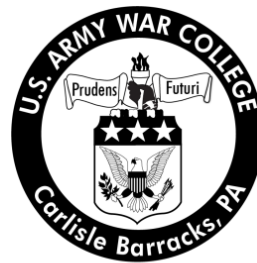


# Turkey: Enduring Partner or Emerging Foe?

by

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United States Army War College  
Class of 2012

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**TURKEY: ENDURING PARTNER OR EMERGING FOE?**

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This paper examines the strategic direction of the bilateral relationship between the United States and Turkey. Two opposing assessments characterize Turkey in the relationship: one as enduring partner and the other as an emerging foe. This paper posits that a 21st Century US-Turkish relationship must continue to build on its solid foundation to realize the strategic potential of Turkey's newly found regional influence. More than an enduring partner, the US must elevate Turkey's standing in the relationship to a level at least equivalent to the close friendship with Israel.



## TURKEY: ENDURING PARTNER OR EMERGING FOE?

Turkey and the United States must stand together and work together to overcome the challenges of our time.<sup>1</sup>

--President Barack Obama

President Obama's proclamation of the importance of U.S.-Turkish relations staked out a very specific position regarding policy and strategy at a critical time for both countries. His words to the Turkish Parliament in April 2009, a meeting deliberately set at the onset of his term, signified the importance and the resolve to strengthen relations with a long-time ally. This paper examines the bilateral relationship and potential strategic directions for the relationship. Two opposing assessments characterize the American view of the relationship. By one assessment, Turkey is characterized as increasingly adversarial and Islamic fundamentalist—an emerging foe. By the opposing assessment, Turkey is characterized as an emerging regional power where interests and values remain stable albeit more independent of the West—an enduring partner. The Obama Administration sees Turkey as an enduring partner. Philip Gordon, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, in a March 17, 2010 speech to the Brookings Institution, noted that the Administration views Turkey as continuing to be firmly rooted in the Euro-Atlantic alliance and that it is not turning away from the West as some observers contend.<sup>2</sup>

The US–Turkish relationship has advanced the interests of both countries while promoting shared values since July 12, 1947 when the current close relationship was formalized as part of the Truman Doctrine.<sup>3</sup> Turkey showed solidarity in the new relationship by sending 15,000 troops to Korea from 1950 to 1953 to fight with the US. Washington responded by securing Turkey's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization (NATO) in 1951.<sup>4</sup> The solidarity continued for four decades as Turkey played a critical role in the defense of Europe during the Cold War Era with the second largest military in NATO, by its strategic location, and with its Western orientation.<sup>5</sup> The Cold War era was a time when Turkey depended on the US and NATO to confront security threats from the Soviet Union. The current era is a time when the US and the West depend on Turkey to confront security threats from US enemies in the Middle East. The long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have created the need to relook power sharing with Turkey in the bilateral relationship. Hard power, so critical in the Cold War Era, has proven less effective in countering hostile states and non-state actors in the Middle East. Soft power, which Turkey sees critical to crisis resolution in the region now, may be the best option overall for promoting shared values and interests and the only available option for the US in partnership with Turkey. Unlike the US, Turkey does not see the Middle East turmoil as an existential threat and reluctantly considers hard power solutions to those problems. The US should learn to accept Turkish ways and means to achieving shared end states as acceptable options—a position the US takes at times with Israel.

This paper posits that a 21<sup>st</sup> Century US-Turkish relationship must continue to build on its solid foundation to realize the strategic potential of Turkey's newly found regional influence; more than an enduring partner, the US must elevate Turkey's prestige in the relationship to a level at least equivalent to that afforded to Israel.

To support this thesis, this paper first examines perspectives on Turkey's recent actions that precipitated the two opposing views in the West. The paper next examines the ascendancy of the current dominate political party, the Justice and Development

Party (AKP), and offers a framework discussion of three different alternative futures for Turkey's place in the international order: pro-Western, anti-Western, and emergent power. Within each alternative future, implications are considered, indicators are tendered, policy recommendations are offered, and opportunities are highlighted. Finally, the paper establishes Turkey's intrinsic value to the partnership and concludes why the US must embrace Turkey differently now that the Soviet threat is replaced by threats from the Middle East.

### From "Shared Vision" to Strained Relations

When Turkey denied the US access to attack into Iraq from Turkey in 2003, the US and much of the West were caught off guard by the decision. While debate ensued over the wisdom and rationale of the Turkish decision, one point became very clear: Turkey had matured enough in the strategic partnership to be able to say no to its superpower partner. More importantly, neither the US nor Turkey lost sight of their mutual interests in the wake of Turkey's unexpected decision to deny the US an axis of attack into Iraq from Turkey. Instead, they opted to seek a path of renewed cooperation. Three years later a vision of that future was revealed. On July 5, 2006 the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, and the Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, signed a "Shared Vision Statement to highlight the common values and goals between the two countries and to lay out a framework for increased strategic dialogue."<sup>6</sup> The wording of the document expressed new prestige and prominence for Turkey—especially in the broader Middle East. It is visionary and worthy of review.

The shared vision announced by Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Gul is rooted in shared values that address problems common to both countries and to solutions best solved by cooperation. The US and Turkey, "share the same set of

values and ideals in our regional and global objectives: the promotion of peace, democracy, freedom and prosperity.”<sup>7</sup> The document included pledges of support, almost prophetic-like, for every hot-spot that would emerge in the region in the next five years: settling the Arab-Israeli conflict, resolving the Iranian non-proliferation of nuclear weapons problem, promoting Iraqi prosperity, countering international terrorism, countering the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its affiliates, enhancing energy security, and gaining accession for Turkey in the European Union.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the framework included provisions for structured dialogue to produce real results and not just talks.<sup>9</sup> Routine engagement would take place between the Secretary of State and Foreign Minister, Undersecretaries of State, Congress and the Turkish Grand National Assembly, policy units, think tanks, and others to develop the shared vision within a reinforcing framework of mutual consultations, policy planning, and review.<sup>10</sup> The strategic partnership had every indication of renewed vitality. Strained relations were eased and mutual interests were emphasized instead.

One of the first concerns addressed in the Shared Vision Framework was the PKK terrorist threat to Turkey, the US, and Iraq. President Bush met first with Prime Minister Erdogan on November 5, 2007 and then met with President Gul on January 8, 2008 in order to pledge greater counterterrorism assistance to Turkey to combat the PKK. President Bush characterized the PKK as a "common enemy" of Turkey, Iraq, and the United States.<sup>11</sup> The shared vision and the stance against PKK terrorism were positive steps forward. A year later, President Obama pressed for more cooperation when he made the bilateral relation his top foreign relations priority on assuming office in January 2009.<sup>12</sup> The Obama administration showed the world the significance of the

partnership on April 5, 2009 by making an historic three day visit to Turkey for his first meeting of heads of state. President Obama and the Prime Minister Erdogan proved true to their word when they unveiled a new economic framework in December 2009, the Framework for Strategic Economic and Commercial Cooperation (FSECC).<sup>13</sup>

Turkey's ambassador to the US summed up the efforts of 2009 in an article in the *Turkish Quarterly Review*.

The vision of a model partnership takes the Turkish- American relationship a step further than ever before by envisaging close cooperation between a secular and predominantly Muslim nation that has multiple regional identities and a Western superpower with global standing.<sup>14</sup>

The Ambassador was especially optimistic on the prospects of the strategy framework which promised closer cooperation on broader issues. Perhaps economic interests and values might supplant military and security cooperation as the leading dynamics in the relationship, a relationship that would seek far reaching cooperation instead of being principally centered on security and military cooperation:

This vision requires deepening and widening bilateral relations in fields other than military and strategic initiatives, notably in economic, commercial, and cultural spheres. Indeed, the depth of our relations in economic and commercial fields is not yet reflecting the nature of model partnership. Our total bilateral trade figure of ten billion dollars last year remains far below the true potential we could attain.<sup>15</sup>

To many informed observers, it appeared then that the ground work was complete in 2009 for a new era in the US-Turkish relationship. Instead, situations arose that would lead to mistrust and a stalling of the realization of the shared vision. The first situation leading to mistrust came in the United Nations on June 9, 2010 when Turkey voted against U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929 which imposed enhanced sanctions on Iran for failing to ensure that its nuclear program would be used solely for peaceful purposes.<sup>16</sup> The no vote by Turkey, which had been endorsed by the US for its

nonpermanent position on the Security Council, came after Secretary Clinton announced on May 18, 2010 that there was agreement among the permanent members on the Security Council.<sup>17</sup> Turkey and Brazil were the two dissenting votes to the resolution with both nations advocating a negotiated settlement over sanctions.<sup>18</sup> The second action causing mistrust came when an aid ship from Turkey attempted to run an Israeli blockade of Gaza and came under attack by Israeli commandos who killed nine crew members and injured many others in the takeover of the Turkish convoy.<sup>19</sup>

Ambassador Namik Tan stated:

It is unfortunate that two recent incidents have complicated these efforts to elevate our relationship to the level of a model partnership. The Turkish “no vote” on sanctions against Iran in the UN Security Council on 9 June 2010, and the Israeli raid on the Gaza aid convoy on 31 May 2010, triggered a surge of commentaries in the United States suggesting a shift of axis in Turkish foreign policy and questioning Turkey’s allegiance to the Western world.<sup>20</sup>

The two events aroused new suspicion that the Justice and Development Party (AKP) was increasingly Islamist. Where would the AKP go next with Turkey’s secular democracy? The AKP is characterized as increasingly Islamist in the camp that views Turkey as an emerging foe, while the AKP is credited with shaping Turkish identity within a maturing democracy in the camp that views Turkey as an enduring partner.

#### Ascendency of the AKP and a Framework Discussion

Michael Rubin, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, sums up the Islamist camp’s view in commentary made in June 2010.

Turkey is now more aligned to Iran than to the democracies of Europe. Whereas Iran’s Islamic revolution shocked the world with its suddenness in 1979, Turkey’s Islamic revolution has been so slow and deliberate as to pass almost unnoticed. Nevertheless, the Islamic Republic of Turkey is a reality—and a danger.<sup>21</sup>

This suspicion of the AKP is deep seated since both Prime Minister Erdogan and President Gul formed the party in 2001 from its Islamist predecessor the Welfare Party (RP).<sup>22</sup> The Turkish Military had run the RP coalition out of office in 1997—when Erdogan was the RP elected mayor of Istanbul and Gul was the RP appointee to minister of state.<sup>23</sup> Rubin’s argument at first seems straightforward. The AKP is led by leaders from the overthrown Islamist party and its narrative on foreign policy in the region often contradicts the US and the West, so it must seek an Islamic republic in Turkey. How then is the opposing view, that the AKP is something other than Islamist, both viable and valuable to US-Turkish relations?

Ömer Taşpınar, nonresident senior fellow with the Center on the United States and Europe at Brookings sums up why the AKP is not Islamist in an article from March 2011. He acknowledges that it is an “understandable fallacy” to equate policy divergence with an Islamic revival since a Muslim country (Turkey) has elected a party with Islamist roots (the AKP) to three consecutive victories in Ankara.<sup>24</sup> Taşpınar suggests these characterizations fail to recognize the true tensions at play in Turkish politics and foreign policy—nationalism and self-interest. Taşpınar elucidates:

The current analysis on Turkey in most American circles constantly refers to the tension between “secularism and Islam” or “Eastern versus Western” proclivities. Such focus often comes at the expense of the most powerful force driving Turkish foreign policy: nationalism and self interest.<sup>25</sup>

The view that the AKP has Islamist intentions is not limited to the West; it is shared by many members of the Turkish secular establishment, including many in the military and the upper judiciary.<sup>26</sup> How then are nationalism and self-interest driving foreign policy?

The relative stability and prosperity that Turkey has enjoyed in the last decade have allowed politicians to look outward in order to continue expansion of its economy

and to promote its values of secular democracy. Turkey's foreign policy is officially called the "zero problem policy towards neighbors."<sup>27</sup> It is idealist in nature. Values-based objectives find their approach in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's narrative, "Peace at Home, Peace Abroad."<sup>28</sup> Can the realist world give Turkey the benefit of the doubt that it might be seeking a values based foreign policy?

The idealist underpinnings of Turkey's "zero problems" foreign policy promote Turkey's influence in the region through soft power; however, the "zero problems" foreign policy discounts one of Turkey's sources of legitimacy, the US-Turkish bilateral relationship and the hard power guaranteed by the US to back it. Turkey's foreign policy narrative suggests that it sees the international order as increasingly multi-polar, a world Richard Haas describes as "characterized by numerous centers with meaningful power."<sup>29</sup> From a multi-polar world perspective, Turkey's power in the region comes from its unique position to mediate based on historic ties to the West and the Middle East. However, Turkey's hard power actions in dealing with the PKK, Iraq, and Cyprus suggest it will pursue interest-based diplomacy as well as soft power in its quest for meaningful power—hegemony in the realist's world order. This realist perspective is described next at some length.

In spite of her idealist rhetoric, Turkey aspires for regional hegemony and will use a combination of soft power and hard power to achieve it. Turkey cannot seek hegemony and abandon its secular democracy for an Islamic state because to do so would weaken one of its sources of power, to mediate based on its ties to the West. Turkey cannot alienate itself from the US and the West—it depends on that source of

power. From a realist perspective, Taşpınar offers that Turkey is simply recognizing its historic roots as it seeks greater influence:

While the growing importance of religion in Turkey should not be dismissed, a more nuanced debate on Turkish foreign policy should take into consideration three different visions of Turkey's place in the international order: (1) Neo-Ottomanism, (2) Kemalism and (3) Turkish Gaullism. The common denominator of these strategic visions is that they transcend the erroneous narrative prevalent in Western media that focuses on the dichotomy between Turkey's Islamic and secular, pro-West factions.<sup>30</sup>

Neo-Ottomanism recognizes Turkey's Ottoman legacy. Taşpınar emphasizes that the Neo-Ottoman vision recounts the Ottoman past, not to replace the West-focus adopted since Atatürk, but to broaden geostrategic possibilities. He sees it as neither a move to Islamize Turkey nor a foreign policy that seeks to reunite the Ottoman Empire.<sup>31</sup> Externally, neo-Ottoman Turkey is willing to exert soft power in the region—especially a willingness to mediate conflicts.<sup>32</sup> Internally, neo-Ottoman Turkey embraces diversity. It tolerates integration of Kurds and reconciles its secular, democratic government with Muslims seeking greater religious identity.<sup>33</sup> Most notably, Taşpınar's neo-Ottoman Turkey views itself as a rightful regional hegemon, at the center of all policy in the region.<sup>34</sup> Before moving on to the description of Kemalism and Turkish Gaullism, the impact of Neo-Ottomanism on the ascendancy of the AKP is in order.

The AKP is Neo-Ottoman in its roots; which interestingly, makes its policy appealing to both the Arab and West worlds. The AKP, by recognizing its Ottoman roots, realizes the Ottoman Empire was a part of Europe. This realization accounts for why the AKP, despite its party's roots in Islamism, has sought harder than any other Turkish government to gain EU accession.<sup>35</sup> The AKP appeals to the Arab world because it reconciles its secular, democratic government with Muslims seeking greater

religious identity. Steven Cook recognized this in a September 15, 2011 article in *Foreign Affairs*:

His [Erdogan's] Justice and Development Party (AKP) is deeply attractive to both Islamist and liberal Arabs. For Islamists, it provides a lesson on how to overcome barriers to political participation and remake a once-hostile public arena. For liberals, it demonstrates that even a party of religion can embrace and advance liberal principles. The AKP thus resolves one of the Muslim world's central political problems: Citizens are too often forced to choose between the authoritarianism of prevailing regimes and the potential theocracy of Islamists that might replace them.<sup>36</sup>

For the US, the desire for the AKP led Turkey to be more active in foreign affairs, especially to willingly mediate conflicts, makes a neo-Ottoman Turkey a more valuable strategic partner. For Turkey, under AKP leadership, keeping relationships tied to the US and the West offers legitimacy internally to the liberal, secular majority in Turkey and offers prosperity externally through negotiated promises of economic expansion, shared values, and interests. From this initial vision of Taspinar, the vision of neo-Ottomanism and its influence on the AKP, the next sections look at Kemalism and Turkish Gaullism which remain alive and well in Turkey.

Kemalism had always been associated with Kemal Ataturk's imperatives to look to the West often at the expense of relations with the Islamic and Arab worlds.<sup>37</sup> Kemalism rejects Turkey's Ottoman past in both domestic and foreign policy<sup>38</sup>. Taşpinar notes three key differences between Neo-Ottomans and Kemalists. Kemalists are more isolationistic and seek regional foreign policy only cautiously. Domestically, Kemalists are less tolerant of other cultures, preferring instead rigid anti-Kurdish measures and strict secularist anti-Islamist measures. And finally, because they feel unappreciated by the West, whom they believe has not recognized their efforts against Islamists and Kurdish terrorists, they are increasingly resentful of the US and the EU.<sup>39</sup> So, ironically,

those who were pro-West during the Cold War have become its detractors with the ascendancy of the AKP.

Notwithstanding the AKP's prominence, Kemalism remains viable and active in the country. Kemalists challenged the secular legality of the AKP in the high judiciary in 2008 and only narrowly lost by one vote—six out of 11 ruled the AKP to be non-secular and in violation of the constitution but that was good enough to uphold the party in a judgment that required a super majority decision to ban it.<sup>40</sup> Kemalists have also been arrested in four recent indictments for alleged coup attempts—the first in 2008 indicted 86, a second in 2009 charged 56, a third in 2009 charged 52, and a fourth in 2010 charged 17 more.<sup>41</sup> These actions to oppose the AKP indicate that the Kemalists remain active and viable in Turkey. The next section will propose that Turkish Gaullism is also active and may indicate the melding of the first two visions.

Turkish Gaullism is Taspinar's third vision for Turkey in the international order. The UN vote and the Gaza flotilla incidents suggest a new dynamic at play in Turkey. Taşpinar notes, "Turkey's recent problems with Israel and the United States also led to a convergence in the Kemalist and neo-Ottoman camp further reinforcing the Gaullist dynamics in Turkish foreign policy."<sup>42</sup> While the AKP has been Neo-Ottoman in its roots, events can align the Neo-Ottomans and the Kemalists for the third dynamic, Turkish Gaullism. Patriotism and nationalism are at the core of both the AKP's Neo-Ottomans and the military's and liberal's Kemalism. Taşpinar suggests that the convergence is increasingly present in this third vision of Turkish foreign policy.<sup>43</sup> He further advises,

A Gaullist Turkey may in the long run decide to no longer pursue an elusive EU membership. It may even question its military alliance with the United States. Burdened by a sense that it never gets the respect it deserves, Turkey may increasingly act on its own in search of full

independence and sovereignty, strategic leverage and, most importantly, “Turkish glory and *grandeur*.”<sup>44</sup>

A Gaullist Turkey, at the extreme, might become another in the region to seek nuclear weapons. Short of that extreme, a Gaullist Turkey is least likely to be influenced in cooperative ways for any diplomacy short of its own interests and values.

Taşpınar’s nuanced debate, which supplants an Islamist leaning Turkey for his three visions influencing Turkish policy and actions, is useful not only in that it frames the manner in which Turkey relates to the region, but because it presents a means for the US to view Turkish actions as predictors of the direction of the US-Turkish relationship. The framework is foundational for an argument that the US can join with Turkey to realize greater geopolitical position; in so doing, it is okay to elevate Turkey’s power and prestige. It rationalizes the acceptable influences played by Turkish nationalism and self-interests in Turkish foreign policy over the unacceptable Islamist or anti-Western influences feared by those who see Turkey as an emerging foe.

When Turkish actions can be described as Neo-Ottoman, as they have been in the last decade, Turkey recognizes that it is not alone in the region and the world; it needs the US partnership to buoy its position. Should Turkey’s actions reflect a Kemalist nature, which would require a retraction of the current AKP influence, expect Turkey to reject the West and instead align itself with authoritarian states like Russia, Iran, and China. Should Turkey’s actions reflect a Turkish Gaullism outlook, where it could be going now after the third straight elected AKP mandate and after doubling per capita income in the decade, expect Turkey to pursue interests independent of other powers. All three of these frameworks translate to possible alternative futures for Turkey.

### Alternative Future 1: Pro-Western, Member of the European Union

In this possible future, Turkish Democracy continues to mature creating conditions to alleviate concerns among Turkey's biggest detractors to admission to the EU—especially France, Germany, and Austria. In this scenario, Turkey is Neo-Ottoman like, which is important for understanding Turkey's motives to include rather than exclude Kurds and Armenians and to ease practices that had restricted their freedoms and had led to human rights abuses in past governments. The government is able to reconcile Turkey's differences with Kurds, Cypriots, and Armenians in a manner that creates confidence that its politics, its respect for human rights, and its culture are acceptable for admission to the EU.

The Neo-Ottoman vision leads Turkey to seek consensus rather than promoting an adversarial approach to its foreign policy, allowing Turkey to conduct principled negotiations with adversaries. Turkey continues to institutionalize civilian control of the military as the concerns of the secularist military officers and the liberal parties are assuaged in a Neo-Ottoman like Turkey that allows Islamic religious expression without threatening the secular state. However, Turkey's actions alone will probably not be enough for admission to the EU.

For this scenario to happen, the EU will almost certainly have to trade its goal of becoming a strong federal entity for a goal of becoming a looser confederation of nation-states, thus making Turkey more politically and culturally acceptable to EU members.<sup>45</sup> An EU built on a confederation of nation-states would also be more accepting of Turkey's growing economy even though it lags behind the rest of Europe. Turkey's appeal to the EU is enhanced by its offer of energy to Europe via pipelines that bring natural gas out of the Caspian, Iranian, and Iraqi fields. Turkey's military

importance within NATO will solidify and Turkey's allies will appreciate Turkey for its role in assuring access to the Middle East and Caspian Sea regions.

Turkey as a pro-Western member of the EU is the best future of the three proposed in this paper for US interests and values. It satisfies a major US policy goal by keeping Turkey anchored in a Euro-Atlantic framework and ends debate about Turkey's long-term political orientation.<sup>46</sup> This future best aligns Turkey with Western economic and Western security interests since it would provide a bridge to the Muslim world that could lead to increasing openness and political pluralism in the Muslim world.<sup>47</sup> The unrest and revolutions of the Arab Spring intensify the importance of building this bridge quickly in order to enable that openness and political process that perhaps only Turkey could facilitate. More importantly, this future provides opportunity to build a unified policy among the US, Israel, and Turkey to contain a nuclear Iran, to stabilize Israel, to stabilize Syria, and to build a prosperous Iraq—all essential security precursors necessary for the economic framework to prosper as envisioned in December 2009 by President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan.

The biggest risk to the US in this future comes from any downside that would be associated with the EU exercising greater influence in Turkey's foreign policy and security ties.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, a more Europeanized Turkey is a better option than an isolated Kemalist or an emerging power Gaullist Turkey which will be discussed later. While intrinsically obvious that a pro-Western future is best for the US, the future is equally best for Turkey.

Turkey views a pro-Western future, one where it is a member of the EU, as its best option and stated policy. The AKP, immediately upon assuming control in 2003,

pursued an ambitious agenda of reforms to convince the EU to begin accession negotiations and Turkey officially became a candidate in 2005.<sup>49</sup> It was a long-time aspiration for Turkey that began in the 1960's with an associated agreement with the European Economic Community, application for full membership in 1987, and an EU-Turkey customs union in 1995<sup>50</sup> It is the rational outcome for a long-time NATO ally that has looked to the west since Ataturk forged the country into a secular democracy from its Ottoman past. It is the best option economically for Turkey's burgeoning economy and for its national security.

In this future, Turkey can benefit from NATO and US protection against a nuclear armed Iran without the cost of developing its own defenses against the threat. In the other futures to be discussed, Turkey is forced to abandon NATO and to bear a greater burden of its defense and security. In this scenario, the savings gained by spending less on its defense, realized by virtue of the NATO alliance, can be applied to growing its economy and to increasing its standard of living. Given the impending threat to Turkey's aspirations of hegemony from a nuclear-arms-seeking Iran and the ongoing turmoil on Turkey's borders with Iraq and Syria, Turkey's accession to the EU is an issue whose approval cannot wait. Turkey would benefit from the prestige that would come from EU accession to better negotiate settlements with the state and the non-state actors destabilizing the region.

The European Commission, the EU's executive, endorses Turkey's membership more than some member states because it acknowledges Turkey's influence in regional conflict management, its importance as an energy hub, and as a bridge between Western and Muslim worlds.<sup>51</sup> No party stands to lose more than Europe in all three of

the areas noted by the European Commission should Turkey continue to be denied membership—certainly not the US or Turkey. Additionally, while the EU sees Turkey's 78 million inhabitants who currently live well below the average income of the EU as a drain to the EU, they are blinded to their own problems of declining birth rates and the threat those demographics play in supporting an aging Europe. Turkey's membership could bring a growing economy to the EU and could change the EU's demographic problem with Turkey's birth rate at 17.58 births per 1,000 population compared to the EU's birth rate of 10.27.<sup>52</sup> Egemen Bagis, Turkey's minister for European affairs and its chief negotiator in the accession talks, commented in the EU Observer on December 12, 2011:

According to the UN, Turkey has entered into a period of a “demographic window of opportunity” which is expected to continue until the mid 21<sup>st</sup> century. Its young well-educated and highly skilled labour force can be a remedy for the structural deficiencies of the EU stemming from its aging population.<sup>53</sup>

In short, the EU needs Turkey for far more than the security Turkey affords it by its strategic location between the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. As important, the EU cannot afford to lose in the arenas of security, energy, and trade from an isolated or emergent power in Turkey that looks to Russia, China, the Arab world and Iran for security and trade before it looks to the EU.

The EU needs to accept Turkey, not just for the benefits that would be shared between the EU, Turkey, and the US by the membership, but to dissuade Turkey from turning to Russia and China in any other alternative future. As a part of the EU, Turkey will not turn to Russia and China for military sales and cooperation. As a part of the EU, Turkey, not Russia, will provide the main hub for natural gas coming out of the Caucasus, Iran, and Iraq for sale under EU policy agreements to other EU nations. As a

member of the EU, Turkey will look first to expand globally competitive markets, like textiles, through the EU to the West which should deny some of those market shares to China. Iran will be marginalized with a Turkey aligned with the EU and the West. Therefore, Turkey's accession to the EU is valuable if for nothing more than how it counters Russian, Chinese, and Iranian ascendancy and influence should Turkey not be accepted.

The most rational future for Turkey is to become a member of the EU. It is the future Turkey has wanted for more than 50 years and has negotiated formally for since 2005. Unfortunately for the US and the West, unless something influences a change of direction quickly, the chances of the EU accepting Turkey are slim. France, Germany, and Austria oppose accession on political, religious, and cultural grounds.<sup>54</sup> Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates gave a strong assessment of the situation in remarks to reporters following Turkey's "no vote" on UN Sanctions on Iran on June 10, 2010:

I personally think that if there is anything to the notion that Turkey is, if you will, moving eastward, it is, in my view, 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.<sup>55</sup>

What can the US do? It isn't enough to criticize the EU process. It is time for the US to act with urgency for this outcome.

The US must take strong action to support its stated policy objective to keep Turkey anchored in the Euro-Atlantic and thereby end debate over Turkey's political orientation. The US could initiate two policy actions that would be unmistakable in their support and respect for Turkey's contributions to the West. First, the US could actively mediate Turkish-Israeli rapprochement in order to end their rift as a precursor to

establishing solidarity to face other threats in the region. And secondly, the US could propose new Turkish policy in the arenas of travel, work, commerce, military cooperation, and citizenship to show the EU that the US endorses Turkey. Timely, urgent US actions start with actively mediating the Turkish-Israeli rift as a necessary precursor to pursuing further Middle Eastern policy objectives.

The U.S. must act to end the rift between Turkey and Israel in order to preserve Turkey's prestigious position as the one country that can mediate between the West and the Muslim worlds. Vitally important, this peace is necessary for subsequent moves that rely on Turkey's position to unite with the US and Israel to stand in the face of Iran, that rely on Turkey to promote Syrian stability, that rely on Turkey to mediate between Israel and Hezbollah, and that rely on Turkey to promote Iraqi prosperity. Turkey is necessary for each of these settlements. No progress can be made as long as the US-Turkish relationship is entangled in the rift between Turkey and Israel. Heads of state from each country need to be called together to resolve their differences.

President Obama should host a Camp David Accords-like conference, similar to the conference held by President Carter in 1978, as a means to establish the framework for a new comprehensive peace in the Middle East and to signify to the world that Turkey is a powerful ally to the process. He should secretly bring Prime Minister Erdogan and Prime Minister Netanyahu together to hammer out the same type of framework agreements as in the original conference, only substituting Turkey for Egypt in the roles Egypt played in the original framework agreements. In 1978, the accord established two agreements: *A Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty for Egypt and Israel* and *A Framework for Peace in the Middle East*. In 2012, with Turkey a

participant instead of Egypt, the accord could establish nearly the same: A Framework for the Conclusion of a Mutual Treaty for Turkey and Israel and A Framework for Peace in the Middle East. The framework would promote Turkey to become the key mediator between the Palestinians and the Israelis and to mediate between Hezbollah and the Israelis. Additionally, the framework would include a Middle East Peace that addresses the Kurdish territories whereby Israel would mediate between the Kurdish and Turkish sides. This would be a major step in creating trust and countering anti-American sentiment in Turkey. Turkey would emerge from the process as the key leader in the region and more appealing for membership in the EU.

With signed accords, the U.S. would have a foundation for pledging full partnership to Turkey and Israel and for promising all aspects of US national power to counter Kurdish and Palestinian Terrorists. Turkey could pledge to mediate ongoing conflict resolution and to promote Palestinian prosperity in the new peace. Even if the peace processes moved slowly in the Israeli-Palestinian and in the Turkish-Kurdish resolutions, Turkey and Israel, who need each other in the region, would be united with the US again. Stephen Larrabee at Rand notes in a 2010 article:

Although the Turkish-Israeli relationship has lost some of its early luster, it still retains importance for both sides. For Turkey, Israel is a valuable source of sophisticated military equipment and intelligence, while, for Israel, Turkey provides valuable training sites for the Israeli Air Force that would be difficult to replace. Thus, neither side is likely to allow relations to deteriorate too badly<sup>56</sup>

Neither side can afford to let their relationship flounder. The stakes are too high with every country on Turkey's southern border in turmoil. Solidarity between the US, Turkey, and Israel would go far in deterring Iran and in stabilizing Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon.

The accords would open the door for the US to extend to Turkey short, medium, and long range missile defenses to protect Turkey, and US forces on bases in Turkey, from nuclear threats in the region. Turkey, the US, and Israel would all benefit from Turkey and Israel ending their rift. The complexity of issues in the region, with Turkey on the seam between Europe and the Middle East, warrant adjustments in the US policy on the Israeli peace process even if means advocating compromises to strengthen Turkey's prestige at the expense of Israel. This message to Turkey and the world could be further backed by a radical offer to extend rights of liberal immigration to Turkey and is proposed next.

The US must move to counter any argument that the West has denied the organic link to the West that Turkey has sought, regardless of who is to blame for pushing Turkey eastward. The US can accomplish this by instituting a blanket policy that affords Turkey equal access to travel, work, commerce, military cooperation, and citizenship as is currently extended to the US's staunchest ally in the EU—Great Britain. This would show Turkey that the US sees them as valuable as our most trusted European ally and this would begin to ease anti-American sentiment in Turkey. The blanket policy would send a message to the EU and the world that the US is ready to accept Turkey as if they were already members in the EU.

#### Alternative Future 2: Anti-Western, Economic and Security Ties with Russia, Iran, and China

In this future, it is the Kemalists, the secular constitutional purists, who had always included a Western orientation as one of the three pillars of their vision for Turkey, who reject the West and look to Russia, Iran, and China instead. This scenario runs counter to the prevailing suspicion that a West rejecting Turkey would be Islamist

and non-secular. Taspinar notes that the lack of respect and the outright rejection of Turkey's culture and Muslim faith by its detractors to EU membership have become deep seated to the point of causing the Kemalists to be willing to reject this pro-Western pillar. Taşpinar notes, "Kemalism is increasingly resentful of the EU and the US."<sup>57</sup> It is a feeling among Kemalists that is exacerbated by the unwarranted respect that they feel the AKP led government of Erdogan has been shown by the US and the EU.

In this alternative future, the Kemalists, feeling slighted after supporting the interests of the US and Europe for the most of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reject the support to the Neo-Ottomans on the grounds that it could destroy Turkey. More ominously, they turn to a real foe of the West and seek partnerships with countries such as Russia, Iran and China. Their concerns could manifest in a military coup that topples the AKP led government—secular parties and the military align under the Kemalist banner to oust the AKP. This future could be realized if (1) the AKP fails to keep the government secular and free from Islamic law, (2) the EU continues to block Turkish accession, and (3) the US fails to support anti-PKK agreements while pursuing antagonizing policy like Armenian genocide resolutions in Congress. Given those three conditions, the Kemalists would feel they have nothing to lose by unleashing a military coup. Bitter and disillusioned after 50 years of supporting the West without getting recognition, a military influenced Turkish government weakens Turkish ties to the West and opens the door for new alliances instead with Russia, China, and Iran. A shift in alliances to these authoritarian governments would allow Kemalist Turkey's intolerance of Kurds, Islamists, and Greece to manifest in policy that is unconstrained by Western ideals for liberty and equal rights.

This scenario is the worst of the three for the US. In it, the Turkish Military, the very partner that forged the initial push for a West focused government, now focuses on actively rejecting the West to take a path of emerging foe instead. The US and NATO would likely be denied the use of Turkish bases. Turkish defense and intelligence sharing with Israel would probably end. The “shared vision” would fall apart and the bilateral relationship would be diminished to the lowest of exchanges.

This is also the worst scenario for Turkey. It would weaken the prestige that Turkey currently enjoys and benefits from as a valued partner of the US and Europe. Security cooperation with Russia, China, and Iran in lieu of the existing one with the US, NATO, and Israel is a big step backward. It would be better for Turkey to advance its prestige as a Muslim democracy aligned with the West, as in the Pro-Western future, than for Turkey to attempt to advance its influence by aligning with authoritarian governments like Russia, China, and Iran who would be determined to marginalize Turkey. Furthermore, it would be costly to replace its military systems with Russian or Chinese systems and to risk retracting the rapidly expanding Turkish economy at a time of unprecedented growth and optimism. The US and the EU must be careful to ensure actions and policies do not allow this future; not only does it alienate them from their ally in Turkey, it would embolden Iran and weaken Iraq.

Iran would benefit, in any scenario where Turkey rejects the West. Iran would be free to pursue interests in Israel, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and the greater Arab world without the worry of US and NATO military action originating out of Turkey. Russia would benefit in the energy markets of Europe. Turkey would no longer pose a competitive threat as a competing route for transporting natural gas to the EU nations,

which would allow Russia increased leverage in setting prices. Iraq would be seriously exposed if Turkey were to reject the West. China would take advantage of increased opportunity unconstrained by the West to increase trade, to export military hardware and military assistance, and to shape the region for China's own interests by its influence in and through Turkey. Iranian, Russian, and Chinese interests in the Middle East would disregard the shared interests and values that the US-Turkish relationship had fostered from its inception.

Turkey cannot afford to abandon its interests in the West with any hope that new alliances would strengthen its influence. The threats to Turkish identity from its Arab and Persian neighbors would be too risky without its ties to the US and Europe. It would take years to regain the prosperity that Turkey is enjoying and would destabilize the already unstable area of the Middle East to a point untenable for US interests. It would take even longer to reestablish the security cooperation the US and Turkey have shared for more than 50 years. Turkey is a necessary ally for all US security interests in the Middle East—just as Israel is necessary. The US needs to actively prevent this future in all policy considerations since it cannot maintain a tenable posture for security interests in the Middle East if Turkey were to become an emerging foe as it does in this alternative future. A more likely future, a combination of the two already described, is proposed next.

### Alternative Future 3: Emergent Power, Seeking own Realpolitik

This future is the most likely and may only be one decision from becoming reality—a decision by Turkey to abandon its ambitions for EU membership. Turkey is confident after a decade of stable government under the AKP led by Prime Minister Erdogan. It prospered under a sustained period of economic growth and recovery that

has made it the 16<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world while doubling per capita income.<sup>58</sup> In this future, the powers of nationalism unite the Neo-Ottomans and Kemalists because both are equally frustrated by the perception that the west doesn't appreciate Turkey's contributions and strategic importance. In this Gaullist Turkey, Taspinar warns:

As France did under Charles de Gaulle in the 1960s, Turkey may opt for its own “force de frappe” – a nuclear deterrent – and its own “Realpolitik” with countries such as China, India, and Russia. It could even contemplate leaving, as France under de Gaulle did, the military structure of NATO, while maintaining its political membership in the organization.<sup>59</sup>

If Turkey abandons its quest for the EU, then the US and the EU must pursue the next best alternative—privileged partnerships that court Turkey as it looks for economic and strategic opportunities in Russia, China, Iran, and the greater Middle East. The EU would likely have to accept less than it hoped for in settlements in Cyprus, Greece, and the Aegean.

Under this scenario Turkey is not an emerging foe but the US would likely have to accept Turkey's new found power in the region if it hopes to maintain limited use of Turkey's bases. As an emerging power seeking its own realpolitik, Turkey would not exclude the US or the EU in trade like it might in the previous Kemalist future. However, the US and the EU would have to accept more and more independence from Turkey in policy decisions. But given the alternative of being excluded from important accesses in the region, this would be a price that the US would have no choice but to pay. A major priority for US policy would be to continue to secure the relationship between Turkey and Israel in this new order. The US cannot underestimate how important it remains to buoy Turkey's prestige—Turkey is less significant in the region without a privileged partnership with the US.

Turkey faces a far tougher climb to preeminence outside of the EU than it would inside the EU. A decision to abandon its quest to join the EU requires Turkey to accept its limitations as it envisions operating independent of the backing of its superpower partners. Turkey must recognize that its decision to seek its own realpolitik will still require it to make concessions to both the US and the EU. Turkey cannot afford to court friendships from its weaker neighbors by a narrative that denounces the West for the sake of Arab or Muslim appeal. Turkey must remain mindful that it needs a European anchor to achieve the most from economic and strategic opportunities elsewhere—it lacks enough power to bargain without strong ties to the West. So, while this future gives Turkey more autonomy to seek a realpolitik, the implications of its decisions cannot exclude Turkey from the US and the EU.

#### Conclusions: More Than Enduring Partners, Embracing New Horizons with Turkey

The US has relied on its strong security partnership with Turkey for more than five decades. Turks were concerned that the end of the Cold War would cause the US to pull away from Turkey even as the US pulled its nuclear weapons and defenses after the fall of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, the unrest in the region since the end of the Cold War has elevated Turkey's significance by their strategic location and their shared interests and values. The two nations need each other. Turkey needs the US for continued growth and prosperity and the US needs Turkey's assistance to achieve security interests in the Middle East. Now is the time for the US to show Turkey that the US is willing to go as far as is necessary to realize its stated policy goals of keeping Turkey anchored in a Euro-Atlantic framework and ending debate about Turkey's long-term political orientation. Now is the time to ensure that Turkey remains an enduring partner and never becomes a foe.

Turkey is critical for US policy in the Middle East. The three alternative futures discussed in this paper have tremendous implications for the US-Turkish relationship and for stability in the Middle East. The US must do more to achieve a stronger enduring partnership with Turkey. The shared vision framework of the Bush Administration, while important and relevant, falls short of the advances needed in the partnership. It opened the door for the Obama Administration to make advances and the new administration made it a priority—albeit a priority that has yet to be realized fully. The US needs to regain the momentum President Obama created in 2009. The administration’s approach was solid but it will take years of action to reverse anti-American sentiment in Turkey. The US could recreate momentum by hosting a Camp David-like accord to establish new frameworks for stability in the region and by extending new privileges to Turkey. Moreover, the US government must avoid the suspicion being aroused by some think tanks and by some in the media who would demonize Turkey. These kinds of public displays of distrust undermine US policy objectives with Turkey and the region.

It would be a mistake for President Obama to treat a Gaullist Turkey as President Kennedy treated de Gaulle in France in the 1960s—demonizing foreign policy and national grandeur as anti-American spite.<sup>60</sup> That policy cost NATO for decades when it lost France as a full NATO partner. Why risk the same with Turkey? It would be equally ill-advised for the US to marginalize Turkey’s emerging policy in the region by negotiating with Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, the nations of the Arab Spring, and perhaps even Iran, without Turkey’s help. Turkey has unique connections and understanding from its Ottoman past to better understand and relate to regional actors. Using Turkey

to negotiate enhances newly found prestige and boosts soft power diplomacy in the region. What does the US have to lose anyway? Hard power proves ineffective over and over in the Middle East. The US needs innovative solutions. Now is the time for bold change. It is the best chance at lasting security in the region. It has to start first with a common front of the partnerships of the US, Turkey, and Israel.

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