.U., to come up with a comparative result that will shed light on the development and the ups and downs of such a topic.

### **U.S.-E.U. Relationship**

The US-EU partnership is the largest economic relationship in the world, and is likely to remain unmatched in the near future. This fact alone makes this relationship a very important one on the global scale. Keohane argues that the primary distinction between these two polities is their understanding of sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> While the United States has over time adopted a classic definition of sovereignty, the European Union moved away from such this conception of external sovereignty, attempting to make its member states delegate part of their governing power to the higher institutions of the Union.

The beginning of the relationship between the European Union and the United States goes back to 1950s. Overall, this is one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world, since both parts are the biggest economic and military (and arguably, diplomatic) powers in the world.

This fact leads these two entities to dominate international scientific production, economic production, international trade, etc. Thus, the main theme, course and changes of their relationship impacts not only these two parts but arguably the whole global community at large.

The relationship is sometimes complicated, as the E.U. still does not function as a completely integrated political and military power. For example, during the Iraq

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<sup>2</sup>Robert O. Keohane, "Ironies of Sovereignty: The European Union and the United States", *Journal of Common Market Economics*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 2002, pp. 743-765.

War in 2003, members of the E.U. took opposing stances. Similarly, not all member states took the same position about critical issues such as E.U. enlargement, or the ratification of the proposed European Union constitution, which was drafted in 2004 and later signed as the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007.

The relationship with Turkey remains one of the most important issues related to the enlargement processes of the Union and continues to be a source of significant disagreement among E.U. member states.

### **Turkey-U.S. Relations During the Post-Cold War Era**

Turkey and the United States have been strategic allies since the end of the 1940s and have maintained an overall positive and cordial relationship; however, this relationship was one subject to temporary crises and disagreements rather than the uninterrupted alliance that is sometimes retrospectively imagined. During the “Johnson letter” incident in 1964 and the Cyprus crisis between the 1950s and 1970s, especially when Turkey took military action in Cyprus in 1974, the relationship became strained.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the two countries continued to share above-average warmth in their relationship, one which begins with military ties and extends to commerce, tourism and foreign policy.

In the post-Cold War period, however, the relationship was seriously tested in new ways time outside the boundaries and the structure dictated by the necessities of the Cold War. The first instance followed Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait and the transition of the Gulf crisis turned into open warfare as coalition forces led by the United States took military action in December 1990. Turkish-American cooperation during this incident was seemingly very fruitful; however, the aftermath of the Gulf War presented a new political landscape with both opportunities and threats to bilateral cooperation.

Starting in the early 2000s, Turkey adopted an assertive stance and showed significantly increased activism in its foreign policy regarding the Middle East.<sup>4</sup> This was perhaps to be expected: until the end of the Cold War, because of, Turkey saw the former Soviet Union’s close relations with Middle Eastern countries such as Syria as a threat and maintained a low-profile policy towards these countries.<sup>5</sup> With its participation in the 1990 Gulf War, Turkey’s foreign policy towards the Middle East changed considerably. Turkey became a member of the Allied coalition and subsequently stopped the flow of Iraqi oil through the existing Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline, while simultaneously permitting the United States Air Force to use NATO bases in Turkey, most notably İncirlik in Adana province in the south. The Turkish

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<sup>3</sup> E. J. Erickson, “Turkey as Regional Hegemon—2014: Strategic Implications for the United States”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2004, pp. 25-45.

<sup>4</sup> Tarık Oğuzlu, “Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy”, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 61, 2007, pp. 81-97; Bülent Aras, *The Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Policy Brief No. 32, Ankara, SETA Foundation, May 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayari, *Turkey’s New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Washington, D.C., The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000.

president at the time, Turgut Özal, believed that this was an opportunity to demonstrate and reassert Turkey's geostrategic importance for the West, most notably the United States.<sup>6</sup>

The Turkish-American relationship during the post-Cold War era can be analyzed by looking into four main areas: regional security issues; energy development and security; Turkey's membership in the European Union which is broadly discussed in the following sections; and domestic issues and developments. The threat of the former Soviet Union was a point of consensus for Turkey and the United States during the Cold War era. Consequently, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and subsequent changes in the Eurasian region deeply affected Turkish-American relations. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the bipolar international system gave way to a new unipolar world stage in which the United States was the primary superpower, a change which nevertheless had significant ramifications. In contrast to the Cold War era during which Turkey was the third largest recipient of American foreign aid, military assistance drastically declined in the post-Cold war period.<sup>7</sup> With the increasing interest in human rights and democracy, Greek and Armenian lobbies in the United States emphasized the Kurdish issue and human rights problems in Turkey.

From a regional security perspective, the first major area of concern has been the Middle East. Turkey's had an active role during the First Gulf War and its support for the United States illustrated that Turkey gave up its non-involvement with regional conflicts. Another important issue in the region is the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, which, unlike the current situation, looked promising in the 1990s. The United States and Turkey agreed that this issue would determine stability in the region. Therefore, the United States lend its support to the emergence and development of Turkish-Israeli relations.

In the Caucasus, while Turkey and America had some common interests, there were also extremely divergent elements of American and Turkish interests. Turkey was worried about Russia's influential policy over the former Soviet Union states. In addition to regional security issues, energy development and security were an important aspect of Turkish-American relations. With the demand growing for domestic energy consumption, Turkey became increasingly interested in Caspian oil as a new energy source. Concern about the routing of new pipelines to transport Caspian oil and gas to towards the west also increased. In the 1990s, the most significant of these was the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia; which also determined the nature of bilateral relations with United States. At present, Turkish relations with the Caucasus are largely shaped by topics such as energy sources and economic development, especially the Baku-

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<sup>6</sup> Cengiz Çandar, "Turgut Özal Twenty Years After: The Man and the Politician", **Insight Turkey**, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2013, pp. 27-36.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, 1 July 1945–September 30, 2012 < <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/data/fast-facts.html> > (29 April 2014).

Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline.<sup>8</sup> The energy resources in the Caspian region also increased its importance for aspiring regional leaders such as Iran and Russia. Because of the potential threats from these countries, the United States supported Turkey in the region.

With the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, ethnic conflicts surfaced in the Balkans, even turning into civil wars. The tense regional instability was especially concerning since these ethnic conflicts had the potential to spill-over into neighboring states like Turkey.<sup>9</sup> The breaking point of regional order and stability started with the Bosnian crisis and afterwards the Kosovo Conflict. Turkey was against the fragmentation of Yugoslavia. They were worried about its implication for Kurdish separatists. As we can see again how domestic policies affected. The multilateral United Nations peacekeeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina included Turkish troops. The Kosovo conflict in 1998 was also a critical issue. Even though Turkey had forces in the region, Turkey did not vigorously take on diplomatic efforts for the Kosovar Albanians. Also, Turkey did not seek to advocate them in international organization. Turkey's main goal in regards to the Balkan Policy was to prove to Europe that Turkey had westernized characteristics.

Three Turkish domestic issues affected bilateral relations between Turkey and United States. First of all, human rights have become a major element in post-Cold War American foreign policy, and, Turkey's efforts to address the Kurdish issue were sometimes perceived as human rights violations.<sup>10</sup> While the United States recognized the PKK as a terrorist organization, it wanted Ankara to find a political solution to the issues. At the same time, Anti-Turkey lobbies in the United States have made use of this issue to pressure the American governments which were expected, in turn, to pressure Turkey. Secondly, increasing political Islam and rising Islamist parties were another issue in Turkish domestic policy that affected its relationship with the U.S. For example, the United States saw the military ousting of the Welfare Party in 1997 as an important human rights issue.<sup>11</sup> Finally, as mentioned above, Armenian and Greek lobbies in the United States are quite powerful; therefore Cyprus and issues regarding the events of 1915 also became important issues for Turkish-American relations.

The final key issue affecting the relationship between Turkey and America is the transformation of Turkish domestic politics. The AKP has won three successive elections in the years 2002, 2007 and in 2011, recently showing signs of turning into

<sup>8</sup> Ziya Öniş, "Turkey and Post-Soviet States: Potential and Limits of Regional Power Influence", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2001, p. 69.

<sup>9</sup> Sabri Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: The Challenges of Multi-Regionalism," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, no. 1, 2000, pp. 176-77.

<sup>10</sup> Hamit Bozarslan "Human rights and the Kurdish issue in Turkey: 1984–1999", *Human Rights Review*, October-December, 2001, pp. 45-54.

<sup>11</sup> Umit Cizre-Sakallioğlu and Menderes Çınar, "Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the light of the February 28 Process", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 102, No. 2, 2003, pp. 309-332.

a dominant party and further consolidating its political power.<sup>12</sup> The party stems from Turkey's Islamist movement and has maintained power in the Turkish Parliament for the past decade. The AKP has a large number of officials who possess negative views towards the United States; often these views stem from the close alliance between America and Israel. Although these opinions rarely have concrete policy implications, due to *realpolitik* considerations, they still affect the tenor of Turkey and America's relationship. In addition, AKP's foreign policies are designed to promote interaction with neighboring Muslim countries in the Middle East. The AKP continues to spend considerable diplomatic energy and money to raise the Turkish regional profile, with the goal of making Turkey the leading country in the Middle East. The Davutoğlu foreign policy doctrine which calls for 'Zero Problems with Neighbors' ignored the fact that Turkish neighbors had significant problems with Turkish Western allies, including the United States. In addition to a host of additional issues, this made a peaceful Middle East a highly ambitious dream. Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan's government also continues to try to develop closer relations with Iran. Erdoğan's administration holds a positive attitude regarding the Iranian nuclear development program, which has at times given the impression that Turkey values a relationship with Iran more than a relationship with the west. In addition to Turkey's attempt at developing an allegiance with Iran, the AKP government's policies toward Israel have been another crucial point of resistance between Turkey and the United States.

A closer look at the relationship under different administrations will offer a more detailed picture, enabling an analysis that captures the changes and continuities in the established political relationship.

### Clinton Administration's Foreign Policy

As Robert Rubin says, President Clinton emphasized three issues: reducing the deficit, investing in people and opening markets abroad while keeping U.S. markets open at home.<sup>13</sup> Bill Clinton began his presidency in an era when the European Union was regarded as a project to secure peace and democratization. As one of the post-Cold War presidents in the U.S., Clinton focused the importance of "economic diplomacy" and maintained a foreign policy of integrating with global actors by establishing economic and commercial ties in addition to diplomatic and military relations.<sup>14</sup> His tenure was one of intense American military and political action, yet

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed account of the AKP's success and transformation see Sabri Sayarı, "Towards a New Turkish Party System?" **Turkish Studies**, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2007, pp. 197-210; Şebnem Gümüşcü, "The Emerging Predominant Party System in Turkey", **Government and Opposition**, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2013, pp. 223-244.

<sup>13</sup> Chris Bury, "The Clinton Years: Interview with Robert Rubin", 2000, < <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/clinton/interviews/rubin.html>> (5 May 2014).

<sup>14</sup> John Peterson and Maria Green Cowles, "Clinton, Europe and Economic Diplomacy: What Makes the E.U. Different?" **Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration**, Vol. 11, No. 3, July 1998, pp. 251-271.

also one that focused on creating multilateral ties and mobilizing the global community, as well as global public opinion, on the necessity of preserving peace and democracy.

Clinton established U.S. foreign policy on the idea that a stabilized world is necessary to encourage U.S.'s economic integration with the rest of the world. In order to achieve this stability, he argued, U.S. may use all the necessary foreign policy instruments. For this reason, one can argue that the Clinton era was the most demanding period of U.S. leadership with regard to peace-making and conflict resolution. Actions by Clinton's administration included initiatives to resolve conflicts including those between Israel and Palestine, as well as those between Jordan and Israel, conflict in Kosovo, between Eritrea and Ethiopia, India and Pakistan, Peru and Ecuador, and Greece and Turkey.

E.U.-U.S. relations during Clinton era involved a great deal of cooperation on "behind the border" issues<sup>15</sup> such as competition policy, rules and regulations, and trade liberalization. The United States' relationship with the E.U. during this era should also be regarded in terms of the economic expansion; the period is often referred to as the "roaring 90's".<sup>16</sup> Peterson and Cowles explains Clinton's approach to the E.U. mentioning nature of E.U.'s market as the most closest market to U.S. in terms of maturity, impact of U.S. corporations that politically involved to the E.U. via their economic activities namely the E.U. Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce and finally impact of the same U.S. corporations both in U.S. and the E.U. decision making processes.<sup>17</sup>

The year 1995 was an important turning point both in terms of E.U.-U.S. relations and E.U.-Turkey relations. The Trans-Atlantic Business Dialogue (TABD) was established as the official business sector advisory group for E.U. and U.S. officials with purpose of nurturing continuing relations between business and government at the highest levels. This initiative was unique as the first time the private sector took an official role in transatlantic relations. TABD conference that held in Seville, Spain and conference accomplished establishment of working groups on standards and regulatory issues, trade liberalization, investment, and third country relations.<sup>18</sup> In the same year, Turkey and the E.U. signed the Custom Union Agreement that is also important turning point of Turkey's integration to the E.U. in terms of trade liberalization and third country relations. Although, there was a lack of enthusiasm from the E.U. Parliament to sign such an agreement with Turkey, with an obvious support by U.S. officials influential lobbying activities, Turkey and the E.U. signed the Customs Union Agreement in 1995. Another important turning point

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Martijn Konings, "Neoliberalism and the American State", *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 36, No. 5, 2010, pp.741-765.

<sup>17</sup> John Peterson and Maria Green Cowles, "Clinton, Europe and Economic Diplomacy: What Makes the E.U. Different?" *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, Vol. 11, No. 3, July 1998, pp. 251-271.

<sup>18</sup> Transatlantic Business Council, <<http://transatlanticbusiness.org/tabd/>> (6 May 2014).

in Turkey's E.U. membership process is recognition of Turkey's candidacy for full membership at Helsinki Summit in 1999. Likely Clinton administration made significant efforts through both formal and informal channels, including telephone calls by President Clinton to European leaders as well as by high-ranking Clinton administration officials on their European counterparts during the recognition of Turkey's full membership candidacy process.<sup>19</sup>

Many critical events for E.U.-Turkish relations occurred during the Clinton presidency, including the signed a Custom Union Agreement in 1995 and E.U. accepted Turkey's candidacy for full membership in 1999. The Clinton administration also encouraged Greek-Turkish *rapprochement*, fueled by the "earthquake diplomacy" that appeared after two major earthquakes that took place in 1999 in Greece and Turkey.

Turkey was also affected by Clinton's economic policies, which resulted in more economic cooperation in the Western hemisphere. However, the success of the European project had conflicting results for the United States. On the one hand, such a major scale project was inspiring peace and prosperity around the globe, thus bolstering the American discourse on the matter and adding to the legitimacy and the political power of global economic institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. On the other hand, Europe retained the potential to become a larger economy than the United States. Due to its geographical location, historical ties and its more particular emphasis on democracy and human rights, it even threatens to undermine American credibility in comparison. Furthermore, an assertive Europe is thought to be likely to develop its own, independent security strategies and adopt a more independent foreign policy approach towards the aforementioned conflict-ridden regions and countries. Thus, it can be said that, during the Clinton administration, America's stance towards the E.U. oscillated between full cooperation and cautious examination.

### **Bush Administration's Foreign Policy**

The power of the United States to shape international relations significantly decreased under President Bush. Efforts to establish a new order in the Middle East have largely failed, as did Washington's influence in Russia and parts of Asia. The partial renunciation of the neoconservative project during Bush's second term in office was not enough to repair the damage done to America's reputation. Among the challenges Bush left to his successor were reforming the global governance framework, strengthening the transatlantic partnership, and pursuing a selective strategic partnership with China and Russia.<sup>20</sup>

When Bush moved into the White House in January 2001, he had no visible foreign policy experience. During the election campaign, his foreign policy team

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<sup>19</sup> Sabri Sayarı, "The United States and Turkey's Membership in the European Union", **The Turkish Yearbook**, Vol. 34, 2003, pp. 167-176.

<sup>20</sup> Andreas Wenger, "US Foreign Policy under Bush: Balance Sheet and Outlook", **CSS Analysis in Security Policy**, October Vol. 41, Issue: 3, 2008, pp. 1-3.

had distanced itself from the humanitarian interventionism of Bill Clinton and had warned against overstretching U.S. military resources in the context of extensive stabilization missions. This pragmatic realism was also dominant in the first foreign policy statements of the new administration. Against this background, it seems ironic that U.S. foreign policy in Bush's first term was strongly marked by idealist and interventionist elements.<sup>21</sup>

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, in which nearly 3,000 Americans were killed, transformed George W. Bush into a wartime president. The attacks put many of Bush's hopes and plans on hold, and George H. W. Bush, Bush's father and the 41<sup>st</sup> president, declared that his son "faced the greatest challenge of any president since Abraham Lincoln."<sup>22</sup> Given the fact that the rapid change in Bush's foreign policy course was dependent upon 9/11, the infamous attacks marked the defining moment in the so-called "Bush revolution" in foreign policy. The rise of the neoconservative forces to become the dominant faction among Bush's foreign policy advisors was supported by two factors. At first, the 9/11 attacks revoked a fundamental feeling of vulnerability in U.S. society that contradicted the national self-perception as a safe haven free from conflict. Secondly, a dramatic realignment of U.S. foreign policy seemed not just necessary, but also possible in the wake of such an unprecedented event. The belief in the U.S. ability to eradicate evil unilaterally was based on a new feeling of unique and unmatched power.<sup>23</sup>

In response to al-Qaeda's attacks, Bush sent American forces into Afghanistan to eliminate the Taliban, the fundamentalist Islamic group that had provided a safe haven to al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. While the efforts to remove the Taliban from power seemed successful, American troops failed to capture Bin Laden, who remained at large as Bush began his second term. Following the attacks, the president also formed a new cabinet-level position heading the Department of Homeland Security, reforming the nation's intelligence and military capability to meet the new enemy.

The invasion of Iraq in 2004 is regarded as the most controversial act of the Bush administration. The administration invasion justified on the belief that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein posed a grave threat to the United States, due to his possession of weapons of mass destruction. President Bush pledged during his 2005 State of the Union Address that the United States would help the Iraqi people establish a fully democratic government because the victory of freedom in Iraq would strengthen a new ally in the war on terror, bring hope to a troubled region, and lift a threat from the lives of future generations.<sup>24</sup> Instead, though Saddam

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<sup>21</sup> **Ibid.**

<sup>22</sup> Freidel, Frank, and Hugh Sidey, "The Presidents of the United States of America", 2006, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/georgewbush>> ( 15.04.2014).

<sup>23</sup> Andreas Wenger, "US Foreign Policy under Bush: Balance Sheet and Outlook", *CSS Analysis in Security Policy*, October Vol. 41, Issue: 3, 2008, pp. 1-3.

<sup>24</sup> Freidel, Frank, and Hugh Sidey, "The Presidents of the United States of America", 2006, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/georgewbush>> ( 15.04.2014).

Hussein was captured, the damage to Iraqi society and the deaths of American servicemen and Iraqis became a persistent challenge of Bush's second term in office. In hindsight, another of Bush's comments may have been more telling: his matter-of-fact statement about using American military force to "overthrow the dictator".<sup>25</sup> However, this approach came with its downside, as the US prestige considerably declined throughout the world, and especially in the Middle East and North Africa region.

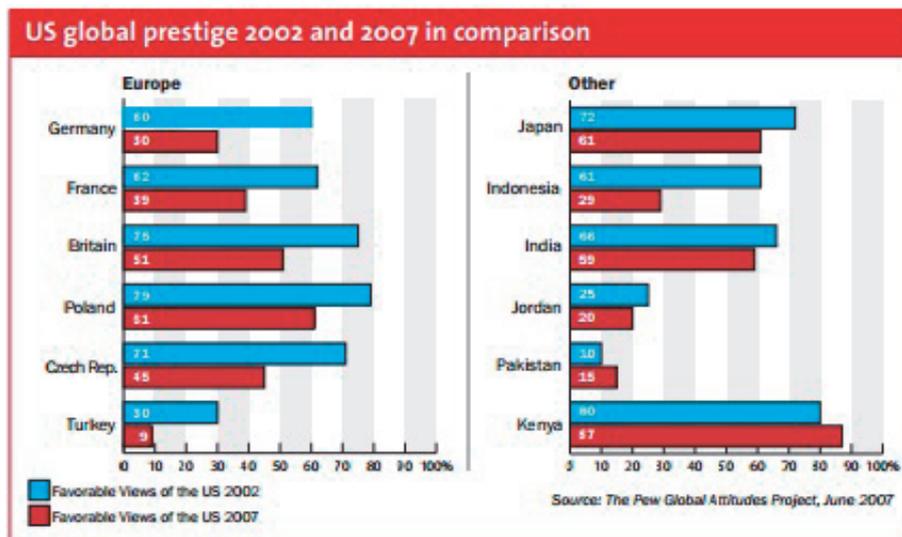


Figure1: US Global Prestige – 2002-2007

The Bush administration did successfully cruise through several major events during their eight years in office. Today, Turkey would have been in a different place had not Washington moved smartly in 2001 to organize the IMF/World Bank package that checked the Turkish economy's free fall and created the basis for its dramatic recovery. The Bush White House repeatedly prevailed in resisting the Armenian lobby's efforts to pass a "genocide" resolution through Congress. In addition, President Bush's support for Turkey's candidacy for European Union membership was noteworthy and exemplary. Finally, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice deserves special credit for building strong personal relationships with Turkish leaders early in her tenure as that more than once mitigated bilateral tensions.

Nor can the Turkish side escape a degree of blame for recurrent tensions in the relationship. Some of its contributions, notably the March 1, 2003 debacle over

<sup>25</sup> University of Virginia Miller Center. "American President: A Reference Resource", <<http://millercenter.org/president/gwbush/essays/biography/5>> (16.04.2014).

authorizing U.S. forces to invade Iraq through Turkey and the surprise invitation in early 2005 to Hamas's military chief, were arguably more a function of inexperience than ill-intent. Others, (notably what appeared to be a studied series of slights throughout the winter of 2004-05 against the Bush administration, appeared less benign.<sup>26</sup>

At the end, however, the burden of responsibility for what has been the most problematic six years in Turkish-American relations since the Cyprus crises of the 1970s lies with Washington. Of its sins of commission and omission, the latter stands out.<sup>27</sup> As the facts clearly demonstrate, the policies and actions of the George W. Bush administration decreased the favorability of the United States in Turkey, and consequently weakened the historical and strategic friendship between the two countries.

Given Turkey's strategic location and its ability to advance or impede American freedom of action from the eastern Mediterranean to Central Asia, the U.S. has been key stakeholder in the long-term process of Turkey's membership negotiation with the U.S. The Bush Administration wisely chose to take a low-key approach to Turkish-E.U. negotiations. Given the troubled state of transatlantic relations, anything else might have harmed rather than helped the Turkish case. However, the Bush administration failed to grasp that the Turkish-American relationship needed to reflect several realities, and capture some important opportunities.<sup>28</sup>

### **Obama Administration's Foreign Policy**

Some of the main characteristics of President Obama's foreign policy have become commonly known as the "Obama Doctrine". Principles of the doctrine, while widely debated, generally include multilateral cooperation rather than unilateral confrontation, and diplomacy rather than force, in international affairs.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, critics and supporters alike recognize that from the Arab Spring and its aftermath to the 2014 crisis in Crimea, the Obama administration has sought to maintain commitment without overt intervention.

During his 2014 State of the Union address, the president promised to keep minimal U.S. troops in Afghanistan after 2014 and veto any upcoming sanctions on Iran that could risk derailing negotiations on Tehran's nuclear program. He also reasserted his desire to close Guantanamo Bay and put limitations on drone use. The President claimed that U.S. strategy in Syria, one based on diplomacy and verbal

<sup>26</sup> Parris, Mark R. "Common Values and Common Interests? The Bush Legacy in US-Turkish Relations", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10 No. 4, 2008, pp. 6.

<sup>27</sup> **Ibid.**

<sup>28</sup> Lesser, Ian. "Global Europe Program: Turkey in the E.U. Means a New Kind of US-Turkish Relationship", <<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/turkey-the-eu-means-new-kind-us-turkish-relationship>>, (12.04. 2014).

<sup>29</sup> Juliet Eilperin, "Obama Lays out His Foreign Policy Doctrine: Singles, Doubles and the Occasional Home Run", *Washington Post*, 28 April 2014.

condemnation, has been keeping pressure on the murderous Syrian regime and has resulted in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons.<sup>30</sup> The Obama administration exercised caution rather than boldness in such international crises and, in cases such as Syria, the U.S. has refused to act without the support of regional partners.

Turkey has been one of the most important of these regional partners. Consequently, since 2009, the Obama Administration has followed the Bush Administration's policy of supporting full Turkish membership in the European Union. At the start of President Obama's first term, deepened ties with Turkey represented an opportunity to counter his predecessor's alienation of Middle Eastern countries. Supporting Turkey's membership in the E.U. became another way to promote a new trend of cooperation and reaffirm U.S. support for Turkey's aspirations to gain influence in the international arena.

Barack Obama's presidency started at a time when the E.U. euphoria had largely waned in Turkey. As a NATO ally, mediator between the West and the Muslim world as well as being a regional economic powerhouse, Turkish membership in the E.U. and strong Turkish-American relations have consistently remained in line with U.S. interests. The Obama Administration continues to support Turkey's E.U. membership, although reactions from the major European powers and Turkish policies have complicated these interests, so far originated most importantly from France and Germany.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to trace the developmental path and the shifts either temporary or long-term in the United States-European Union relationships particularly with regards to Turkey's candidacy and future membership in the European Union.

It sought to accomplish this task through establishing the historical roots of the U.S.'s approach to Turkey's potential membership in the E.U. in terms of different administrations' stance, while at the same time considering the impact of political developments that affected the course of the E.U.-Turkey relationship since the end of 1960s. Furthermore, the relationship between the U.S. and the E.U. is analyzed in-depth in order to assess how the historical and current status of Turkey's candidacy for full membership in the E.U. has been represented in the U.S.-E.U. relationship.

As a result, this paper confirms the existence of consistent support from the United States on Turkey's journey to European Union membership. During the Presidency of the three leaders, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, America has continued to support Turkey in its negotiations with the E.U, mainly thanks to a dominant consideration based on security perspective, hence ascribing

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<sup>30</sup>HowardLaFranchi, "Top Five Foreign Policy Points in Obama's State of the Union Speech", 29 January 2014 <<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2014/0129/Top-five-foreign-policy-points-in-Obama-s-State-of-the-Union-speech-video>> (12 May 2014).

Turkey an important place in U.S.'s security concerns as the country is one of the strongest allies of the U.S. and a regional power. This position, furthermore, did not disappear or arguably even wane in the post-Cold War era, further contributing to American support in various fields. Thus, despite short-term shifts in Turkey's regional position, its long-term importance does not decrease. As a result, three different presidents with very different foreign policy approaches all demonstrated their support for Turkey against the E.U.

While Clinton's presidency saw a drastic rise in the usage and legitimacy of the discourse of democratization, thus affecting the support for Turkey in a positive manner, the Bush administration had to take a hard stance against what it perceived and attacked as "global terror", this time acting with an impulse to not let important allies down, of which Turkey constitutes one of the best examples, especially with its role of exemplifying a secular, democratic, liberal Muslim country that enjoy close ties with the West, despite radical terrorist groups' claim that call for a global "*ji*had". Finally, the Obama administration had to deal with the conclusion parts of the U.S.'s military adventures in Afghanistan and in Iraq, while also having to deal with the grassroots popular movements that swept through North Africa and the Middle East, starting from late 2010. Thus, the Obama administration's approach to Turkey can be regarded as a mixture of the Clinton and G.W. Bush administrations' approaches, since the considerations during Barack Obama's tenure were mixed and involved both counter-terror and democracy-building elements.

The United States has always recommended European leaders to show goodwill towards the Muslim world through Turkish integration. Should Turkey achieve European Union member-status, it would undoubtedly be viewed as a constructive effort by the West to strengthen ties with the often-misunderstood Islamic world. The opposition to Turkish membership argued that the Turkish government needs to implement reforms on both domestic and international problems, including the examination and potential improvement of laws protecting human rights. For the most part, Turkey has acknowledged that some reforms are necessary; however, for many areas including political, judicial, freedom of the press and laws regarding the minority Kurdish population, changes may already be imminent.

Meanwhile, The United States and Turkey have been shared a close and mutually beneficial relationship for decades, as their cooperation in NATO shows the strength of it. Their relationship however, was subject to temporary crises and strains as in the case of the Cyprus crisis in 1963 and 1974, or when Turkey refused to allow the United States to use its bases for the Iraq invasion in March 2003. The American war in Iraq was also greatly opposed by many in Turkey. However, the alliance was robust enough to overcome these crises. Turkey is undoubtedly a crucial ally to the United States, in addition to being an important component member of the European community. Both the United States and Turkey need to stand together and cooperate to conquer the overwhelming and complex challenges in our modern day, and that clear reality, which would be visible even to the least informed individual if be presented with adequate facts, was of course not ignored by successive American Presidents and their counselors.

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