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NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE

JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL



**THE RISE OF ISLAM IN TURKEY: OPPORTUNITY OR OBSTRUCTION FOR
THE WEST?**

by

Deborah Robinson

U.S. Department of State

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

Signature: Deborah Robinson

1 June 2011

Thesis Adviser:

Signature: [Signature]

Dr. Karl Erickson

Approved by:

Signature: [Signature]

Dr. Keith Dickson, Committee Member

Signature: Joanne M. Fish

Joanne M. Fish, CAPT, USN, Committee Member

Signature: Joanne M. Fish

**Joanne M. Fish, CAPT, USN, Director,
Joint Advanced Warfighting School**

ABSTRACT

As a predominantly Muslim nation with a democratic tradition and government, Turkey has become the figurative bridge between the democratic West and the Islamic East. Within the past decade, Turkey has embraced its unique position and now seeks to become a major player in the international community, starting in its own neighborhood. Turkey has a unique history, with both an Islamic past and a secular and democratic present. The idea that a nation with a majority Muslim population would embrace a wholly secular and democratic government was groundbreaking when Kemal Ataturk introduced the concept in the 1920's, and it has endured for the past ninety years. In 2001, the Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (AKP), a party with Islamist roots, took power and since that time a political shift has been taking place. The AKP's rise to power and subsequent changes in Turkey's domestic and foreign policy have led many observers and analysts to assert Turkey is moving away from secularism towards becoming an Islamist state, like its forbearer, the Ottoman Empire.

Basic Islamic principles, especially as they relate to governance, provide insights into why a nation might seek changes to the secular nature of its government by incorporating Islamic practices. Turkey's current domestic and foreign policies are examined to determine if they reveal a proclivity towards an Islamist government. Previous Islamic revolutions in Iran and Afghanistan are used as examples in order to provide insight into the genesis and evolution of Islamic movements. When Turkey and the AKP are viewed through these lenses, and the classic definitions of social movements are applied to the situation, it becomes clear that any shift that has or is taking place in Turkey is not a revolution but rather a revival of Turkey's Islamic heritage.

Turkey continues to be the bridge between the East and West but has started to remodel the bridge based on its new vision as a good neighbor to East and West alike. It has become more proactive in its region and has started to engage its neighbors, implementing a "zero-problems" foreign policy. However, just because Turkey is seeking to engage these states does not mean they will become allies or that Turkey prefers these partners over the West. An understanding of Turkey's unique situation and ability to connect with and influence Islamic countries in the Middle East should lead the West to embrace Turkey and its foreign policy. Turkey's external relations could be extraordinarily beneficial to Western nations seeking peace and security in the volatile Middle East. Therefore, so long as Turkey's current Islamic revival does not end its status as a democratic, moderate state that is positively engaged with the West, the United States and other Western nations should seek to strengthen and expand ties with this key strategic partner.

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INTRODUCTION

Turkey has long been viewed as the bridge between the East and the West, both literally and figuratively. Turkey's geographic location makes it a literal bridge, bordering southern Europe to its north and Syria, Iraq and Iran to its south. As a predominantly Muslim nation with a democratic tradition and government, it has become the figurative bridge between the democratic West and the Islamic East. Within the past decade, Turkey has embraced its unique position and now seeks to become a major player in the international community, starting in its own neighborhood.

As the heir to the Ottoman Empire that was the face of Islam for centuries coupled with a recent past of secularism and democracy, Turkey has a unique history. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey emerged as a new, democratic nation that firmly embraced a wholly secular and democratic government. The idea that this type of system could be successfully practiced in predominantly Muslim nation was groundbreaking, and has endured for the past ninety years. In 2001, the Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (AKP), a party with Islamist roots, took power and since that time a political shift has been taking place. The AKP's rise to power and subsequent changes in domestic and foreign policy have led many observers and analysts to assert Turkey is moving away from secularism towards becoming an Islamist state, like its forbearer, the Ottoman Empire.

Given that the world, led by the United States, continues to wage wars in nations with majority Muslim populations and terrorism in today's world is often blamed on militant adherence to Islam, political Islam is a widely discussed topic. It is important to

understand basic Islamic principles, especially as they relate to governance, as they can provide insights into why a nation with a majority Muslim population might seek changes to the secular nature of its government by incorporating Islamic practices. Previous Islamic revolutions in Iran and Afghanistan can be used as examples that may be able to provide insight into the genesis and evolution of Islamic movements. When Turkey and the AKP are viewed through these lenses, and the classic definitions of social movements are applied to the situation, it becomes clear that any shift that has or is taking place in Turkey is not a revolution but rather a revival of Turkey's Islamic heritage.

Turkey is caught between two worlds, both geographically and ideologically. Europe and Asia, secular and religious, and as a nation Turkey is still trying to find its way through a changing world order. "Turkey is accustomed to tectonic tensions over its identity," and these tensions have been revived by the current government.¹ However, so long as Turkey's current Islamic revival does not move it away from being a democratic, moderate state that is positively engaged with the West, the United States (U.S.) and other Western nations should only seek to strengthen and expand ties to Turkey as a key strategic partner due to its location and potential influence in areas where the United States and Europe may not be as effective.

¹ John K. Cooley, "Islam on the ballot: Turkey's test," *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 7, 2007.

CHAPTER 1: TURKEY BACKGROUND

Turkey put its imprint as one of the most influential countries not only on 2010, but on the first decade of the third millennium. At the start of the new decade, too, Turkey's geopolitical position, rich historical heritage, cultural depth, well-educated young population, ever-strengthening democracy, growing economy, and constructive foreign policy make it an indispensable country in a world transformed by rapid globalization.¹

- Prime Minister Recep Erdogan

Key Events

Turkey has a rich but complicated political history as the nation that inherited the legacy of the Ottoman Empire. Barely intact at the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire covered an extensive portion of modern-day Europe and the Middle East. In 1920, the Treaty of Sevres ceded Ottoman territory to the Allied powers as well as the Greeks, Armenians and Kurds.² It was at that time Mustafa Kemal, or *Kemal Ataturk* (Father of the Turks) as he has become known, sought to save the remnants of Turkish culture and nationalism that existed within the Ottoman Empire and create a new republic. In 1923, Turkey was declared a republic and Kemal Ataturk became its first president. At its inception, Islam was the codified state religion but in 1928 Turkey removed the constitutional clause that retained Islam as the official religion and became a secular nation.³

¹ Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey: the new indispensable nation," *Hurriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, December 10, 2010.

² "Special Report: Islam, Secularism and the Battle for Turkey's Future," STRATFOR – Global Intelligence, <http://www.stratfor.com> (accessed October 25, 2010).

³ "Turkey timeline," BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1023189.stm> (accessed November 22, 2010).

Tensions between religion and the state have always existed in Turkey and from the outset the military proclaimed themselves the protectors of the secular nature of Turkey. Throughout Turkey's history, the military has carried out several coup d'états against democratically elected governments due to the military's belief that the leadership had improperly introduced Islam into government. In 1960, the military stripped the Islamist-leaning and ruling Democratic Party of power; in 1971, the military disbanded the overtly Islamist National Order Party; in 1980 the military overthrew a coalition government that included the National Salvation Party, another Islamist party; and, finally in 1997, a coalition government headed by the pro-Islamic Welfare Party resigned under pressure from the military. A result of each of these coups, the political party removed from power was banned from further participation in Turkish politics. The current governing party in Turkey, the Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (AKP), whose leaders were members of the Islamist Welfare Party, was formed in 2001 and elected to power in 2002.

Government

Turkey is a republican parliamentary democracy. The president is the chief of state and the prime minister is the head of government. The prime minister is elected by parliament and is traditionally the head of the party holding a majority of seats in parliament. Until recently, the president was also elected by the parliament for a term of seven years; however, a constitutional amendment passed by referendum in October 2007 mandates the people will directly elect the president starting no later than 2014. All future presidents of Turkey will serve for a term of five years, and can serve no more than two consecutive terms. Heads of federal ministries are appointed by the president.

The legislative body, the Grand National Assembly, has 550 members, elected every four years. Election of members of parliament is by a system of party-list proportional representation, and a party must obtain at least ten percent of the votes cast at the national level in order to have the right to any representation in parliament. The judicial branch at the national level consists principally of the Constitutional Court, the high court responsible for judicial review of laws and decrees in accordance with the constitution and the Court of Cassation, the supreme court of appeals.

The current Turkish constitution was written by the military in 1982, in the wake of a military coup that banned all political parties. Changes to the constitution can be passed by the parliament with a two-thirds majority vote. If an amendment receives more than sixty percent support from parliament, but less than a two-thirds majority, the amendment must be ratified by the people in a referendum.⁴

Economics

Economics has played a key role in the resurgence of Turkey on the international scene and in the rise to power of the current government. The economic situation was dismal during the late nineties. In 2000 – 2001, Turkey's economy suffered a total meltdown with the Lira collapsing, its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) shrinking by almost six percent, most banks needing to be rescued and International Monetary Fund (IMF) assistance was requested by Turkey in an attempt to salvage the remnants of its economy. However, after hitting this low Turkey's economy has rebounded dramatically. In the past decade its GDP has grown by an average of about six percent per annum,

⁴ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, "Background Note: Turkey," U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3432.htm> (accessed March 24, 2011).

inflation has decreased from an average of seventy-five percent to nine percent a year and public debt has decreased from its high of almost seventy-five percent of the national income to less than fifty percent.⁵ Angel Gurría, Secretary General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), said Turkey would be the fastest growing member in 2010 and compared Turkey to the emerging-market BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India & China) countries. For the first time, Turkey is about to achieve an investment-grade rating and economists have projected that over the next seven years Turkey's growth will "match or exceed that of any other big country except China and India."⁶

Turkey's biggest economic problem is chronic unemployment, which stands above ten percent and is higher among young people, the unskilled and in certain parts of the country. Another challenge is to find new markets. Historically, Turkey has relied on exporting its goods to the West and Europe is still the largest consumer of Turkish goods, importing about fifty percent of available goods. However, since 2002 the amount of Turkish exports going to the Middle East has doubled, currently standing at about eighteen percent. Exports to the U.S. are minimal, and exports to Iran and Syria alone are now worth more than exports to America.⁷

Religion

Turkey is almost wholly Muslim, with only small Christian and Jewish communities existing alongside the 99.8 percent of the population claiming Islam as their

⁵ "Anchors Aweigh: A Special Report on Turkey," *The Economist*, October 23, 2010, 5.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 6.

religion. The Sunni sect is prevalent but there are relatively large numbers of the Alevi sect, which is a combination of Sunnism, Shi'ism and pre-Islamic beliefs.⁸ In a research study conducted in 2007, forty-one percent of Turks identified themselves as religious, while only four percent defined themselves as fully devout. Among the rest of the population, forty-two percent defined themselves as non-religious while ten percent said they were non-believers.⁹ The split among the population between those that consider themselves religious and those that define themselves as non-religious (and therefore logically favor secularism) is largely defined by geographic boundaries. Conservative Islamic views are widely held in the more rural areas of Turkey while large cities are traditional secular strongholds.

History of Separation of Mosque and State

The recognition that no protection shall be accorded to an activity contrary to Turkish national interest, the principle of the indivisibility of the existence of Turkey with its state and territory, Turkish historical and moral values or the nationalism, principles, reforms and modernism of Ataturk and that, as required by the principle of secularism, there shall be no interference whatsoever by sacred religious feelings in state affairs and politics...

- Preamble, Turkish Constitution

The fall of the Ottoman Empire is often blamed, among other factors, on the misuse of Islam. At least one expert posits this caused Turkey to "wash its hands of religion."¹⁰ Regardless of whether he was influenced by the history of the empire, Mustafa Kemal believed in secularism. Therefore, in the new nation of Turkey he

⁸ Carol Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Politics of Identity and Power," *Congressional Research Service*, August 13, 2010, 2.

⁹ "Religion, secularism and the veil in daily life," Istanbul: KONDA Research Group, 2009, 26.

¹⁰ Scott Peterson, "Struck Down in Turkey, Islam Coils," *The Christian Science Monitor* 90, no. 37 (1998): 6.

governed, he imposed strict separation between mosque and state. This principle is called *laiklik* in Turkish. This term roughly translates to secularism in English, which is generally regarded as the separation of religion and state. However, *laiklik* actually denotes the subordination of religion to the state.

This is a crucial difference in the Turkish context. The state controls the education of religious professionals and their assignment to mosques and approves the contents of their sermons. It also controls religious schools and the content of religious education and enforces law about the wearing of religious symbols and clothing in public spaces and institutions.¹¹

Laiklik has become a hallmark of Turkish governance and there are large segments of the population, referred to as secularists, who feel strongly about strict adherence to this principle. There are two groups of avowed secularists who believe it is their duty and right to protect what they see as the critical legacy of Ataturk – a secular Turkey. First, there is group of secularists in Turkey commonly referred to as the "deep state," which is a behind-the-scenes, elite group of bureaucrats, military brass and other members of high society. Some analysts contend that this group has "controlled the country and manipulated the political system" for the past fifty years.¹² Second and much more overtly, the Turkish military sees itself as the ultimate guarantor of the secular Turkish state and has taken action consistent with this "duty." Explicitly confirming their view as the party principally responsible for upholding secularism, Chief of the General Staff General Ilker Basbug recently wrote, "the Turkish Armed Forces is always involved as a party when it comes to safeguarding and protecting the underlying philosophy of the

¹¹ Thomas Patrick Carroll, "Turkey's Justice and Development Party: A Model for Democratic Islam?" *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 6, no. 6/7 (2004): 22.

¹² Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Politics of Identity and Power," 9.

Republic of Turkey ... noting the principle of secularism is one of the pillars of the underlying philosophy of the Republic."¹³

Written by the military after the 1980 coup, the Turkish constitution explicitly bans the mixing of mosque and state. Written by the very people who unabashedly claim their right to protect the secular nature of Turkey, the constitution defines as improper the exercise of Islam in the government. In delineating the characteristics of the republic, Article 2 states that “the Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular and social state ...” Article 14 specifies that no right or freedom articulated in the constitution can endanger the secular order of the Turkish Republic. Article 24 states "no one shall be allowed to exploit or abuse religion or religious feelings, or things held sacred by religion, in any manner whatsoever, for the purpose of personal or political influence, or even partially basing the fundamental, social, economic, political, and legal order of the state on religious tenets." Article 68 explicitly states the statutes, activities and programs of political parties cannot violate the principle of a secular republic, and Article 69 allows for the Constitutional Court to hear suits filed by the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Republic when Article 68 is violated. The Constitutional Court may then permanently dissolve the political party or deprive it of financial aid from the state. Further, any member or founder of a political party found to have violated Article 68 cannot be founders, members or directors of another political party for a period of five years.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., 12.

¹⁴ Constitution of the Republic of Turkey.

CHAPTER 2: POLITICAL ISLAM

Islam is a monotheistic, proscriptive religion that guides spiritual values and governs everyday life. One of Islam's fundamental beliefs is that there is no divinity but God (Allah) and that God is everywhere, a concept called *tawhid*. This concept is the defining characteristic behind the idea there can be no separation between mosque and state because life cannot be separated into a part that deals with God and another part that does not. Such a separation would create a vacuum in the non-god part of life and this could lead to a lack of values and spiritual direction in a non-religious government.¹ “The sociopolitical manifestation of Islamic revivalism cannot be separated from the religion itself, since Islam in practice penetrates and influences all aspects of a Muslim's life.”²

The concept of *tawhid* is the foundation for the oft-proposed idea that sharia law, or law according to the tenets of Islam, should be used as the basis for the regulation of all conduct in Islamic nations. *Tawhid* teaches Muslims what they should believe and sharia is the how-to guide in implementing *tawhid*.³ Under pure sharia law, there is no difference between the parts of a Muslim's life as sharia regulates both religious activities and one's private life. "The sharia, in theory, is infallible and immutable doctrine regulating the whole of the religious, political, social and private life of believers and to a certain extent, nonbelievers living under Muslim rule."⁴ However, the idea that there

¹ John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, "Islam and Democracy." *Humanities* 22, no. 6 (2001).

² John Sabini, "*Islam, a Primer*," Washington, D.C.: Middle East Editorial Associates, 1983, 3.

³ Stephen P. Lambert, "*Y: The sources of Islamic Revolutionary Conduct*," Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic Intelligence Research, Joint Military Intelligence College: 2005, 51-52.

⁴ Sabini, 25.

should be no secular laws and sharia laws should govern all interaction is generally regarded as an idealistic view, not a practical one. Over time, Muslim political leaders have learned that applying the ideal state to the practicality of governing often led to irreconcilable issues. People and tribes cling to their different cultures, conditions and traditions and this makes it difficult to effectively employ the one-size-fits-all approach of sharia law. In fact the Ottoman Empire, Islamic in nature, openly introduced civil codes based on European models in both commercial and criminal law. "In effect, a system of secular law grew up alongside that of sacred law, and it gradually took over most of the latter's functions except in the fields of religion, the family and inheritance."⁵

It is important to understand the subtle difference between an Islamist government and an Islamic government. The definition of an Islamist is "a group or individual advocating Islam as a political as well as a religious system."⁶ The main goal of an Islamist or an Islamist government is generally the utilization of the tenets of Islam as the basis of all statutory issues in a government, but not the use of sharia law as the law of the land. Alternately, an Islamic government is a theocracy, where there is no separation between mosque and state, and the tenets of Islam and sharia law are enforced as the ultimate law of the land, regardless of whether all citizens adhere to Islam or not.

Increasing adherence to Islam and implementing sharia law has been the motivating factor behind many modern social movements, and these social movements are therefore referred to as Islamist movements. There are various reasons why Islamist

⁵ Ibid., 29-30.

⁶ Youssef H. Aboul-Enein, "*Militant Islamist Ideology: Understanding the Global Threat*," Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2010, 2.

movements gain support from the population and these underlying factors are fairly constant, regardless of whether the movement leads to participation in a nation's established political process or a revolution. Islamist movements generally gain support because many people turn to Islam, a known and accepted part of their life, when other aspects of life are hard and people face unemployment, unequal or unhelpful government policies, or cultural disorientation. "The mosque is one of the few constants in Muslim countries undergoing great social disruptions. Islam offers a clear sense of social justice, a feeling of empowerment, and an obligation to challenge those who cause the injustice, even when manipulated by radical elements."⁷

Social movements often use symbols that the population is already familiar with to attract people to their cause, but the movements use these symbols in a way that transforms their meanings into a tool for the movement. "Problems are spun as unjust grievances for which clear blame can be assessed and a solution proposed by the movement."⁸ Religious movements in particular capitalize on this as religion gives people a reason for gathering, and has innate symbols that correspond to justice and other familiar and idealized ideas of the population. "The requisite resources and networks of mobilizing, integral to social movement success, are also found in religion's institutional legacy and its charitable works."⁹ With Islam's distinctively delineated belief structure with an emphasis on religion being an integral part of all aspects of life and an extensive

⁷ Stephen Zunes, "Political Islam: Revealing the Roots of Extremism." *Middle East News Online* (2002).

⁸ Anne Marie Baylouny, "Emotions, Poverty, or Politics: Misconceptions About Islamic Movements." *Strategic Insights* III, no. 1 (2004): 3.

⁹ Ibid.

network of clerics and followers, it has been fairly easy for Islamist movements to gain support.

However, these movements can either subsist within the political structure of a country, or can morph into a group that seeks to work outside the existing system to build its own system that can then be imposed on the people it seeks to govern. Democracy theory believes that participation in the formal political arena moderates political parties.¹⁰ Therefore, in a democracy, Islamist movements would theoretically compromise with other parts of society and government in order to realize their desired gains. Many Islamists believe that working within the system, especially a democracy, is the most effective vehicle for political participation. However, there are those who believe Islamists work through democracy simply as a tactic to gain power, at which point they can use the system to achieve their end – movement towards an Islamic state.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Esposito and Voll.

CHAPTER 3: POLITICS AND ISLAM IN TURKEY

Despite the explicit prohibition against religious inclinations becoming part of government functions in Turkey, there is a long history of Islamist and Islamist-leaning parties holding power. These governments were tolerated to differing degrees; however, every previous Islamist-leaning government in Turkey was ultimately removed from power by the military and the political party dissolved by the courts.

History of Islamist Parties

The first Islamist-leaning government was the Democrat Party of Adnan Menderes. Menderes, as prime minister, was more tolerant of expressions of Islam in Turkey than any of his predecessors. Turkey's first military coup d'état was against Menderes, who was removed from power by the army in 1960 and the Democrat Party dissolved.¹ Islamism faded into the background for the next ten years until Necmettin Erbakan entered the Turkish political scene. Over the next thirty years, Erbakan became the Islamist face of Turkish politics. His first Islamist-leaning party, the National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi, MNP) was elected to power in 1970. The MNP was a strong advocate for a conservative moral agenda, and also encouraged the reduction of economic ties with the West. In 1971, the military brought about its second coup, stripping the MNP of power and the party was disbanded for violating the principle of secularism. Erbakan returned in 1973 with the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi, MSP), another Islamist party. During the seventies, the MSP was actively

¹ Thomas Patrick Carroll, "Turkey's Justice and Development Party: A Model for Democratic Islam?" *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 6, no. 6/7 (2004): 23.

encouraged to participate in government as a practical counterweight to the radical left and took part in three coalition governments. However, the state of Turkish affairs was not positive in the late seventies and in 1980 the military stepped in again, declared martial law and the courts banned all political parties.²

Erbakan formed yet another political party with an Islamist agenda, the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi). It took several years for the party to gain popular support, but it became Erbakan's most politically active party. During the eighties the Welfare Party did not have much of an impact on Turkish politics. Initially, the party was banned from participating in elections and when finally allowed to participate, it did not exceed the constitutionally mandated threshold of ten percent of the vote needed to hold seats in parliament. However, through a grass-root, local approach that focused on good governance and solid values, the Welfare Party began to gain a foothold in Turkish politics. In 1991, the party received seventeen percent of the vote and sixty-two seats in parliament, followed by 158 seats in the 1995 elections, at which point Erbakan became the prime minister of Turkey in a coalition government.³

The Welfare Party was seen by the population as an alternative to the corrupt, weak and out-of-touch government regime of the late eighties. The Welfare Party's popularity came from "years of grass-roots political work, running virtually corruption-free local councils, and helping the poor, whose needs have not been met by secular

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 24.

governments."⁴ This approach eventually won the party popular support and they were elected into the government. However, Erbakan made strategic errors when he came into power in the nineties, as he made his Islamist agenda quite clear. In light of the opposition to the slightest overt introduction of religion into government among certain powerful entities in Turkey, this brought immediate attention to Erbakan and his Islamist government. Among his first actions as prime minister were visits to Libya and Iran, a proposal to form a Muslim economic bloc while opposing Turkey's European Union (EU) membership and openly encouraged women to veil themselves in public.⁵ This, and other less overt actions such as formally hosting an iftar dinner party during Ramadan, led to the familiar allegation of improper mixing of mosque and state, and like all other Islamist-leaning parties before it, the Welfare Party was removed from power and then shut down in the late nineties by the Constitutional Court.

Erbakan later formed several other Islamist parties, but his political value had significantly declined and his subsequent parties were inconsequential in Turkish politics. It was after the Welfare Party was shuttered that a few younger Erbakan followers became disillusioned with his parties and policies. This new generation was in favor of a more democratic and transparent party structure, as well as Turkey's integration with the West. Led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gul, in 2001 this new generation

⁴ Scott Peterson, "Struck Down in Turkey, Islam Coils," *The Christian Science Monitor* 90, no. 37 (1998): 6.

⁵ Carroll, 23.

broke away from Erbakan and formed a new political party, the Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (AKP).⁶

Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (AKP)

Led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi [AKP]) is the governing party in Turkey. It was first elected to power in 2002 and currently holds 341 seats in parliament.⁷

Rise To Power

It was a perfect storm of sorts that led to the overwhelming election of the AKP in 2002. The AKP had just broken away from Erbakan's more conservative Islamist party, there was a massive economic crisis taking place in Turkey, and it was the prevailing public view that the government was corrupt, ineffective and generally useless. It was in this climate the election was held and the AKP elected.⁸

In the November 2002 elections, the AKP received thirty-four percent of the vote and 363 of 550 seats in Parliament. Due to the constitutional threshold that mandates that a party must receive at least ten percent of the total votes in order to hold any parliament seats, there were several parties that received votes but did not pass the threshold and therefore could not take any seats in parliament. As a result, even with just 34 percent of the vote, the AKP occupied the majority of seats in parliament and was able to form a

⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁷ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, "Background Note: Turkey," U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3432.htm> (accessed March 24, 2011).

⁸ Carol Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Politics of Identity and Power," *Congressional Research Service*, August 13, 2010, 3.

single-party government.⁹ Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gul, the two partners that formed the AKP, led the party to victory. As the head of the party, Erdogan would normally have been elected prime minister by the parliament. However, he had been banned from holding political office and therefore Abdullah Gul became prime minister. Nevertheless, Gul continued to closely consult with Erdogan, who was widely seen as the mastermind behind the government. This perception was solidified when U.S. President George W. Bush invited Erdogan to the White House for informal discussions. Erdogan accepted, and followed his visit to the U.S. with stops in Europe, where he discussed Turkey's EU accession. He was told Turkey would proceed along the path to membership if it made significant progress in economic and political reform. Subsequent to these trips, the AKP-led parliament proposed a constitutional amendment that would lift the ban on Erdogan serving in public office. Since Erdogan's ban was the result of a violation of the principle of secularism, the Turkish military might have opposed the repeal of the ban, as the vanguard of secularism. However, it is believed the implicit U.S. and EU validation of Erdogan's stature in Turkish politics was the reason why the Turkish military did not oppose the ban repeal.¹⁰ The constitutional amendment was followed by a special election where Erdogan was elected to parliament, which was necessary for his ascension to prime minister. In March 2004, Erdogan became the prime minister of Turkey.

In light of Erdogan and Gul's previous affiliation with Erbakan, people were skeptical of Erdogan's AK party and its perhaps Islamist intentions. When asked about

⁹ "Anchors Aweigh: A Special Report on Turkey," *The Economist*, October 23, 2010, 11.

¹⁰ Carroll, 26.

the AKP and its religious affiliations, PM Erdogan compares the AKP to a European Christian Democratic party – meaning it is a party whose members and supporters tend to be religious, but the party itself does not incorporate religious views into their policy stances and governance.¹¹ In direct contrast to Erbakan’s self-proclaimed Islamist agendas, the AKP has pursued a more balanced approach to mosque and state. However, members of the AKP have also often used "fiery rhetoric -- alternately pro-Islamic, anti-Israel, national and populist -- to gain support among conservative and religious constituents."¹²

Whether it was as a result of skepticism over the party leaders’ previous affiliations with Islamist parties, or truly over its policies and actions, the AKP’s adherence to the principle of secularism has been challenged. In 2008, the Chief Prosecutor filed a suit in the Constitutional Court against the AKP alleging the party had violated the constitution in two ways. First, members of parliament passed a constitutional referendum that allowed the religious hijab, or headscarf, to be worn in public buildings and second, they elected Abdullah Gul, whose wife wears a headscarf, as president of Turkey. In July, the Constitutional Court voted six to five the AKP should not dissolved according to Article 69 of the constitution, one vote short of the seven votes needed to disband the party. Instead, as allowed by the constitution, the court cut the party’s state funding of \$58 million in half.¹³

¹¹ “Anchors Aweigh,” 4.

¹² Hugh Pope, "Pax Ottomana?" *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): 161.

¹³ Vincent Morelli, "European Union Enlargement: A Status Report on Turkey's Accession Negotiations," *Congressional Research Service* (2010), 6.

Personalities

In the AKP, personalities matter. There are three key personalities in the AKP government and each man holds a prominent position in the government. Recep Tayyip Erdogan is the current Prime Minister, Abdullah Gul is the current president and Ahmet Davutoglu is the current Foreign Minister.

One of the two founding members of the party, Prime Minister Erdogan is the force behind the AKP. His political career was launched when he was elected the mayor of Istanbul in 2004 as a member of Erbakan's Welfare Party. Erdogan gained a reputation for good administration of the largest city in Turkey. His government was efficient, competent and most importantly, not corrupt. Erdogan is a devout Muslim and in 1999, as part of a speech, he read a few lines of a well-known religious poem in public. Famous Turkish poet Ziya Gokalp wrote of Turkish nationalism, "the mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers,"¹⁴ and Erdogan used this prose. A legal case was brought against him, and for offending the constitutional principle of secularism, Mr. Erdogan was jailed and subsequently banned from serving in public office.¹⁵

Erdogan is not afraid to admit he is a religious man. However, he claims religion is a personal issue and something he now keeps private. "Before anything else, I'm a Muslim ... I have a responsibility to God, who created me, and I try to fulfill that

¹⁴ Carroll, 24.

¹⁵ "Anchors Aweigh," 11.

responsibility, but I try now very much to keep this away from my political life"¹⁶

Erdogan asserts he believes in the Western definition of secularism, where religion and state are separated, but where religion is not subordinate to the state. As an example, Erdogan points to his daughters who both attended the University of Indiana, where they were free to wear their headscarves, though they could not have done the same at a public university in Turkey.¹⁷ Though Erdogan's reputation as an efficient and competent administrator stands, he is also known for his authoritarian ways and dislikes opposition and hates being criticized. "He has a reputation for keeping lists and remembering the names of his enemies, especially in the media - and of harassing them."¹⁸

President Gul is an economist by training and after completing his studies in Turkey studied in England. He then worked in Saudi Arabia at the Islamic Development Bank for eight years before returning to Turkey and joining Erbakan's Welfare Party. He was elected to parliament in 1991 and held various party positions, while also serving as a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.¹⁹ When the AKP was elected to power in 2002, Gul was appointed prime minister, but stepped down when Erdogan's ban from serving in public office was overturned. He became the foreign minister until he assumed the presidency in 2007. Gul and his wife are both devout Muslims and Gul's wife is the only Turkish first lady to ever wear a headscarf; however,

¹⁶ Carroll, 22.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Anchors Aweigh," 11.

¹⁹ "Abdullah Gul - President, Republic of Turkey," Today (SETimes.com), http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/infoBios/setimes/resource_centre/bios/gul_abdullah (accessed April 4, 2011).

Mr. Gul claims he has cut his ties to political Islam.²⁰ Mr. Gul's presidential bid was controversial due to his religious devotion. Yet Mr. Gul pledged his commitment to secularism. "The constitution will be my guide. The Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular and social state, governed by the rule of law. I will always be determined and resolved to advocate, without discrimination, each of these principles and to further strengthen them at every opportunity."²¹ As president, Gul has said the AKP has no intention of forcing Islamic dress, education or law on the country, but rather desires an increase in toleration and mutual respect for both secularism and Islamic traditions. He has said he wants a Turkey where the "Islamic headscarf and the miniskirt walk ... hand in hand."²²

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has not always been a diplomat. Although not a founding member of the AKP, has worked in some capacity with the party since its inception. Prior to assuming the position as a foreign policy advisor to the AKP, he wrote a 600-plus page book called "Strategic Depth" in which he describes international relations theory as it applies to Turkey. The book also attempts to connect Turkey's political past and present, especially as regards its relations with countries formerly part of the Ottoman Empire.²³ He states Turkey should "freely follow policies of its own

²⁰ "BBC NEWS - Europe - Profile: Abdullah Gul," BBC News – Home, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6595511.stm> (accessed April 4, 2011).

²¹ Simsek Ayhan, "Abdullah Gul: The Man Who Would be Turkey's President. 20.08.2007," Home - Deutsche Welle, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,2745136,00.html> (accessed April 4, 2011).

²² Peterson, 6.

²³ James Traub, "Turkey's Rules," *New York Times Magazine*, January 23, 2011, 34.

making instead of following ones that extend 'global designs.'"²⁴ Due in part to this intellectualization of Turkey and what Davutoglu argues is the extraordinary status Turkey should and will enjoy because of its unique history and geographic location, he is widely regarded as the champion of a greater Turkey. These beliefs led him to the AKP and the party has fully embraced his views and continues to allow Davutoglu to further his strategic vision for Turkey. However, a potential downside to Davutoglu is his tendency to see his (and Turkey's) role in the world as perhaps more important than it is.²⁵

²⁴ Carol Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and U.S. Views," *Congressional Research Service*, November 28, 2010, 2.

²⁵ Traub, 34.

CHAPTER 4: TURKEY'S DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES

The AKP has been heavily criticized and accused of anti-secular activity in large part due to policy decisions and courses of action they have pursued while in power. Criticism of their domestic policy has been epitomized in the headscarf issue and scrutinized in constitutional reforms the AKP has sought, and in some cases, secured. However, it is Turkey's foreign policy that has caught the attention of the West and led to allegations that Turkey is and will continue to pursue a close association with the Islamic East at the expense of their relationship with the democratic West – and therefore the West has “lost” Turkey.

Domestic Policy

Headscarfs

One of the most controversial domestic policies the AKP has sought to change is the current ban on wearing the hijab, the headscarf worn by religious women, in public institutions in Turkey. The headscarf ban has effectively been a bar against adherent religious females, precluding everything from receiving an education in public universities to working in the public sector. The AKP had always supported lifting the ban but was hesitant to take on the issue directly, knowing doing so would mobilize secular opponents. However, two events brought the issue to a head.

In 2007, the term of Turkish president Ahmet Sezer ended and Prime Minister Erdogan announced Mr. Gul was his choice for the position.¹ Mr. Gul's wife wears a

¹ “Anchors Aweigh: A Special Report on Turkey,” *The Economist*, October 23, 2010, 11.

headscarf and this was viewed as an affront to the separation of mosque and state as opponents believed his wife's headscarf was symbolic of Mr. Gul's conservative tendencies and indicative of his inclinations to improperly bring Islam into government. The Turkish army reacted quickly in its self-proclaimed role of guarantor of the secular nature of Turkey. In what has been termed an "e-coup", the army posted a message on its website which stated it would step in to prevent the appointment of a president whose wife wore a headscarf.² Despite the army's warning, the parliament elected Mr. Gul president. Subsequently, on unclear grounds, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling that invalidated the parliamentary vote. Erdogan then called for an early election. In the special election, the AKP won forty-seven percent of the vote, and using its landslide victory and new majority in parliament as a mandate to install the party-endorsed candidate, the AKP succeeded in electing Mr. Gul president.³

Nevertheless, the AKP did not immediately seek to overturn the ban itself. This changed in early 2008 when Erdogan said the current ban on wearing the headscarf in public institutions was "a serious problem in terms of freedom."⁴ The next month, with an overwhelming majority vote of 411 to 139, Turkey's parliament passed two constitutional amendments that lifted the headscarf ban, amendments that were promptly ratified by President Gul. The same month, opposition parties requested the Constitutional Court review and overturn the amendments based on the violation of the

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Carol Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Politics of Identity and Power," *Congressional Research Service*, August 13, 2010, 4.

principle of secularism. Within months the Constitutional Court ruled the amendments violated the constitution and annulled them in a non-appealable decision.⁵

Constitutional Reforms

The AKP has also attempted to amend the constitution in ways not overtly related to religion. The latest changes to the constitution sponsored by the AKP included collective bargaining rights for civil servants, an increase in the number of supreme court judges, and the ability for the government to bring to trial any soldier.⁶ These reforms are aimed at making changes necessary to continue along a path to EU membership. Moreover, though none of these amendments are directly related to religion, many people felt some of these changes would be used to help send Turkey down a more religious path, especially the changes in the way judges are appointed and the increased civilian control of the military.⁷ The AKP was also criticized for the way the amendment process was handled. The amendments were brought to parliament and passed with 336 votes, more than the 330 needed to authorize a referendum on the proposal, but short of the two-thirds majority (367) needed to change the constitution without a referendum.⁸ Rather than work to reach a consensus among political parties, the AKP pushed the proposed reforms to a public referendum, causing further distrust over the intentions behind the constitutional changes. However, in the AKP's favor, the constitutional amendments

⁵ "Special Report: Islam, Secularism and the Battle for Turkey's Future," STRATFOR – Global Intelligence, <http://www.stratfor.com> (accessed October 25, 2010).

⁶ Ariel Cohen, Turkey's Referendum: A Looming Challenge to U.S. Interests?, 1-2.

⁷ Sinan Ulgen, "Turkish Politics and the Fading Magic of EU Enlargement," *Centre for European Reform*, September 2010, 3.

⁸ "Special Report: Islam, Secularism and the Battle for Turkey's Future."

were vetted at the outset by the Constitutional Court and in the referendum Turkish citizens voted fifty-eight percent to forty-two percent to adopt them.⁹

Foreign Policy and External Relations

As we leave behind the first decade of the 21st century, Turkey has been able to formulate a foreign-policy vision based on a better understanding of the realities of the new century, even as it acts in accordance with its historical role and geographical position. In this sense, Turkey's orientation and strategic alliance with the West remains perfectly compatible with Turkey's involvement in, among other, Iraq, Iran, the Caucasus, the Middle East peace process, and Afghanistan.¹⁰

- Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu

One of the most telling lens through which the change in the political atmosphere of Turkey can be viewed is through its foreign policy and who it is embracing as allies and partners. When he addressed the Turkish Grand National Assembly in April 2009 President Obama delineated what he saw as the common interests of the U.S. and Turkey in the Middle East. However, Turkey's proximity and self-interest in the region has given it a different perspective on its role in the region. Turkey has sought to become a strong regional player and is basing its foreign policy on Davutoglu's principle of "zero problems with neighbors."

Background

Turkey has a very large foreign presence, not only in the region but in the world – writ-large. Turkey continues to expand its presence, recently opening fifteen new

⁹ Ulgen, 3.

¹⁰ Ahmet Davutoglu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy* (2010), http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/20/turkeys_zero_problems_foreign_policy (accessed November 11, 2010).

embassies in Africa and two in Latin America.¹¹ Turkey now has 106 embassies and seventy consulates throughout the world and its development agency, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency, distributed about \$1.5 billion of aid to ninety-eight countries in 2009.¹²

Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu promulgated his vision for Turkey's foreign policy in a 2010 Foreign Policy article called "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy."¹³ In this article, FM Davutoglu explains that solving the complex issues of today's world needs international involvement, but there is no comprehensive, working mechanism to make that happen. Therefore, he believes Turkey must play a bigger role in promoting international security and prosperity and "the new dynamics of Turkish foreign policy ensure that Turkey can act with the vision, determination, and confidence that the historical moment demands."¹⁴ Davutoglu states the security problems in Turkey's neighborhood were the impetus for its desire to harmonize the environment. This harmonization effort is coming at a cost as Davutoglu concedes it has "admittedly ... created tensions between its [Turkey's] existing strategic alliances and its emerging regional responsibilities."¹⁵

His article laid out a clear and comprehensive vision for Turkey's foreign policy. According to Davutoglu, there are five operational principles that drive Turkey's foreign

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Heather Grabbe and Sinan Ulgen, "The Way Forward for Turkey and the EU: A Strategic Dialogue on Foreign Policy," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, December 2010, 4.

¹³ Davutoglu.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

policy: a balance between security and democracy; zero problems towards neighbors; proactive and pre-emptive peace diplomacy; multi-dimensional foreign policy; and, rhythmic diplomacy. Zero problems with neighbors leads Davutoglu to talk about achieving "maximum cooperation" with its neighbors, highlighting strategic council meetings with Iraq, Syria, Greece and Russia while seeking to build the same relationships with Bulgaria, Azerbaijan and Ukraine and the abolishment of visa requirements with Syria, Tajikistan, Albania, Lebanon, Jordan, Libya and Russia.¹⁶

Pre-emptive and proactive diplomacy encompasses Turkey's mediation efforts between Israel and Syria, Sunnis and Shias in Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, Serbia and Bosnia, Afghanistan and Pakistan and reconstruction in Darfur and Somalia. As for multi-dimensional foreign policy Davutoglu says Turkey's relations with other nations "aim to be complementary, not in competition. This means good relations with Russia are not an alternative to relations with the EU. Nor is the model partnership with the United States a rival partnership against Russia."¹⁷

Rhythmic diplomacy is how Davutoglu terms Turkey's goal to take a more active role in international relations, specifically by becoming more involved in international organizations. To demonstrate its new resolve, he highlights becoming a non-permanent member on the United Nations Security Council, chairmanship of the South-East European Cooperation Process, membership in the G-20, observer status in the African Union, a strategic dialogue mechanism with the Gulf Cooperation Council and

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

participation in the Arab League. "Today, Turkey has a great deal of say in the international arena. More importantly, there is a critical group of countries that lends a careful ear to Turkey's stance on a myriad of regional and international issues. At this point, the world expects great things from Turkey, and we are fully aware of our responsibility to carry out a careful foreign policy."¹⁸ Beyond what FM Davutoglu highlighted in his article, since 2002, in expanding its rhythmic diplomacy Turkey has provided the secretary-general of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), appointed a Secretary-General of the Organization for Security Cooperation and Development (OECD), an Assistant Secretary-General of NATO, and sought seats on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank executive boards.¹⁹

European Union

The European Union and NATO are the main fixtures and the main elements of continuity in Turkish foreign policy. Turkey has achieved more within these alliances during the past seven years under the AK Party government than it did in the previous 40 years.²⁰

- Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu

The key often used to gauge where Turkey believes its future and interests lie is its stated position and actions towards becoming a member of the EU. In 1963 Turkey was the second country to sign an association agreement with the European Economic Community, the precursor organization to the European Union. In order to be accepted in the EU, a candidate country must meet the 80,000 plus pages of rules and regulations

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Carol Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and U.S. Views," *Congressional Research Service*, November 28, 2010, 1.

²⁰ Davutoglu.

known as the *acquis communautaire*. This document is divided into thirty-five chapters, and each chapter can only be opened and subsequently closed with the approval of all member states and any chapter closed can be reopened. When all thirty-five chapters are closed, a draft accession treaty can be drawn up based on the chapters and that document is submitted first to the European Council for approval and then to the European Parliament for assent.²¹ Turkey applied for full membership in 1987, but was deferred on the grounds the EU was not considering enlargement at that time. A Customs Union agreement was signed between Turkey and the EU in 1995, taking effect in 1996 and the EU finally accepted Turkey as a candidate for membership in 1999.²² In 2001, the EU actually adopted an Accession Partnership with Turkey that provided the framework through which Turkey needed to prioritize and implement European standards.²³ At that point, Turkey began seriously working on necessary political and economic changes in the country to meet the stringent requirements of the EU. The AKP took over the government in 2002 and continued the process of reforms, fully embracing the idea of acceding to the EU. In 2004, the European Commission decided Turkey had fulfilled the political aspects of the accession requirements and individual EU governments voted unanimously to allow Turkey to start membership negotiations in 2005.

However, Turkey's membership negotiations have not gone smoothly from the start, with various EU nations blocking the opening of chapters of the *acquis communautaire*. Turkey is especially disillusioned with the EU over the issue of Cyprus.

²¹ Vincent Morelli, "European Union Enlargement: A Status Report on Turkey's Accession Negotiations," *Congressional Research Service* (2010), 1.

²² Ulgen, 2.

²³ Morelli, 2.

When the Annan compromise plan that would have fully united the Turkish and Greek parts of Cyprus went to a vote of the people of Cyprus, Turkey encouraged the Turkish-Cypriot side to vote in favor of the plan. The Turkish side did, overwhelmingly approving the plan with sixty-five percent voting in favor, while the Greek-Cypriot south voted overwhelming against the plan, with seventy-six percent voting against the plan. This was in large part because the EU had made an unconditional promise to admit Cyprus to the EU, regardless of the outcome of the vote on the unification plan. In keeping with that promise, in 2004 the EU admitted the Greek Cypriots as an EU member representing the entire island, completely disenfranchising the Turkish-Cypriot north.²⁴

In 2005, the EU imposed sanctions on Turkey over its refusal to recognize and open its ports to Greek-Cypriot trading and Cyprus, as an EU member, has since blocked EU-Turkey discussions and prevented the opening of various chapters of accession negotiations. Further, in 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy was elected president of France and in this position he has openly advocated granting Turkey something other than full membership in the EU. German chancellor Angela Merkel agrees, and together the two leaders came up with the idea of a "privileged partnership" for Turkey.²⁵ Between Sarkozy, Merkel and Cyprus, 17 chapters of the EU process have been blocked. Of the remaining available chapters Turkey has already opened thirteen, leaving relatively little room for further negotiations until more of the blocked chapters can be opened. The idea of being second class citizens in the EU does not resonate with the Turkish public, and

²⁴ Tarik Oguzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?" *Turkish Studies* 9, no. 1 (2008), 12.

²⁵ Ulgen, 2.

"many Turks started to regard the EU as a antagonistic entity rather than an ally and a future partner."²⁶

Membership notwithstanding, the EU and Turkey are partners in many respects, most often informally or at the working-level. The EU has noted Turkey has consulted with the EU on foreign policy issues and tends to seek alignment with EU positions. However, the EU conclusions on Turkey subtly chastise Turkey's foreign policy by stating although Turkey is doing well in the field of external relations, further work remains, "in particular on the general system of preferences with regard to its geographical coverage."²⁷ The EU has taken care to point out that just because a chapter is not officially open does not mean the EU will not support reforms and advances in that area. Turkey received 654 million Euros in pre-accession aid in 2010 and the European Commission continues to highlight Turkey's achievements in areas that are not officially open for negotiations.²⁸ Further, Turkey makes sizeable contributions to EU military missions. Turkey contributed to EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions CONCORDIA and PROXIMA in Macedonia, EU Police Mission (EUPOL) in Kinshasa and provided airlift to EU Military Force (EUFOR) in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is currently the largest non-EU participant in CSDP missions, providing the second largest contribution of military personnel to the EUFOR mission ALTHEA in

²⁶ Ibid., 3.

²⁷ *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010 - 2011: Conclusions on Turkey*, January 1, 2011.

²⁸ Katinka Barysch, "Turkey and the EU: Can stalemate be avoided?" *Centre for European Reform*, December 2010, 4.

Bosnia, as well as a significant contribution to the EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) in Kosovo.²⁹

Despite these positive interactions, the EU is losing popular support in Turkey. In 2004, seventy-three percent of Turks supported joining the EU, but that number plummeted to merely thirty-eight percent in 2010. Thirteen percent of Turks said the EU should be Turkey's primary international partner while twenty percent thought Turkey should start working more closely with Middle Eastern countries.³⁰ Turkish President Gul highlighted this growing apathy when he said, "perhaps the Turkish public will say 'let's not become a member'; despite having successfully concluded negotiations."³¹

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

The United States believes that Turkey's membership in NATO has demonstrated that Turkey can interact constructively with a organization dominated by most of the same European countries that belong to the EU and play a positive role in foreign policy matters that impact Europe, whether it is the Europe of the EU or the Europe of NATO.³²

Turkey is one of the oldest members of NATO, having been invited to join in 1952. It is the only Muslim country in the partnership. Turkey maintains its membership in this alliance and continues to make significant contributions to the organization and its missions. Turkey currently commands the Regional Command of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul and has almost 1800 troops in country, though they

²⁹ Grabbe and Ulgen, 9.

³⁰ Barysch, 5.

³¹ Morelli, 14.

³² Ibid., 13.

cannot be used in combat missions.³³ Since 2006, Turkey has also provided a civilian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Wardak province and is establishing another PRT in Jowzjan province that will work together with Swedish forces. In 2008, Turkey provided 755 tons of humanitarian food assistance in Afghanistan and, in 2009, contributed \$96.4 million to Afghanistan, built thirty-four schools, six clinics and a hospital: a considerable contribution to one of NATO's highest priority missions.³⁴

Despite Turkey's constructive contributions and seemingly solid support for the alliance, experts predicted there would be a rift between Turkey and other NATO members at the NATO summit in Lisbon in November 2010 because of Turkey's new alliances with its neighbors. However, this rift did not occur and instead NATO at least implicitly embraced Turkey's regional policies in the new NATO Strategic Concept. The three potentially divisive issues were: 1) Turkey did not want the installation of anti-ballistic missile defense (ABMD) systems on its territory if a specific country, namely Iran, was identified as the threat; 2) the ABMD installation was an issue if NATO did not specifically state the defense shield was to protect the entirety of NATO-member territory; and 3) Turkey was worried about any statements made or agreements struck between NATO and the European Defence Agency (EDA). This third point was important to Turkey as it did not want to be left out of any agreements between the two entities because it is not an EU member state.

³³ Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and U.S. Views," 37.

³⁴ Ibid., 38.

All of Turkey's concerns were addressed, either before or during the summit. First, NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated no country would be named as a threat against which ABMD would be positioned in Europe, and the final Strategic Concept statement reaffirmed this. Article 19 of the Strategic Concept states NATO will "develop the capability to defend our populations and territories against ballistic missile attack as a core element of our collective defence, which contributes to the indivisible security of the Alliance."³⁵ Further, NATO affirmed any anti-ballistic missile defense system would be intended to protect all NATO countries, under the principle of indivisible allied security.³⁶ Though no agreement has been reached between Turkey and NATO on the placement of ABMD systems on Turkish territory, Turkey's underlying concerns were addressed.

Finally, Article 32 of the Strategic Concept states "non-EU Allies make a significant contribution to these [the EU's capacities to address common security challenges] efforts. For the strategic partnership between NATO and the EU, their fullest involvement in these efforts is essential."³⁷ This satisfied the Turkish desire to affirm its contributions to the EU Common Security and Defence Policy and not allow Turkey to be excluded from NATO activities designed for European (and by definition, EU) countries. President Gul declared he was fully satisfied with the results of the summit and

³⁵ Strategic Concept For the Defence and Security of The Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, November 2010.

³⁶ *OxResearch Daily Brief Service*, "Turkey/NATO: Alliance accepts Ankara's regional policy," November 23, 2010.

³⁷ Strategic Concept For the Defence and Security of NATO.

Turkey appears to see a future within NATO.³⁸ "Turkey has become more assertive in pursuing its own national interests, but its belief that these can be accommodated within the alliance, which remains the priority, has now been endorsed by NATO as a whole."³⁹

United States

The United States and Turkey have not always agreed on every issue, and that's to be expected -- no two nations do. But we have stood together through many challenges over the last 60 years. And because of the strength of our alliance and the endurance of our friendship, both America and Turkey are stronger and the world is more secure.⁴⁰

- President Barack Obama

The U.S. and Turkey have been allies and strategic partners for the past fifty years, since the U.S. adopted the Truman Doctrine. In March 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Turkey and used it as a positive example of Islam and democracy working hand-in-hand. "And Turkey, as everyone knows, is a model democracy with a secular constitution that shows Islam can coexist with both."⁴¹ President Obama visited Turkey shortly thereafter, during his first overseas trip, and he reaffirmed the alliance and friendship between the two countries.⁴² However, relations with the U.S. have changed over the past 50 years. The bilateral relationship is no longer the alliance of the Cold War, nor the strategic partnership that followed. Some analysts are concerned Turkey may now consider the U.S. both an ally and a potential security threat, based on U.S.

³⁸ *OxResearch Daily Brief Service*, "Alliance accepts Ankara's regional policy."

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ "Remarks By President Obama To The Turkish Parliament," The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-turkish-parliament> (accessed March 24, 2011).

⁴¹ "Interview With Mehmet Ali Birand of Kanal D TV," U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/03/120125.htm> (accessed April 2, 2011).

⁴² "Remarks By President Obama To The Turkish Parliament."

actions in the Middle East that have a potentially negative impact on the internal national security interests of Turkey.⁴³

The U.S. built the Incirlik Air Base in Turkey in 1954 and used it extensively during the height of the Cold War. The base is maintained under a bilateral defense cooperation agreement and is an important European hub for the United States. Seventy-four percent of all air cargo into Iraq transits Incirlik and the U.S. allegedly stores nuclear weapons at the base.⁴⁴ Initially, the U.S. provided foreign assistance on a low key quid-pro-quo basis, but has not done so since the early nineties. Current United States foreign assistance to Turkey is negligible and is mostly in military and law enforcement funds.⁴⁵

After the first Gulf war, Turkey authorized the use of Turkish air space for U.S. and British planes to enforce a no-fly zone over northern Iraq in Operations PROVIDE COMFORT/NORTHERN WATCH.⁴⁶ However, when the U.S. approached Turkey for permission to use its territory to open a northern front for the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Turkey's parliament refused. However, Turkey still allowed the use of Turkish air space for the invasion.⁴⁷ The refusal to authorize the use of Turkish ground territory greatly upset the U.S., and seems to have started an era of suspicion towards the current Turkish administration. However, it was not the Turkish leadership (president and prime minister) that said no to the U.S. request. The AKP leadership supported the request and

⁴³ Oguzlu, 4.

⁴⁴ Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and U.S. Views," 50.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁷ Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Politics of Identity and Power," 25.

attempted to influence the Turkish parliament to vote in favor. However, the Turkish parliament, reflecting the feelings of the Turkish people, did not agree, and voted no.⁴⁸

Israel

The heart of U.S. concern towards Turkish foreign policy is the marked change in its relationship with Israel. In 1948, Turkey was the first Muslim country to recognize Israel.⁴⁹ Since that time, Israel and Turkey have had a discreet and mutually beneficial relationship and it had become an important component to regional stability for both countries, though there have been ups and downs. Turkey recalled its ambassador in 1956 over the Suez crisis, though the embassy remained open with only lower-level diplomats working. In 1991, an ambassador from Turkey was again sent to Israel, marking a resurgence in the relationship between the two countries.⁵⁰ This resumption of full diplomatic ties was due in part to the fact that in the early nineties, both Turkey and Israel were pro-Western in their orientation and were looking for partners that could be counterweights to the growing security threats posed by Iraq, Iran and Syria. Further, Israel was an attractive option for Turkey as it had a special relationship with the U.S., and also had military technology Turkey did not have and could not get from the West. After Turkey sent an ambassador in the early nineties, Israel and Turkey signed a number of bilateral military agreements and the two countries began holding yearly joint military exercises. In fact, the AKP government signed more official agreements with Israel than

⁴⁸ Steven A. Cook, "Turkey's Cooling Ties with U.S., Israel," *Council on Foreign Relations*, July 13, 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/turkey/turkeys-cooling-ties-us-israel/p22624> (accessed December 1, 2010).

⁴⁹ Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and U.S. Views," 10.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

any other Turkish government had.⁵¹ The relationship blossomed and "for Jerusalem, the intimacy between the two governments was second only to U.S.-Israel relations."⁵² Turkey mediated four rounds of indirect Israeli peace talks with Syria in 2008.⁵³ Turkey was Israel's closest Muslim ally, and trade between the two countries totaled more than \$2.5 billion in 2009, and was on the rise in 2010.⁵⁴

The current rift began with Israel's Operation CAST LEAD, Israel's attack on Gaza from late 2008 through early 2009. Shortly before Israel launched the attack, then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had been visiting Turkey and at no time during that visit did he advise his Turkish allies that Israel would be taking action against Gaza. Prime Minister Erdogan took this as a personal slight.⁵⁵ His animosity over the incident became very public about a month later when Turkish and Israeli leaders were attending the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Erdogan and Israeli President Shimon Peres were both on a panel discussion of the Gaza offensive and after having already spoken at length on the suffering of the Palestinian people, Erdogan later wanted to respond to President Peres' comments on Israel's actions. The moderator of the discussion tried to end the session, but Erdogan persisted and shortly before abruptly

⁵¹ Hugh Pope, "Pax Ottomana?" *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): 168.

⁵² Efraim Inbar, "The Deterioration in Israeli-Turkish Relations and its International Ramifications." *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 89 (2011), 2-3.

⁵³ Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and U.S. Views," 11.

⁵⁴ *OxResearch Daily Brief Service*, "Turkey/Israel: Diplomats will try to overcome politics," December 21, 2010.

⁵⁵ Cook.

leaving the stage told President Peres, "When it comes to killing, you knew well how to kill."⁵⁶

On 31 May 2010 when Israeli commandos boarded the Turkish flagged but privately-sponsored Mavi Marmara, a ship with humanitarian supplies bound for Gaza. The ship was part of a flotilla with a stated intent to break the Israeli-imposed blockade of Gaza. Israel requested the flotilla to turn back, but the flotilla refused. Israeli commandos then aggressively boarded the ships in international waters. On the Mavi Marmara, eight Turks and one American of Turkish descent were killed in the incident. Though the ship was not sponsored by the Turkish government, the outrage of Turkish citizens over the incident prompted government officials to become involved. The Turkish government publicly voiced their displeasure over the actions of the Israeli soldiers, and Turkey recalled its ambassador from Israel. As this issue simmered, deadly forest fires broke out in Israel and Turkey was the first country to respond to Israel's call for help. Turkey sent two firefighting aircraft to assist and this led to a tangible easing of tensions between the two countries. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu visited the Turkish planes at the airport in Israel and stated he was certain Turkey's assistance would "be a gateway to improving relations between the two countries."⁵⁷

However, before the goodwill from these actions had time to foment and reverse the negative trends in the relationship, Israel publicly released their report on the Gaza-

⁵⁶ Katrin Bennhold, "Leaders of Turkey and Israel Clash at Davos Panel," *The New York Times*, January 30, 2009.

⁵⁷ "Carmel Mountain Fires and Turkish-Israeli Relations," STRATFOR - Global Intelligence, <http://www.stratfor.com> (accessed December 6, 2010).

flotilla incident stating its soldiers had "acted professionally and in a measured manner."⁵⁸ In response, Turkish President Gul stated Israel's report was not "worth the paper it is printed on - it has no credibility, legitimacy or plausibility" and released the previously private Turkish report on the incident. In direct contrast to the Israeli report, the Turkish report found that the Israeli soldiers had acted recklessly and in a pre-meditated manner, with at least one of the dead being shot between the eyes with the use of a laser-mounted sight on an automatic weapon. Further, Turkey's report detailed the efforts of Israel to destroy any evidence of wrongdoing by holding the ships for sixty-six days. Upon their return, investigators found the ships had been "scrubbed down thoroughly, blood stains completely washed off, bullet holes painted over ..." and all other evidence of the nature of the attack destroyed or confiscated.⁵⁹

The Muslim world

Turkey's move away from Israel has coincided with Turkey reaching out to its Islamic neighbors. PM Erdogan is becoming increasingly more popular in the Arab world, but not necessarily for the right reasons. "it is not because he is promoting a synthesis of democracy, modernity and Islam, but because he is loudly bashing Israel over its occupation and praising Hamas"⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Scott Peterson, "Turkey releases report on flotilla incident, accusing Israel," *The Christian Science Monitor (Boston)*, January 25, 2011.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Thomas L. Friedman, "Letter From Istanbul," *The New York Times*, June 15, 2010.

Yemen, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Hamas & Hezbollah

As part of its outreach policy, Turkey has created a visa-free zone with Jordan, Lebanon and Syria and is moving towards a free-trade zone with these partners as well.⁶¹ This led to an increase in tourists from Middle Eastern countries, with numbers rising sixteen percent in 2008 and an additional twenty-two percent in 2009.⁶² Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Turkey have formed a Senior Strategic Cooperation Council, which is a formalized mechanism through which they conduct regular meetings of senior officials meant to facilitate friendly relations and business with each other.⁶³

President Gul has traveled to Yemen in order to promote cooperation between the two countries. Sudanese president Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who has been charged by the International Criminal Court (ICC) with war crimes and crimes against humanity, visited Turkey twice in 2008.⁶⁴ However, since Turkey is not a signatory to the ICC, it was not obligated to take any action against President al-Bashir.⁶⁵ In fact, PM Erdogan said of Bashir, "It's not possible for a Muslim to commit genocide."⁶⁶ In early 2004, President Bashar Assad of Syria visited Turkey, the first Syrian president ever to do so. PM Erdogan likewise went to Damascus and the two countries signed a free-trade agreement during the visit. In 2009, Syria and Turkey held a joint military exercise and Turkey has stated they intend to send military personnel to help train the Syrian military.

⁶¹ James Traub, "Turkey's Rules," *New York Times Magazine*, January 23, 2011, 35.

⁶² Pope, 166.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Inbar, 6.

⁶⁵ "ICC - The States Parties to the Rome Statute," ICC, <http://www.icc-cpi.int/Menu/ASP/states+parties/> (accessed April 24, 2011).

⁶⁶ Friedman, "Letter From Istanbul."

When Palestinian National Authority President Moumoud Abbas was visiting Turkey, Turkish President Abdullah Gul called for the immediate recognition of a Palestinian nation.⁶⁷ Turkey engaged Hamas after it was elected to power in the Palestinian territories in 2006. Erdogan continues to aggravate the U.S. by saying Hamas is a "democratically-elected political organization, and not terrorist group."⁶⁸ According to Turkey, not only is Hamas a legitimately elected government, but while engaging with Hamas, Turkey has implored it to recognize Israel, end terrorist attacks, seek a valid two party solution to the Israel-Palestinian issue and honor the agreements signed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.⁶⁹ Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has also been invited by Turkey to visit.⁷⁰ Many of these personalities are leaders that the West has sought to isolate, but in part because these leaders reside in Turkey's neighborhood, Turkey prefers instead to engage them.

Iran

Turkey's new friendship with Iran is particularly unsettling for the United States. Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited Turkey in 2008 and Turkish officials reached out to congratulate him on his reelection, despite allegations of fraud during the election and the ensuing protests that the Iranian people held over the vote.⁷¹ Prime Minister Erdogan said of Ahmadinejad, "there is no doubt he is our friend ... as a friend,

⁶⁷ *OxResearch Daily Brief Service*, "Diplomats will try to overcome politics."

⁶⁸ Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Politics of Identity and Power," 26-27.

⁶⁹ Oguzlu, 14.

⁷⁰ Inbar, 7.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

so far we have good relations and have no difficulty at all."⁷² PM Erdogan visited Iran in October 2009 and the two countries agreed to work together on a \$2 billion joint venture to establish a crude oil refinery in northern Iran.

Questions about Turkey's allegiance came when Turkey voted against a U.S. backed resolution to impose tougher sanctions on the Iranian government. At the 2010 nuclear summit, PM Erdogan and Brazilian President Luis Inacio Lula de Silva approached President Obama and proposed a plan wherein they would try to work with Iran to have it surrender some of its enriched uranium. Foreign Minister Davutoglu worked for several months on this issue, traveling to Tehran seven times in just two months. Tehran finally agreed to a deal, and on 16 May 2010, Iran, Turkey and Brazil signed a "swap agreement" where Iran would send some of its low-enriched uranium to Turkey for safeguarding in exchange for high-enriched uranium that could fuel an Iranian research reactor. Turkish officials felt they had at least the implicit support of the U.S. in pursuing this agreement, and claim they kept U.S. officials informed on the negotiations.⁷³ However, during the uranium negotiations the U.S. finally persuaded Russia and China to agree to impose tougher sanctions on Iran in the UN Security Council. Therefore, the U.S. rejected the deal brokered by Turkey and Brazil and sought a Security Council resolution imposing tougher sanctions. Subsequently, in June 2010, as temporary members of the UN Security Council, Turkey and Brazil both voted against the resolution authorizing the sanctions against Iran, provoking U.S. and European resentment against the two countries as they appeared to be parting ways with the West.

⁷² Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and U.S. Views," 18.

⁷³ Inbar, 8.

Turkey says that President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad intended to negate the deal it had just brokered if Turkey and Brazil did not vote against the resolution, and therefore, Turkey says it was "voting for continued diplomacy, not for Iran or against the United States and the West."⁷⁴ PM Erdogan has repeatedly stated "the pursuit of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes is the legitimate right of all world countries, including Iran," a statement echoed by other AKP leaders.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Traub, "Turkey's Rules," 50, 54.

⁷⁵ Inbar, 9.

CHAPTER 5: HISTORIC ISLAMIC REVOLUTIONS

Within the last fifty years, two Islamic revolutions have taken place, in Iran and Afghanistan. The two revolutions were quite different in the way they were conducted and in the resulting governing structure, but had striking similarities in the reasons behind the revolutions.

Iran

In 1979, Iran experienced a revolution that led to the installation of the ultra-conservative Islamic government still in power today. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah (or king), had been in power for almost thirty years at the time of the revolution, after succeeding his father as the ruler of Iran. From the Cold War until the revolution, Iran was a staunch ally of the U.S. In 1977, U.S. President Jimmy Carter went to Tehran and praised the Shah and his country as "an island of stability" in the Middle East.¹

Just one year later in January 1978, students in Qom, a holy city for Shiite Muslims, gathered in the streets in protest against the Shah, his policies and the reign of his family. Police loyal to the Shah fired on the protestors, killing twenty people. These killings ignited waves of protests throughout Iran and in an attempt to maintain power, the Shah responded by imposing martial law and banning all protests. However, the people defied his decrees and continued to gather in the streets of Tehran. Ultimately, an estimated two million people assembled to protest the government and both its unwillingness to address the root causes of the discontent and the government's

¹ Peter Edidin, "1979: Iranian Revolution," *New York Times Upfront*, April 6, 2009, 25.

increasingly violent methods of suppressing the public protests.² The Shiite Muslim clergy rallied the opposition to the Shah, led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Khomeini was a conservative Shiite scholar and cleric, who after having worked for years to overthrow the Shah, was forced to live in exile in France. Khomeini was virulently anti-American and viewed both the Shah's alliance with the U.S. and the reforms he was implementing as contradictory to the tenets of Islam.

Demonstrations and strikes in Iran crippled the country for the next year, and on 16 January 1979, the Shah fled Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Tehran and Iranians welcomed him home as a hero. Though some more moderate members of the opposition attempted to create a parliamentary democracy in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini seized the momentum and power. He declared the establishment of "God's government" an Islamic regime headed by the Council of Guardians, a small group of clerics who were led by Khomeini as the "Supreme Leader." Iran became an Islamic theocracy. Women were forced to wear full body coverings, religious police enforced strict moral codes and political opposition was brutally suppressed.³

Several factors contributed to the Islamic revolution in Iran. Iranians believed the West, especially the U.S., was dominating many aspects of their life and this prompted nationalistic feelings. The U.S. seemed to be everywhere in Iran with American advisors working with the government, the military, the oil companies, the schools and even the Peace Corps was active in rural Iran. This powerful influence led many Iranians to

² Ibid., 26.

³ Ibid.

believe the West was manipulating their country, and they sought to distinguish themselves from the West. One way to do this was to assert their Muslim identity, and the Islamic overtones of the revolution did just that, setting the precedent for a meaningful differentiation between the West and Muslim countries. "The Iranian revolution contributed to a revival of the political role of mosques in the mobilization of politically-oriented Islamic elements throughout the Muslim world."⁴

Iranian citizens' desires for more of a say in how they were governed was largely created by having been subjected to dynastic rule coupled with the brutally authoritarian rule of the Shah, the perceived violation of traditional Islamic values and economic inequality. The resulting revolution was seen as an inevitable quest for empowerment of the Iranian people. Twice in the previous eighty years, the Iranian people had sought a change to the 2500 years of dynastic rule that categorized Iranian regimes. The 1905 - 11 Constitutional Revolution and the nationalist uprising of 1951 - 1953 were both attempts at evolutionary change to the Iranian system. However, having twice unsuccessfully attempted to make changes by working within the system, the people ultimately resorted to revolution as a means of change.⁵

As a non-elected leader, the Shah did not always govern in a democratic or benevolent fashion, as he was not beholden to the people. One way he maintained power was through the creation of the Sazeman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar (SAVAK), his personal secret police corps. The Shah had many adversaries, ranging from conservative

⁴ Walid M. Abdelnasser, "Islamic Organizations in Egypt and the Iranian Revolution of 1979: The Experience of the first few years," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1997): 27.

⁵ Robin Wright, "Iran's New Revolution," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 1 (2000): 134.

Muslim clergymen who did not like the reforms the Shah was implementing, to the urban middle class who wanted more power and political freedom. During the Shah's reign and at his direction, the SAVAK tortured, killed or imprisoned many of the Shah's adversaries.⁶ "The Shah's brutal secret police - organized, trained, and armed by the U.S. government - largely crushed any liberal, leftist, or other secular opposition to the monarchy, leaving only the mosques as a viable organizing point for resistance. The result was a movement with a strong Islamic identity and a virulent antipathy for the United States and the West in general."⁷

Finally, though the Shah was implementing reforms that benefitted certain classes of the population, his government often ignored the social and economic needs of the common people. Both the revolution and its Islamic nature were encouraged by a breakdown of the traditional social order and the inability or unwillingness of the government to provide for the socioeconomic needs and wants of its population. "The Islamic movement acted as the 'rival integrative movement,' offering the disoriented with a sense of moral and spiritual community."⁸

Though many Iranians likely intended for the regime change to lead to a system of governance where they had a voice and the power to control aspects of their own lives and destinies, the revolution was taken over by the Shiite clergy. Existing networks of contacts and followers gave the Islamic clergy legitimacy and leadership that allowed

⁶ Edidin, "1979: Iranian Revolution," 25.

⁷ Stephen Zunes, "Political Islam: Revealing the Roots of Extremism." *Middle East News Online* (2002).

⁸ Asef Bayat, "Revolution without Movement, Movement without Revolution: Comparing Islamic Activism in Iran and Egypt," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40, no. 1 (1998): 137.

them to gather widespread support for their brand of revolution and rule, ensuring the revolution in Iran became an Islamic one.

Afghanistan

After the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, the country fell into complete chaos. Though a puppet government remained in Kabul, the reality was that various mujahidin groups divided the country into sectors that they governed while they vied for control of the capital. In 1992, the Jamiat-i-Islami mujahidin group took over Kabul and a leadership council elected Burhanuddin Rabbani the president of Afghanistan, though the fighting continued among the various mujahidin groups for control of the country.⁹

In 1994, Mullah Mohammad Omar, a little-known cleric who ran a religious school in Kandahar, claimed to have a vision in which God told him to bring peace to Afghanistan and to accomplish this mission, Islam and sharia law should be the foundation of the country. However, he labored in obscurity until later that year when he and a group of his students freed a Pakistani convoy being held hostage in Kandahar province by local thugs. Not only did they free the convoy, but they proceeded to disarm the thugs and run them out of town and then continued patrolling the area, making it a safe place for citizens.¹⁰ Mullah Omar's students and other religious followers formed the core of what became known as the Taliban. The group's success in Kandahar spread by

⁹ Amin Saikal, "Iran's Turbulent Neighbour: The Challenge of the Taliban," *Global Dialogue* 3, no. 2/3 (2001): 94.

¹⁰ Christopher D. Kondaki, "The Taliban: A Primer," *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy* 29, no. 10 (2001): 6.

word of mouth throughout southern Afghanistan and support for the Taliban soared, with thousands of men joining the movement. This rapidly expanding group first controlled a small part of Kandahar, and then the Taliban expanded their control to the entire province. Over the next few years, the Taliban maneuvered against entrenched mujahidin warlords with a combination of bribery, coercion and fighting. In 1996, the Taliban marched into Kabul, forced the Rabbani government to flee and became the de facto rulers of Afghanistan.¹¹

Though the Taliban were principally a militaristic group as opposed to a political movement, once they controlled the country they sought to transition from a militant movement to a governing power. Having risen to power in part due to their advocacy of and adherence to the basic tenets of Islam, they imposed a strict form of Islam on the Afghan people. The Taliban intended to establish an Islamic emirate, calling the territory they governed the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.”¹²

Several factors contributed to the revolution in Afghanistan. First, the government of Afghanistan could not and was not meeting the basic needs of the people. Two decades of war with the Soviets had left Afghanistan in a state of disrepair as the constant fighting had destroyed most basic infrastructure including roads, bridges, power plants, telephone systems and factories.¹³ Further, the social state of Afghanistan was in even worse shape. Mother, child and infant mortality rates were sky-high, malnutrition was rampant,

¹¹ Barnett R. Rubin, "Afghanistan under the Taliban," *Current History* 98, no. 625 (1999): 79.

¹² Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008: 45.

¹³ Kondaki, 6.

widows and orphans were commonplace, education was not a priority, and jobs were impossible to find. The Taliban began to fulfill people's basic needs and this won the support of much of the population.

Second, after the withdrawal of Soviet troops, tribal groups exerted their power and authority over their parts of the country and warlords were committing atrocities against the people. Offenses included kidnapping women and children for various types of slavery, stripping people of their household possessions or even their homes and land, and robbing travelers as they passed through their territory.¹⁴ The population was frustrated with the corruption and violence rampant in the country and there was an overwhelming desire for moral values to have a place in society. The Taliban wanted to end the chaos and corruption, and felt the situation was the result of moral laxity and a movement away from conservative religious values – and much of the population agreed.

The Taliban represented the popular will of the people and were initially defended by many expatriates, including Hamid Karzai.¹⁵ The stability and services the group brought to the country was a welcome change from what the Afghans had been experiencing. The imposition of Islamic values was seen as necessary and desirable, in contrast to the corruption and crime that had been mainstays of daily life in Afghanistan. Though the people of Afghanistan initially welcomed the reintroduction of conservative Islamic values, the Taliban began to impose religion in a way not envisioned by the majority of the population. The General Department for the Preservation of Virtue and

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Crews and Tarzi, 51.

the Elimination of Vice oversaw the imposition of symbols of religious piety that overtly displayed to the population the requirement for strict adherence to the tenets of the faith, including the full veiling of women, bans on women seeking education and employment and the requirement for men of compulsory mosque attendance with full untrimmed beards.¹⁶ This Islamic revolution that began with popular support quickly lost its appeal as the government imposed a way of life not envisioned by the people in their desire for, and actions towards change.

¹⁶ Barret A. Rubin, 79-80.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS

Definitions

It is necessary to define what the changes in Turkey's political situation can be titled since the characterization of the change often becomes the definition of the change itself. The most commonly applied terms to a change in the political situation are revolution, evolution and revival or resurgence.

A revolution is defined as a sudden, radical, or complete change, a fundamental change in political organization; especially the overthrow or renunciation of one government or ruler and the substitution of another by the governed. Evolution is a process of gradual, peaceful, progressive change or development, as in social or economic structure or institutions. Revival is the renewed attention to or interest in something, a new presentation or publication of something old or a period of renewed religious interest. Finally, resurgence is a rising again into life, activity or prominence.¹

Anatomy of an Islamic Revolution

The changes in both Iran and in Afghanistan are correctly labeled as revolutions. Each overthrew the existing government of a country through activities outside of the national political processes. The overthrow of the Shah's government in Iran squarely fits the classic definition of a sudden and fundamental change. The rise to power of the Taliban in Afghanistan is not quite so clear cut, but still seems to best fit the definition of a revolution. Even though the existing government of Afghanistan was chaotic at best,

¹ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed.

the government that did exist was overthrown through coercion and violence and replaced by another organization.

Islamic associations have used the 1979 Iranian revolution to promulgate four lessons that can be learned about Islamic-based revolutions. First, the power of faith is a strong motivator; second, personal dignity is a core tenet found in Islam; third, Islam can, and should, learn how to incorporate the joining of religion and state; and fourth, leaders of Muslim nations should serve the interests of their own people rather than being a puppet for outside influences.² These four lessons form the basis for understanding why revolutions occurred in both Iran and Afghanistan and how each became an Islamic revolution. In each case, the government was seen as ineffective and corrupt and catering either to outside entities or the needs of a minority of the population while being unwilling or perhaps unable to address the basic needs of the entire population. The uprisings began as a reaction to the perceived injustices taking place in the country. Perceived injustice is the key. If people feel their needs are being met, or that they can work through the system to have their concerns addressed, they will not look to revolution as the answer.³

Islam plays a vital role at this step in the process. As personal dignity and honor are key principles in Islam, Muslims who become disenfranchised in the political system tend to want a stronger influence of Islam in their government. This is not only because the basic tenets of Islam are something they know and are familiar and comfortable with,

² Walid M. Abdelnasser, "Islamic Organizations in Egypt and the Iranian Revolution of 1979: The Experience of the first few years," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1997): 30.

³ Anne Marie Baylouny, "Emotions, Poverty, or Politics: Misconceptions About Islamic Movements." *Strategic Insights* III, no. 1 (2004): 3.

but also because they believe including the tenets of Islam in the government will make the system more transparent and fair.⁴

It is through the familiarity of the people with the religion and the ease of tapping into existing networks in the religious community that revolutions, initiated simply to address the perceived injustices in the society, can become Islamic revolutions. These Islamic revolutions then intend to not only rid the country of the government, but use the tenets of Islam in the political system in order to both address inequalities and prevent more from occurring in the future.⁵

No Islamic Revolution in Turkey

By applying these definitions and the overlay of the historical examples, it is clear there has not been and there is not now an Islamic revolution taking place in Turkey. First, except for the military coups, at no time has there been a sudden, radical or complete change in the government of Turkey. In the case of each of the military coups, the change was from a more religious government to a secular government and therefore, even if they could be defined as a revolution, they were not pro-Islamic revolutions – in fact, they were the exact opposite.

Using the observations made from previous Islamic revolutions to Turkey as an overlay to the current situation in Turkey, there is no evidence the people of Turkey believe that widespread injustices are being perpetrated against them, which as explained above, tends to be a common basis for a revolution. Further, even if segments of the

⁴ Stephen Zunes, "Political Islam: Revealing the Roots of Extremism." *Middle East News Online* (2002).

⁵ Ibid.

population believed that inequality was rampant, it does not appear the majority of the Turkish population is turning to Islam as the primary means through which any perceived injustices could be addressed – the citizens of Turkey continue to work through the secular political process to have their complaints heard and settled.

It could be argued the AKP has been using its power as a single-party government to implement fundamental changes to the country that are Islamist in nature. However, the AKP is a democratically elected government and the changes they have implemented to this point have all been undertaken within the existing political process in Turkey. Further, it seems clear that some segments of the population would like to see a change in *laiklik* and want Islam to play a larger role in their daily lives. However, since neither the government nor the population are advocating a sudden change in the structure of the government to reflect these desires, any change in the circumstances in Turkey would be more correctly labeled an Islamic evolution, revival or resurgence. Evolution would be the most appropriate term if government structures themselves are undergoing a slow, progressive change, and revival or resurgence would be more appropriate if the population itself is simply renewing their interest and attention to Islam in their lives.

AKP Has Made Mistakes

Turkey has a unique role to play in linking the East and West. If Turkey lurches too far East, it may become more popular on some Arab streets, but it would lose a lot of its strategic relevance and, more importantly, its historic role as a country that can be Muslim, modern, democratic - and with good relations with both Israel and the Arabs.⁶

⁶ Thomas L. Friedman, "When Friends Fall Out," *The New York Times*, June 1, 2010.

The AKP is clearly not perfect. It has been criticized internally for selectively implementing reforms, suppressing the freedom of the press, and for aggressively pursuing legal cases against supposed adversaries in the military.⁷ Though these criticisms may be valid, and if valid would be areas for legitimate concern, the concern should be that the AKP may be straying from basic principles of democracy – whether the motivation is religion or the consolidation of power. However, there is no logical or factual linkage between any of these criticisms and the theory that the AKP is implementing an Islamist agenda.

Externally, the AKP leaderships' antagonism towards Israel and their perceived lack of support for traditional allies has been problematic. Specifically, Prime Minister Erdogan's inflamed rhetoric aimed chiefly towards Israel and his seemingly blatant patronization of Arab countries is a cause for concern. However, it also needs to be recognized that Erdogan's rhetoric is part of his personality and it no longer surprises those that follow his career. With regard to Turkish foreign policy, a Turkish journalist has quipped, "Davutoglu makes, Erdogan breaks and Gul picks up the pieces."⁸ Further, Turkey's vote against the UN Security Council resolution imposing greater restrictions on Iran over its nuclear program may have been some analyst's biased perspective that the vote exhibited Turkey's new preference for its Islamic neighbors over its traditional allies rather than a cognitive choice for extended diplomacy and regional stability.⁹ Turkey's external relations may appear to be grounded in an Islamist agenda, but the few

⁷ Michael Rubin, "Turkey, From Ally to Enemy," *Commentary* 130, no. 1 (2010): 83-84.

⁸ "Anchors Aweigh: A Special Report on Turkey," *The Economist*, October 23, 2010, 8.

⁹ Carol Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Politics of Identity and Power," *Congressional Research Service*, August 13, 2010, 27.

examples provided by its critics are essentially their personal perspectives rather than solid evidence that Turkey is intent on instituting an Islamist government to replace the current secular government. Turkey is certainly making significant changes to its foreign policy and pursuing and expanding ties to nations in its neighborhood. Though this is the main reason why some say the West is losing Turkey, any review of its actions and positions does not support this hypothesis.

Is Turkey Lost to the West?

In European capitals and Washington, it will be tempting to conclude that Turkey is already 'lost,' that it is inevitably fated to become a rising theocracy that will work against rather than for international order. This would be a grave mistake.¹⁰

Turkey's Foreign Policy

Turkey sees itself as the new power in the Middle East. Turkey's new foreign policy "marks [its] move away from a reflexively defensive foreign policy, a decades-old holdover from the aftermath of the Ottoman collapse, and toward outreach and faith in win-win outcomes."¹¹ Turkey is concerned with security and stability in the Middle East, and President Gul has said, "our relations with any particular country cannot be at the expense of our relation with another country. We want that the region enjoys security and prosperity ... we do not have secret agendas; rather, we reach out with love and a sense of common responsibility to all our friends and brothers."¹²

¹⁰ Daniel M. Kliman and Joshua W. Walker, "The West must engage, not demonize, Turkey." *The Christian Science Monitor* - CSMonitor.com, <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2010/0803/The-West-must-engage-not-demonize-Turkey> (accessed March 6, 2011).

¹¹ Hugh Pope, "Pax Ottomana?" *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): 165.

¹² *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, "Turkish President on visit to Yemen, role in region, Israel, accession to EU," January 12, 2011.

AKP leaders have stated on numerous occasions that Turkey is not taking sides in an East versus West dissected world and they see no contradiction in seeking both further integration in Europe and stronger cooperation with Arab countries. As the literal and figurative bridge between the East and West, Turkey believes it is in a unique position to influence its neighborhood in a way much of the West cannot.

Turkey's posture - looking both East and West - is neither paradoxical nor inconsistent. On the contrary, Turkey's multidimensional geopolitical position is an asset for the region. There are few countries that can play such a critical role. Turkey constitutes a new synthesis because of its ability to link such diverse qualities and backgrounds. Turkey is thus capable of overcoming the dichotomies of East-West, Europe-Middle East, and North-South.¹³

These ideas are clearly guiding Turkey's foreign policy in a new direction and though Turkey is confident in its course, it is making the U.S. and the EU uneasy.

Relations with the U.S.

The relationship between Turkey and the U.S. has changed. It has been said that Turkey and the U.S. were bound together by the Cold War and with the end of that era, the need for the alliance between the two countries has diminished.¹⁴ In today's world, U.S. views of Turkey are inextricably linked to Turkey's relationship with Israel and American perceptions of Islam.

Israel

Despite having been discreet and mutually beneficial allies for years, the Mavi Marmara incident took a heavy toll on the relationship between Turkey and Israel. The

¹³ Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey: the new indispensable nation." *Hurriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, December 10, 2010.

¹⁴ Steven A. Cook, "Turkey's Cooling Ties with U.S., Israel," *Council on Foreign Relations*, July 13, 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/turkey/turkeys-cooling-ties-us-israel/p22624> (accessed December 1, 2010).

deteriorating relationship affects more than just their countries. U.S. views that Turkey is turning away from the West seem to be markedly influenced by Turkey's relationship with Israel.¹⁵ U.S. support for Israel is historic and consistent and therefore the U.S. will naturally be concerned when Israel's relations with a predominantly Muslim country worsen.

A tangible effect of the worsening of Turkish-Israeli ties in the U.S. context is that Turkey used to be able to count on the strong lobbying efforts of Israel in the U.S. Congress to counter any anti-Turkish rhetoric. However, with the cooling of ties, the Israeli lobby has not been so quick to defend Turkey. Turkish officials are finding themselves spending a great deal of time explaining that Turkey is not moving away from the Western world towards Islamic partners in the East or that it is an unreliable NATO ally.¹⁶ Without a strong and influential partner like Israel supporting it, Turkey is having difficulties trying to convince U.S. policymakers and analysts that it is not moving away from its secular and democratic nature to become an Islamist nation.

Islamaphobia

After the events of 9/11 and the ensuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, any sampling of news presented by the daily media outlets would show that Americans have become more sensitive to Islamist movements and their ability to influence governments and people. After having served in the U.S. in the late 90's, Turkish Ambassador to the U.S. Namik Tan returned in 2010 and said, "the United States that I found after relocating

¹⁵ Efraim Inbar, "The Deterioration in Israeli-Turkish Relations and its International Ramifications." *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 89 (2011).

¹⁶ James Traub, "Turkey's Rules," *New York Times Magazine*, January 23, 2011, 55.

here is different than the United States I left in 2001. I think the trauma of 9/11 is still alive, and it's affected the American people in unprecedented ways. I found that they have started to develop some paranoid reactions. This is so unfortunate." Turks believe Americans are suffering from Islamaphobia as a result of 9/11 and believe this affects the U.S. outlook towards Turkey.¹⁷

The constant media coverage of Islamic stories as well as the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have apparently convinced some Americans that all Muslims support terrorism, are intolerant of all other religions and oppress women. Too often this viewpoint has engendered fear among both politicians and the public about Islam and any movement that can be tenuously related to an Islamist agenda. "Such popular misconceptions about Islam and Islamic movements - often exacerbated by the media, popular culture, and government officials - have made it particularly difficult to challenge U.S. policy."¹⁸ Categorizing changes in Turkey as Islamic means that Islamaphobia may eventually play a role in defining U.S. policy towards Turkey.

Progress towards EU membership

Though Turkey's progress towards becoming a member of the EU has slowed, if not stalled, the Turkish government continues to reiterate its commitment to the process. President Gul has said Turkey's reforms will continue regardless of where Turkey is on the EU accession track because he believes the required reforms are vital to Turkey's

¹⁷ Larry Luxner, "Turkey's Rise on World Stage Makes Waves in the West," *The Washington Diplomat*, January 2011, 15.

¹⁸ Zunes.

own future development.¹⁹ However, as the pace of the accession negotiations slows and both the Turkish government and public begin to have doubts about whether they will ever attain full membership, Turkey is increasingly finding its own place in the region and the world. The success of Turkey's current foreign policy, coupled with the economic gains the country is enjoying means "a future outside the EU is becoming an acceptable, even desirable, scenario."²⁰ Turkey's chief European negotiator, Egemen Bagis, is fond of saying, "every day that passes Europe needs Turkey more and Turkey needs Europe less."²¹ U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has placed the blame for Turkey's turn to its Islamic neighbors directly on EU member states, telling UK Defence Secretary Liam Fox that Turkey's action "was in no small part because it was pushed, and pushed by some in Europe refusing to give Turkey the kind of organic link to the West that Turkey sought."²²

Significant portions of the population, media and politicians in the EU may also have been affected by Islamaphobia. Tensions between Christian and Muslim identities in Europe are affecting Turkey's EU accession. Turkey is often viewed as not-European because of its majority Muslim population. Pope Benedict XVI suggested the proposed

¹⁹ *BBC Monitoring Middle East*.

²⁰ Sinan Ulgen, "Turkish Politics and the Fading Magic of EU Enlargement," *Centre for European Reform*, September 2010, 5.

²¹ "Anchors Aweigh," 9.

²² Thomas Harding, "Robert Gates: Public Support for Afghan War is Limited," *The Telegraph* (London), June 9, 2010.

European constitution refer to Christianity as "one of the mainstays of European civilization" thereby singling Turkey out as being different.²³

Analysis Conclusion

Turkey is worried about the approach the West is taking towards its neighbors in the Middle East and believes it has a better approach. Turkey knows it would likely benefit from the democraticization of its Islamic neighbors, but worries that if democracy is imposed on its neighbors by the West, it will cause more chaos than stability.²⁴

Turkey's foreign policy reflects this attitude, while Turkey's leaders insist they are not turning away from the West as they reach out to its Islamic neighbors. One observer goes so far as to suggest that "there is a strategic calculation that such a course of action will simply increase Turkey's bargaining power vis-a-vis the West."²⁵ More and more, Turkey seems to be taking the view that not only can it strengthen its position in the region by working together with its neighbors, but these actions will make it a coveted partner with the West.²⁶

Though many in the West assert Turkey is becoming an Islamist nation, there is no Islamic revolution taking place in Turkey.²⁷ Though perceptions persist that the AKP

²³ Tarik Oguzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?" *Turkish Studies* 9, no. 1 (2008): 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁶ *Inbar*, 2-3.

²⁷ As examples: Tony Corn. "The Real Plan B in AfPak: Keeping China Out, Bringing India In, Calming Turkey Down." *Small Wars Journal* (2011). www.smallwarsjournal.com (accessed March 30, 2011); Sally McNamara, Ariel Cohen, and James Phillips. "Countering Turkey's Strategic Drift." *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, July 26, 2010. http://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2010/pdf/bg2442.pdf (accessed January 31, 2011); Michael Rubin, "Turkey, From Ally to Enemy." *Commentary* 130, no. 1 (2010): 81-86.

is in favor of transforming Turkey into an Islamist nation and these perceptions are being used as the proof for their hypothesis that the West is losing Turkey, in reality, there is no evidence to support this conclusion. "Demonizing Turkey will bolster the very internal forces the West fear. It will give credence to their claims that Turkey can never be part of the West and allow them to move Turkey's foreign policy in a more extreme direction."²⁸ The reality is Turkey could turn to its eastern Islamic neighbors in exactly the way some in the West assert it already has if the West continues to categorize changes in Turkey as Islamic in nature and blindly oppose Turkey's approach to foreign policy and external relations.

²⁸ Kliman and Walker.

CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

I would like to close by returning to an old Turkish proverb that we should keep in mind as our two nations face together a variety of common challenges in the years ahead. That saying is, “a wise man remembers his friends at all times, a fool, only when he has need of them.” The United States and Turkey have wisely remembered our friendship, during times of agreement and disagreement, and it is incumbent for us to continue to do so. There is too much at stake - for our prosperity, for our security, and for the credibility of our alliance.¹

- U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates

Turkey's proximity to the instability in the Middle East is much closer than that of either the European Union (EU) or the United States. This very real potential for regional instability, with its attending negative effects for Turkey's growing economy, is probably one of the primary reasons Turkey has chosen to increase its attention on relations with its Islamic neighbors. The West should understand this pragmatic approach and should try to see Turkey's tactics as an opportunity, not a challenge. "It is the ability of Turkey to be a respected partner of both the EU and the United States that truly distinguishes it from other states in the Middle East and underpins the prosperity and legitimacy that the rest of the region so envies."²

The European Union

The history of and current progress of Turkey towards joining the European Union is reaching the point of being a vicious circle. One side believes Turkey has turned away from the EU by not making necessary reforms, not embracing Cyprus and by

¹ U.S. Department of Defense, "U.S. Secretary of Defense speech to American Turkish Council," The Official Home of the Department of Defense, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1513> (accessed February 25, 2011).

² Hugh Pope, "Pax Ottomana?" *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): 171.

becoming Islamic, does not have European values and does not really want to be part of Europe. The other side believes that Turkey has been trying for years to make the necessary changes but, being shut out of membership time and time again has actually led it to have European fatigue. This disillusionment with Europe has then pushed them towards the Islamic world, as Turkey believes it can exert influence there.

Regardless of which side is correct, the EU has the chance to make the most of Turkey's ambitions and meld those ambitions with the added benefit of being a team player on Europe's side.

Deep engagement with [Turkey] will itself further the EU's goals to create a more democratic, economically open, and better governed Middle East. By embedding Turkish foreign policy with EU structures and policies, Europeans could dynamize and enhance their own engagement in a region central to their interests ... The EU should not only see Turkey as a candidate for accession but view Ankara as a significant potential asset for effective multilateralism.³

Therefore, the European Union should look to reenergize and encourage accession negotiations with Turkey. EU leaders should actively engage France, Germany and Cyprus and pressure them to lift the blocks each has placed on opening various chapters of the *acquis communautaire*, impressing on their leadership the role Turkey already plays, and the unique ability Turkey has to communicate with Muslim countries in ways other EU member states cannot. The EU should continue to provide aid to Turkey in making necessary reforms to its structures and systems, as well as undertake a public relations campaign in Europe highlighting Turkey's current and potential future contributions to the security and prosperity of Europe.

³ Heather Grabbe and Sinan Ulgen, "The Way Forward for Turkey and the EU: A Strategic Dialogue on Foreign Policy," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, December 2010, 11.

The United States and NATO

Relations between the U.S. and Turkey seemed to significantly change when the Turkish parliament voted to not allow the U.S. to use Turkish territory to support its initial ground invasion of Iraq. This vote upset many U.S. officials; however, the U.S. should not be upset that a nation, even an ally, relied on its democratic system to express the will of its population and reach a conclusion that did not support U.S. interests. Ironically, this should actually bolster support for Turkey and its adherence to the principles of democracy.

Turkey has simply become more pragmatic about its relationship with the U.S. and this attitude is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. The heart of the issue is that Turkey is no longer a pliable U.S. ally. U.S. policymakers would likely prefer the time when Turkey idealized the West and did whatever the U.S. asked of it, as this tends to be more expedient for the U.S. However, blaming this change in attitude on Islam is neither accurate nor fair. Even if an Islamic revolution took place in Turkey, at least one expert would argue that the U.S. is not opposed to an Islamic government in principle, so long as the country is still willing to partner with the United States on matters of interest to the U.S.⁴ In fact, excepting the Taliban, "the most extremist Muslim state in modern history - in terms of strict interpretation of Islamic codes, repression of women, suppression of religious minorities, and the reactionary political orientation - is Saudi Arabia."⁵ Yet Saudi Arabia is one of the closest partners of the U.S. The difference is that

⁴ Stephen Zunes, "Political Islam: Revealing the Roots of Extremism." *Middle East News Online* (2002).

⁵ Ibid.

Turkey has disagreed with the U.S. on several high profile issues, and this has angered some U.S. politicians and political think tanks. These individuals and entities then blame Islam for the change in Turkey's attitude, and due to the current trend of Islamophobia in the U.S., use this link to Islam as their rationale to negatively influence U.S. policy towards Turkey.

"Neoconservative American and right-wing Israeli commentators who interpret Turkey's engagement as evidence of the AKP's anti-American Islamism are ... mistaking tactics for goals."⁶ Therefore, the U.S. should reach out to Turkey and deepen engagement by increasing military to military interaction, and actively seeking to bring Turkey into play as interlocutors with countries such as Syria, Palestine and Iran. Turkey has the ability to work with and influence these countries in a way the U.S. cannot because of its prominent geographic location, its shared history, religious traditions and existing relationships with these countries and the credibility it has established.

Further, NATO should do the same. Turkey is one of a few countries in the alliance that is both able and willing to contribute forces and money to NATO missions. As NATO chooses to engage further with Middle Eastern countries, as these countries sit on the edge of NATO member states' territory, NATO should make Turkey a lead country in relationships and negotiations with these countries. Finally, NATO should conclude an agreement to place anti-ballistic missile defense systems on Turkish territory and publicly affirm the important and significant contributions Turkey makes to the alliance.

⁶ Pope, 168.

Turkey and Israel

The relationship between Turkey and Israel has been worsening. Prime Minister Erdogan and his inflammatory comments pointed at Israel are not useful in resolving the situation. However, both countries are aware of the negative implications of continued animosity towards each other, and both know it is in their best interests to cooperate. In a December 2010 editorial in the Wall Street Journal, the Turkish government stated “Turkey and Israel are historic friends. Yes, there have been some recent and serious disagreements between our countries. But we believe our two nations will move past these challenges.”⁷ In an editorial in the Jerusalem Post in January 2011, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman stated "allies can have disagreements; it is how we deal with these disagreements that is the true mark of any relationship."⁸

In order to ease the perception that Turkey is choosing Islamic nations over the West, Turkey should take the initiative to immediately repair its relationship with Israel so the two countries can return to the discreet and mutually beneficial relationship they have had for years. Turkey should reach an agreement with Israel on the resolution of the Mavi Marmara incident, full diplomatic relations should be resumed, and the two countries should resume joint military exercises. Other AKP leaders must impress on Prime Minister Erdogan the importance of ending his inflammatory statements about Israel. Though their disagreements may be legitimate, the deteriorating relationship is escalating the perception that Turkey is willing to forego its relationship with the West, with whom Israel is seen to be allied, to pursue its interests in the Middle East.

⁷ Rauf A. Denktas, "Turkey, Israel Are Historic Friends," *The Wall Street Journal (New York)*, December 16, 2010.

⁸ Avigdor Lieberman, "We will not be Turkey's punching bag," *Jerusalem Post*, January 6, 2011.

CONCLUSION

Turkey is building a bridge between the East and West, but it is a bridge constructed on its terms, not terms the West might prefer. Turkey has taken care not to be seen as acting as a proxy for the West in the Middle East and this must continue. The U.S. especially, is not necessarily popular in the Middle East and Turkey rightly wishes to walk a fine line between aligning with the U.S. and maintaining credibility in its region. Turkey has become much more proactive in engaging its neighbors, many of whom are disagreeable to the West. However, just because Turkey is seeking to engage these states, it does not mean they will become allies. Therefore, the West must stop categorizing changes in Turkey as an Islamic revolution that should be feared. Further, the West – the United States, and the European Union and NATO as organizations – should all seek to deepen and expand their engagement with Turkey. An understanding of Turkey’s unique situation and therefore ability to connect with and influence Islamic countries in the Middle East should lead the West to embrace Turkey and its foreign policy and external relations that can be extraordinarily beneficial to Western nations seeking peace and security in the volatile Middle East.

There are a myriad of reasons some U.S. politicians, policy experts and scholars are contending that the West has lost Turkey. However, both by looking at historical Islamic revolutions and comparing them to Turkey today and by taking an in-depth look at the AKP’s policies and practices, both internally and externally, there is no reason to conclude that there is an Islamic revolution taking place in Turkey. There does appear to be an Islamic revival taking place, but this does not present a reason for concern when it comes to partnership with Turkey and it should not be identified as one. In fact, the U.S.

and the West should take advantage of a modern, stable democracy that has cultivated relationships with countries that the West has not and potentially cannot. Turkey can be a conduit to an area that has strained relations with the West and could help bring about a more stable and prosperous world.

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Ms. Deborah Robinson

Ms. Robinson joined the Department of State as a Foreign Service Officer in 2001. Her prior assignments have included: Political Liaison Officer with the Qalat Provincial Reconstruction Team in Zabul province, Afghanistan; Serbia and Montenegro Desk Officer; Operations Watch Officer for the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research; Vice Consul, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; and most recently, Chief of the Fraud Prevention Unit at the U.S. Embassy in Bogota, Colombia. Ms. Robinson has a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations and is a graduate of the Temple University School of Law.