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MISPLACED PRIORITIES TURKISH ASSESSMENTS OF U.S. POWER

Stephen J. Flanagan

Turkish elites and the general public retain a wary respect for American economic and hard power but remain dubious that this enormous capacity will be used in ways that will advance Turkish regional and global interests. Many Turks remain particularly concerned that the United States will leave Iraq unstable and provoke a military confrontation with Iran—with damaging consequences for Turkey’s security and prosperity. The appeal of U.S. political ideas, business practices, culture, and scientific and technological advances has declined dramatically among both elites and the public in Turkey since 2001, largely as a consequence of discontent with U.S. policies toward terrorism, Iraq, Iran, and democracy promotion. While the Turkish government still values the U.S. and Allied defense commitments codified in the North Atlantic Treaty, elite and public perceptions in Turkey of NATO’s importance to the country’s security have also dropped sharply over the last decade.

The growth of Turkey’s self-confidence and sense of relative power vis-à-vis the United States and Europe during the past decade has also influenced these attitudes. Turkey’s diminished dependence on the NATO security guarantee coupled with its remarkable economic dynamism (Turkey is now the fifteenth- or sixteenth-largest economy in the world¹) and diplomatic activism have tempered past deference to the United States. Turkey now has other important partners as it has developed burgeoning economic and political relations with Russia, its Middle East neighbors, and Asia. Current Turkish leaders sometimes overestimate their influence and ability to shape regional and global affairs. They refer to Turkey as a “central power,” a pivotal state in Eurasia that can leverage its regional position to become an increasingly influential global actor. They expect the United States and other governments to treat their country accordingly. They do not see the United States in decline as much as they embrace their rise and the “rise of the rest” that is leading to a more diffuse global power structure and that is also increasing Turkey’s ability to advance its interests.

Domestic trends in Turkey, regional dynamics, and enduring bilateral policy differences make it difficult to envision major improvement over the next five to ten years in the very negative attitudes toward the United States prevalent in Turkey today. Instead of assuming Turkey’s inclination to support U.S. policy initiatives, as was generally the case in past decades, Washington should expect Turkish cooperation to unfold case by case after some negotiation and that Turkey will

1. As of November 2010, the World Bank ranks Turkey’s economy seventeenth in terms of nominal GDP and fifteenth based on the measure of purchasing power parity. See <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP.pdf>, and http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP_PPP.pdf.



sometimes be working at cross-purposes. U.S. standing and influence in Turkey could be best improved by carefully managing policy differences and giving more profile to cooperation on issues where there is a greater convergence of interests and policy preferences, such as on long-term stabilization of Iraq, expansion of bilateral trade and investment, and development of the southern corridor for Caspian Basin energy, supporting political reforms and economic development in the Middle East and Central Asia. These findings emerge from extensive dialogues with senior Turkish officials, members of parliament, journalists, business leaders, and scholars over the past two years, as well as analysis of Turkish media and public opinion data.

Shifting Turkish Interests and Attitudes

During the Cold War, U.S.-Turkey relations rested on the firm foundation of mutual security commitments through NATO and close bilateral military ties, bolstered by Washington's support for Turkey's secular elite and integration into Europe. Turks joined the coalition in the 1991 Gulf War but were deeply disappointed that U.S. promises of compensation for their consequent economic losses and diminished security were unfulfilled. Initiation of the U.S. war on terrorism placed new strains on relations. Turkish secularists felt marginalized by Washington's perceived tilt toward the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) in its rush to embrace "moderate" Islamist movements. Turks of all stripes were uneasy with being held up as a model for their Muslim neighbors and with the U.S. approach to counterterrorism and democracy promotion. Many Turks worried, despite clear disavowal from U.S. leaders, that the war on terrorism was perceived in the wider Muslim world as a war against Islam, which complicated cooperation with Washington in combating extremism.

Differences over the Iraq War and its detrimental consequences for Turkish security led to a further deterioration of relations and favorable opinion of the United States. Many senior officials and a majority of the public have come to feel that U.S. power in the Middle East has been exercised in reckless ways that takes little account of Turkey's interests. The perceived U.S. failure to take effective steps to prevent the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) terrorist group from launching attacks into Turkey from northern Iraq after 2004 became a major irritant and led to enduring perceptions that Washington has a double standard in its fight against terrorism.² Relations with the Turkish government and military recovered somewhat following the establishment in 2007 of the Ankara Coordination Center for exchange of intelligence information on PKK activities in northern Iraq. The Turkish government, however, has not given this cooperation much publicity in the Grand National Assembly or in public statements, and it has not had a major impact on PKK operations.³ As a result, this support has not done much to improve the U.S. image in Turkey.

Domestic politics in Turkey have also influenced bilateral relations and attitudes toward the United States. Since its decisive victory in parliamentary elections in November 2002, the AKP has dominated Turkish politics, winning a second successive election and raising its share of the vote from 34 percent to 47 percent in July 2007. The AKP focused initially on continuing the economic recovery after the serious downturn of 2000–2001 and pursuing accession negotiations with the European Union. It delivered on both those fronts and consequently widened its appeal across the political spectrum. The AKP's roots in the Turkish Islamist movement also necessitated an uneasy cohabitation with the country's rigidly secular system. The AKP reflects the influence of a growing segment of the population that is religious and favors more tolerance of traditional interpretations of piety in public life. It has sought to advance this agenda and its fortunes by emphasizing solidarity with the wider Islamic world. While the AKP avoided an open confrontation with the defenders of secularism during most of its first term, it ran into difficulties when it decided to elect one of its leaders to the presidency in April 2007. As a result of this move and other initiatives to allow traditional expressions of piety in public life, the party was threatened with closure by the Constitutional Court in 2008.

The AKP has lost ground during the past three years, but it remains the most popular party in Turkey. The AKP's continued domination of Turkish politics results, in part, from the weakness of other parties. The two main secularist opposition parties, the Republican People's Party (CHP) and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), have lacked effective leadership and mechanisms for renewal, making it difficult to mount a strong challenge to the current government. Both parties have been highly critical of the United States and the European Union in recent years and have successfully pressured the AKP to adopt more nationalist and less tolerant policies toward the Kurdish minority. There are signs that the new CHP party chairman, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, is trying to temper this nationalism, as well as elements of the party's rigid Kemalist ideology, and reposition the party as a viable social democratic opposition. Kılıçdaroğlu also has a more positive view of the United States and Western alliances, more in line with CHP's historical orientation.⁴

2. In the 2002 Pew Global Attitudes Survey, 58 percent of Turks said they opposed "the U.S.-led efforts to fight terrorism." This opposition jumped to 79 percent by 2007 and still remains high at 55 and 59 in the 2009 and 2010 surveys, respectively.

3. Members of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, interviews with author, Ankara and Washington, D.C., January 2009 and April 2010.

4. CHP representative, interview with author, Washington, D.C., October 2010. While campaigning against the AKP-supported referendum on constitutional reforms, Kılıçdaroğlu promised a creative solution to the fight over the ban on women wearing headscarves at universities and to provide amnesty for PKK

Erdoğan's decisive victory in securing approval of a package of constitutional and judicial reforms in a September 12, 2010, referendum, which the opposition parties denounced, suggests that barring an unexpected economic downturn or some other shock, AKP is likely to retain control of the government after parliamentary elections scheduled for July 2011.⁵

Anti-American sentiment has grown among both elites and the general public in Turkey during the past decade. In the 1999–2000 Pew Global Attitudes Survey, 52 percent of Turks had a positive opinion of the United States. This fell to 15 percent in 2003 after the Iraq War, and dropped to 9 percent in the 2007 survey (among the lowest levels in the Middle East) as the consequences of that war for Turkey became more apparent.⁶ This sentiment reflects lingering discontent with specific U.S. policies, but, over the past few years, dislike of the U.S. government has been accompanied by declining views of the American people and values.

In a 2002 Pew survey, 46 percent of Turks reported a dislike of U.S. popular culture, 59 percent said they disliked U.S. business practices, and 50 percent disliked U.S. ideas about democracy.⁷ A survey five years later revealed further erosion of American ideational and cultural influence: 68 percent said they dislike “American music, movies and television” (up 22 points), 83 percent dislike “American ways of doing business” (up 24 points), 81 percent said they “dislike American ideas about democracy” (up 31 points), and 51 percent said they do not admire the United States for its “technological and scientific advances” (up 27 points since 2002 when 67 percent said they *did* admire such achievements).⁸ The loss of respect for American values has been more pronounced among “conservative” (more traditional and pious) supporters of AKP, but anti-Americanism has become increasingly evident across the Turkish political spectrum.

President Barack Obama's efforts to revitalize relations with Turkey and the Muslim world produced some initial improvement in U.S. standing. The AKP leadership embraced his offer of a “model partnership” and sought to highlight common policy objectives. In 2009, 33 percent of Turks surveyed by Pew expected Obama to “do the right thing” in foreign affairs, up from only 2 percent in 2008, and 50 percent of those surveyed by the German Marshall Fund (GMF) had a positive view of the president's managing of relations with their country. But by early 2010, as policy differences vis-à-vis Iran and Israel gained prominence, these figures had dropped to 23 and 28 percent, respectively.⁹ The United States is still regarded by a large majority of Turks (69 percent

fighters. See Fatma Dişli Zibak, “New CHP Leader's ‘Radical’ Statements Draw Cautious Reaction,” *Today's Zaman*, August 29, 2010, www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-220360-103-new-chp-leaders-radical-statements-draw-cautious-reaction.html.

5. The referendum was approved 57.8 to 42.1, a much larger margin of victory than expected. It is estimated that AKP could expect about 40 percent of the vote in the next elections, down from 46.58 in 2007 but sufficient to form a government on its own. Kılıçdaroğlu has a stronger base of support, and CHP's strength is widely assessed to be more than 30 percent, up from 22.88 in 2007. For an incisive analysis of the implications of the referendum, see Bulent Aliriza and Deni Koenhems, “Erdoğan's Referendum Victory and Turkish Politics,” October 15, 2010, <http://csis.org/files/publication/101510-Erdogan's-Referendum-Victory-and-Turkish-Politics.pdf>.

6. See Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Project, *Muslim Disappointment: Obama More Popular Abroad Than at Home, Global Image of U.S. Continues to Benefit*, June 17, 2010, p. 5, <http://pewglobal.org/files/pdf/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Spring-2010-Report.pdf>.

7. Pew Research Center, *What the World Thinks in 2002*, December 2002, <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/165.pdf>.

8. Pew Research Center, *Global Unease with Major World Powers*, June 2007, <http://pewglobal.org/files/pdf/256.pdf>.

9. Pew, *Muslim Disappointment*, p. 5, and German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Transatlantic Trends, 2010: Key Findings*, August 2010, p. 8, http://trends.gmfus.org/doc/2010_English_Key.pdf.

in the 2010 Pew survey) as the world's leading economic power, but GMF polling in 2009 found that 57 percent of Turks worried about Obama's ability to manage international economic problems.¹⁰ Of Turks surveyed by GMF in 2010, only 6 percent identified the United States as Turkey's most important partner—about the same as Russia (5 percent). Reflecting growing nationalism and a regional focus, 34 percent of the GMF respondents thought Turkey should act alone, and 20 percent felt countries in the Middle East are their country's best partners.¹¹

Several other data points make clear that Turks are wary of any U.S. government, not just the George W. Bush administration. In a July 2008 Gallup poll, only one in three Turks believed the outcome of the U.S. presidential election that year would make a difference to their country. Since 2001, Turkish elites and the public have been increasingly convinced that U.S. leaders pay little regard to Turkey's interests in making foreign policy decisions for the United States. In the 2002 Pew survey, 17 percent of Turks said the United States pays a "great deal or a fair amount" of attention to Turkish interests, but by 2010 only 9 percent of Turks held that view. More alarmingly, 56 percent of Turks surveyed by Pew in 2010 remain very or somewhat concerned that the United States could become a military threat to their country (down from a high of 77 percent in 2007). This sentiment, affirmed in other polls, is part of the legacy of the Gulf and Iraq Wars and reflects a lingering fear among elites and the public that the United States and Israel may yet take military action to thwart Iran's nuclear program and regional hegemony, triggering further instability and economic dislocation in their neighborhood, with very damaging consequences for Turkey.¹²

Turkey's foreign policy decisions over the past few years have generally reflected realpolitik efforts to balance its national and regional interests with relations with the United States and its other allies more than these negative sentiments about the United States. There is undoubtedly a tipping point at which abiding anti-Americanism among the Turkish public will have a more pronounced or distorting impact on Ankara's foreign policy. Both factors were at play in Erdoğan's decision in June 2010 to vote against further UN sanctions on Iran, rather than abstain, as had been expected, and in his government's shifting stance on dealing with the Libya crisis in March 2011.

Turkey's surprising vote on UN sanctions on Iran came in the aftermath of public and official outrage over the Israeli commando raid on the Turkish ship that was part of the Gaza flotilla and the cautious U.S. response as well as Washington's spurning of Erdoğan's effort with Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to broker a nuclear fuel swap deal with Iran. The AKP leadership clearly felt it would not suffer any adverse consequences domestically by challenging the United States and the other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany on such a critical issue. If Israel were to undertake military action against the Iranian nuclear program, whatever the actual circumstances, the Turkish public and leaders across the political spectrum would assume U.S. complicity, which would probably trigger a prolonged rupture in relations with both the United States and Israel.

Turkey's policies toward the Libyan civil war reflected both its efforts to balance its regional and alliance interests as well as its reservations about the application of U.S. and European power

10. German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Transatlantic Trends, 2009*, September 2009, p. 24, www.gmfus.org/trends/doc/2009_English_Key.pdf.

11. German Marshall Fund, *Transatlantic Trends, 2010: Key Findings*, p. 23.

12. A May 2007 Gallup poll found 64 percent of Turks surveyed considered the United States hostile. See Julie Ray, "Istanbul Attack Underscores Poor U.S. Image, Two in Three Turks Disapprove of U.S. Leadership, Consider It Hostile," July 11, 2008, www.gallup.com/poll/108754/Istanbul-Attack-Underscores-Poor-US-Image.aspx.

in its neighborhood. As international concern grew in March 2011 that Muammar el-Qaddafi might slaughter innocent civilians as well as rebels fighting his regime, the Turkish government supported UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1973 but contended that it authorized only humanitarian actions to ensure the safety and well-being of the Libyan people. Uncomfortable with military operations against an Arab neighbor and anxious to preserve substantial business interests in Libya, Turkish officials objected that early coalition military actions exceeded the scope of the UN mandate. Turkey later agreed to support NATO assuming command and control of enforcement of the UN-mandated no-fly zone and arms embargo, but it opposed the alliance directing military actions to protect civilians under threat of attack. After intense diplomatic negotiations, including discussions between President Obama and Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, the Turkish government finally agreed to NATO assuming command and control of military operations related to all elements of SCR 1973, stating that its concerns had been allayed. This arrangement gave Turkey and other allies a veto in the management of NATO strikes. Still Ankara's balancing efforts continued. As NATO assumed command and control of operations, Erdoğan announced that Turkey, with allied blessing, would take over running of the rebel-held Benghazi harbor and airport to facilitate humanitarian aid and was willing to broker a cease-fire between rebels and Qaddafi forces, warning that a lengthy conflict could turn Libya into a "second Iraq or another Afghanistan."¹³

Impact on Turkish Foreign and Security Policy

Turkey's increasingly independent diplomacy reflects its new self-confidence and opposition to certain U.S. policies. Although Turkish leaders still see many convergent strategic interests with the United States, they feel they know their region better than the United States does and that their good relations with all their neighbors give them the ability to engage countries Washington can't. Senior Turkish officials are no longer content to "simply deliver messages framed in Washington," and they feel that their innovative regional diplomacy is not fully appreciated in the United States.¹⁴ This has led to recent strains in bilateral relations. A prominent Turkish scholar summed up this sentiment well:

The Americans, no matter what they say, cannot get used to a new world where regional powers want to have a say in regional and global politics. This is our neighborhood, and we don't want trouble. The Americans create havoc, and we are left holding the bag.¹⁵

Turkish foreign policy under Erdoğan and the AKP has been heavily influenced by the worldview of Ahmet Davutoğlu, the prime minister's longtime adviser and current foreign minister. Davutoğlu's vision rests on several principles designed to leverage Turkey's geostrategic location in the center of Eurasia, as well as its historical Ottoman ties and Muslim affinities, to give Turkey "strategic depth" and global influence over the coming decade. A key element of this strategy is the concept of peaceful regional engagement to achieve "zero problems" with its neighbors. Trade and economic cooperation and demilitarization of its relations with Russia and its neighbors

13. Seumas Milne, "Turkey Offers to Broker Libya Ceasefire as Rebels Advance on Sirte," *Guardian*, March 27, 2011, www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/27/libya-turkey-mediators-prime-minister.

14. Comments at CSIS roundtable on U.S.-Turkish relations, November 2010.

15. Professor Soli Ozel, Bilgi University, quoted by Sabrina Tavernise and Michael Slackman, "Turkey Goes from Pliable Ally to Thorn for U.S.," *New York Times*, June 8, 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/06/09/world/middleeast/09turkey.html.

in the Caucasus and the Middle East are also central to this strategy. Davutoğlu and other AKP strategists also envision Turkey being well suited to be a bridge between Islam and the West, and through its engagement with Iran to broker a historic reconciliation between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim communities and speak authoritatively for the wider Islamic world in international forums.¹⁶ Erdoğan and Davutoğlu have seen the concept of strategic depth as a way to lessen Turkey's historic dependence on the United States and Europe, and have used Turkey's diplomatic activism to build new partnerships in an effort to achieve a new regional balance of power.

The AKP government has pursued policies toward Iran, particularly Tehran's nuclear program, that have strained relations with the United States. Turkish leaders endorse Iran's right to develop a full nuclear fuel cycle but oppose Iran's development of nuclear weapons because it would alter the regional balance of power. The Turks do not see Iran's nuclear program as an imminent threat. The Turkish government remains convinced that diplomatic engagement with Tehran offers the best route to convincing Iran to forswear acquisition of nuclear weapons, and Turkey adamantly opposes military efforts to stop further developments in Iranian nuclear technology. This conviction, coupled with a belief that Turks have influence and know how best to deal with the Iranians, led to Turkey's initiative with Brazil to broker the nuclear fuel swap deal with Iran. The AKP government will remain reluctant to take further steps to isolate Iran and to accept deployment of U.S. or NATO ballistic missile defense systems on Turkish territory. Reflecting its goal of fostering cordial relations with Iran as well as Russia, Turkey demanded that no country be cited as the threat rationale for the alliance's missile defense system as the price for its agreement to commence its development at the November 2010 NATO Lisbon summit.¹⁷

Turkey's differences with Israel have become a major irritant in bilateral relations with the United States. Turkey's relationship with Israel, always complicated, has cooled in recent years as the AKP government has emphasized Turkey's Muslim identity and sought to broaden its ties with other Middle Eastern neighbors hostile to Israel (including Syria, Iran, and Hamas). Turkish leaders decried Israel's 2006 military operations in Lebanon. Harsh criticism of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians by Prime Minister Erdoğan and other senior Turkish officials, particularly following the Israeli invasion of Gaza in December 2008, further strained relations. The Israeli raid on the Gaza flotilla in 2010, which resulted in the deaths of eight Turkish citizens, triggered public outrage and nearly led to a breach in relations. Erdoğan's concerns about the fate of the Palestinians also reflect deeply held sentiment among the AKP's core constituency. The perception of key Turkish elites and the public is that unwavering and uncritical U.S. support of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians is further fueling extremist rage in the Muslim world and undermining Turkey's efforts to promote reconciliation in the Middle East.

Another shift impacting relations with and perceptions of the United States is Turkey's historic rapprochement with Russia. Bilateral trade, investment, energy, and tourism ties have been

16. In his 2001 book, *Strategic Depth, Turkey's International Position*, Davutoğlu argues that Turkey is "the epicenter of the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus, the center of Eurasia in general and is in the middle of the Rimland belt cutting across the Mediterranean to the Pacific." See Joshua W. Walker, "Architect of Power," *Journal of International Security Affairs* (Spring 2010), www.securityaffairs.org/issues/2010/18/walker.php. Another leading advocate of Turkey's engagement with Iran and Shi'ite communities is the prime minister's current foreign policy adviser, İbrahim Kalın.

17. The Turkish government also demands that all Turkish territory be protected and that it have a role in command and control of the system—which would be the case within the NATO decisionmaking structure. See "Turkey Accedes to a Missile Defense Plan," *Hürriyet Daily News*, November, 22, 2010, www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-accedes-to-a-missile-defense-plan-2010-11-22.

growing during the past decade. Russia has become Turkey's leading trade partner, and the volume of mutual investment is valued at more than \$10 billion. Two-way trade between Turkey and Russia amounted to \$35 billion in 2008, more than double the trade with the United States. Turkey now depends on Russia for more than 65 percent of its natural gas and 40 percent of its oil imports, and Turkey recently signed agreements with Moscow to increase gas imports and have Russian firms construct Turkey's first nuclear power plants. These deals are designed to boost trade to \$100 billion by 2015, leading several Turkish analysts to comment that this is becoming a strategic partnership. This energy dependence, while mutually beneficial, gives Russia important leverage.

A close personal relationship between Prime Ministers Putin and Erdoğan has also influenced this dynamic. This shift of interests, coupled with the AKP government's strategy of zero problems with its neighbors, has led Ankara to be more explicit about balancing its relations between Russia and the United States and other NATO allies. The measured Turkish response to the August 2008 conflict in Georgia was the most visible reflection of this balancing. Ankara also feels confident that it can work effectively with Russia to promote economic cooperation and security in the Black Sea region and has resisted expanded NATO operations in the Black Sea. Ankara also believes its deepening economic, energy, and security ties with Russia give it leverage in advancing regional stability in the Black Sea and the Caucasus. Turkish officials insist their cooperation with Russia is being pursued with a proper wariness and that Turkey remains firmly tied to its Euro-Atlantic moorings.

Support for NATO has also declined among elites and the public. Polling conducted by the GMF during the past five years has revealed that public support for NATO in Turkey was the lowest among any allied country surveyed. The number of Turks who felt "that NATO is still essential for their country's security" dropped steadily from 53 percent in 2004 to 30 percent in 2010.¹⁸ Roughly an equal number in 2007 and 2008 said that NATO "is no longer essential" or "did not know or refused to answer" on the topic, suggesting that the Turkish public does not adequately understand the function of NATO—a relationship seldom mentioned by the current political leadership. Although Turkey has provided forces and other assistance to NATO's engagement in Afghanistan, it has not been seen in Ankara as a central national priority. Only 31 percent of Turks are optimistic about the prospects for NATO's mission in Afghanistan, and only 11 percent of the public support retention of Turkish troop deployments in the International Security Assistance Force.

Some in the Turkish national security policy community express the view that NATO has been diluted by its expansion in the 1990s and that it is not as "serious" an organization as it once was in terms of the military capabilities of members and their willingness to meet commitments. In internal policy deliberations, including within the Turkish Foreign Ministry, invoking NATO obligations or commitments is said not to carry the same weight it once did. There is a sense of ambivalence about NATO among some segments of the Turkish military, particularly in the junior officer corps. Officers who have served in NATO missions and command assignments are more likely to see NATO's enduring value. However, many of those whose service has focused on counterterrorism operations in southeastern Turkey see NATO as placing increasingly costly demands on the Turkish armed forces for expeditionary operations but providing few current benefits in return

18. German Marshall Fund, *Transatlantic Trends 2009: Key Findings*, September 2009, p. 26; *Transatlantic Trends 2008: Key Findings*, September 2008, p. 20, www.transatlantictrends.org/trends/doc/2008_English_Key.pdf; and German Marshall Fund, *Transatlantic Trends: Key Findings 2007*, p. 22, www.transatlantictrends.org/trends/doc/Transatlantic%20Trends_all_0920.pdf.

to Turkish security. Still, in a dangerous neighborhood, some political and military leaders value the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Turkey as a concrete linkage to the U.S. strategic nuclear deterrent. Some national security analysts in Turkey have quietly called for developing the basic infrastructure for a countervailing nuclear weapons capability if Iran's nuclear program progresses unchecked and doubts about the value of NATO's extended deterrent grow.¹⁹

Implications for U.S. Policy

Maintaining the U.S.-Turkey partnership and alliance ties will require careful management of policy differences by both governments, particularly with respect to the Middle East. How the United States disengages from Iraq, deals with Iran's nuclear program, and advances Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation will determine the course of bilateral relations and America's influence and image in Turkey. Turkey can also remain a valuable partner in advancing mutual interests with Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

The United States should deepen its cooperation with Turkey in the long-term stabilization of Iraq. Turkey has played an increasingly positive role in the reconstruction of Iraq and is facilitating U.S. military disengagement. Turkey has a vital interest and important capabilities in promoting long-term economic and energy development in that country. Ankara has invested a great deal of effort toward improving its engagement with the Iraqi central and the Kurdish regional governments during the past two years. PKK terrorism remains Turkey's leading security concern. Turkish leaders would welcome more robust U.S. and Iraqi efforts to prevent cross-border attacks by the PKK. The chief of the General Staff, General Işık Koşaner, identified his top priorities as ensuring that the central Iraqi government and the regional Kurdish administration take measures against the PKK, curtailing external support for the PKK from foreign sources, and maintaining the authorization to launch military strikes on PKK bases in northern Iraq.²⁰ CHP chairman Kılıçdaroğlu has revived the idea of Turkish forces being allowed to create a military buffer zone on the Iraqi side of the border to prevent the PKK from conducting attacks in Turkey. Turkish leaders would welcome more robust U.S. and Iraqi efforts to prevent cross-border attacks by the PKK.

Turkey's credibility and reliability as an interlocutor and intermediary with its neighbors in the Middle East have been severely tested in recent months. Turkey's good relations with all these countries have sometimes proven quite useful, as was the case with its mediation of indirect Israel-Syria talks and its work to promote the Iraqi Status of Forces Agreement with Sunni politicians. However, Turkey's embrace of Hamas, harsh criticism of Israel, and support of efforts to break the Gaza blockade have ended Israeli willingness to let Ankara broker discussions on Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian issues. That said, Turkey has gained influence in the region and credibility on the Arab street. The United States should work to repair Turkey's ties with Israel and seek to leverage Turkey's good relations with Syria and other states over the long term to advance regional

19. Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Program May Trigger the Young Turks to Think Nuclear," *Proliferation News and Resources*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 20, 2004, http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/920/irans_nuclear_program_may_trigger_the_young_turks_to_think_nuclear.html.

20. "New Turkish Military Chief Calls for Fight against Autonomy," *Hürriyet Daily News*, August 29, 2010, www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=new-military-chief-mirrors-armys-views-on-critical-issues-2010-08-29.

peace and balance Iranian influence. The Turkish government, nongovernmental organizations, and business community would also welcome partnerships with U.S. and European counterparts, which profiled and leveraged Turkey's ties in the region, to enhance governance, the rule of law, and economic development in the Middle East to ensure that the recent revolutions result in regional stability and cooperation.

Turkey's recent diplomacy vis-à-vis Iran has made the United States, other permanent members of the UN Security Council, and Germany reluctant to seek further help from Turkey in their efforts to dissuade Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. At some point Iran may well cross a red line for the AKP or a future Turkish government. Over the long term, more coordinated Turkish cooperation could be invaluable in halting or dealing with the military consequences of Iranian nuclear weapons. Washington should maintain a dialogue with Ankara on the Iranian nuclear question. CHP chairman Kılıçdaroğlu has argued that Turkey's isolation on this issue is detrimental to his country's strategic interests.²¹ Turkish leaders across the political spectrum say a nuclear-armed Iran would be inimical to those interests. At some point the Iranians may well make a move that will clarify Turkey's red line, which has been difficult to ascertain in recent years, and the United States may be able to enlist Ankara's support for a policy to deter and contain Iran.

While Turkey's economic and political ties to Russia have deepened, Turkish leaders remain wary of Moscow's aspiration to create an exclusive sphere of influence in the Caucasus and to control energy flows from the Caspian Basin. Ankara's principal interests in the Caucasus-Caspian region are maintaining stability to allow for expansion of regional trade and infrastructure and facilitating Turkey's emergence as a key energy hub. Washington should therefore continue to work closely with Turkey to normalize its relations with Armenia, resolve frozen conflicts in the Caucasus, and support Turkey's role as a transit corridor for Caspian Basin energy. Turkey's good relations with Russia could also be leveraged to advance the "reset" in U.S. and NATO relations with Moscow.

The United States should also continue to be unequivocal about its support for Turkey's accession to the European Union. The stalled EU process compromises the U.S. vision of a widening Europe that is increasingly integrated economically and politically. The EU process helps advance reforms that strengthen Turkish democratic governance and its effectiveness as a partner. As long as the Turks feel excluded from European institutions, they will continue to block NATO-EU cooperation and, over time, have diminished willingness to cooperate with the United States and NATO. Washington's advocacy of Turkey's EU bid is resented in some European capitals, but it bolsters the efforts of supporters within the EU and helps prevent its collapse. As the accession negotiations plod along, the United States should support other steps to deepen Turkish integration into European institutions, such as the European Defence Agency.

The prospects for developing the "model partnership" between Washington and Ankara that President Obama envisioned in early 2009 are clearly diminished by the negative views of the United States and doubts about the application of U.S. power that prevail in Turkey today. For the next few years, Turkey's support for U.S. policy initiatives will likely unfold case by case and after some negotiation. Divergent interests will sometimes drive Ankara to work at cross-purposes with Washington although these differences can be managed in ways that can avoid a major breach in bilateral relations and ensure progress in areas of agreement.

21. Sami Kohen, "The CHP's Foreign Policy Stance," *Hürriyet Daily News*, July 28, 2010, www.hurriyet-dailynews.com/n.php?n=the-chp8217s-foreign-policy-stance-2010-07-28.