

Historical Overview of Turkish-American Relations



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INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century is one of the most interesting time frames in human history. Two world wars with devastating results, the communist ideology coming to power in many countries, the astonishing scientific and technological developments mark some of the features of this century. All these changes inevitably affected international relations and politics. The United States of America (USA) getting stronger over time, emerged as a super power at the end of the Second World War. The Ottoman Empire which lasted six centuries plays an important role in European history. The Ottoman Empire and Turkey are situated at the intersection of Middle East, Balkans, Eurasia and Caucasus. Geostrategic location, the rich oil and natural gas resources in the region increase the importance of the region on a global scale. So, the relations between a super power and a regional power is worthwhile analyzing because it influences the balance of power in the region and to some extent, it affects international politics.

FIRST PERIOD: OTTOMAN EMPIRE and the USA

In the 17th and 18th centuries, there were foreign schools in the Ottoman Empire affiliated with the Catholic Church. After the 19th century, Protestant schools improved and the increase in the number of foreign schools accelerated in the second half of the 19th century. According to a determination, the distribution of foreign schools in the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th century were: French schools (72), English schools (83), American schools (465), Austrian schools (7), German schools (7), Italian schools (24), Russian schools (in Beirut) (44), Iranian schools (2), Greek schools (in Izmir) (3) (Kocabaşoğlu, 1989).

The visit of British flagged American merchant ships to Ottoman ports began in the 17th century. Grand Turk was the first American-flagged ship to dock at the Ottoman port. In the 1790's, Grand Turk carried products such as carpets, resin, raisins, figs, leather and opium to New England ports. Under the leadership of David Offley of Philadelphia, American businessmen opened the first American Chamber of Commerce in İzmir in 1811. The trade agreement was signed on May 7, 1830, which allowed Americans to enjoy capitular rights and designated USA as "the most privileged country".

European missionaries began to spread Christianity in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. Protestant American missionaries began similar activities in 1820. In 1810, ABCFM (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission) was established in Boston, through which missionaries were planned to operate outside of the USA and in the Middle East (Akgün, 2014).

The main tasks of the missionaries were to spread Protestantism, especially among Armenians, to live in the society they went to, to collect and report information about that society on every possible issue, and to implicitly impose the American lifestyle. Missionaries have succeeded in establishing many schools at every level, health centers, churches and missionary stations all over Anatolia.

When the missionary work began to extensively involve the Greeks and the Armenians living in the Ottoman lands, the administration began to supervise the missionaries' work starting from the 1860s. The Ottoman administration wanted to close the US schools, because they were afraid of missionary activities raising nationalistic feelings among non-Turkish elements and believing that missionaries' supported for Armenian revolts. This attempt caused friction between the two countries until the beginning of the First World War (Kocabaşoğlu, 2000, Stone, 2006).

The treaty of extradition and nationality was signed between the Ottoman Empire and the USA on August 11, 1874. The USA consulate in Istanbul was promoted to embassy level on June 18, 1906, and John G. A. Leishman was appointed as ambassador. On April 4, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. Following this event, the Ottoman Empire cut its diplomatic relations with the USA on April 20, 1917. Admiral Bristol acted as the High American Commissioner during the years 1919-1927. President Woodrow Wilson delivered a speech in the Congress on January 8, 1918, when he mentioned his famous fourteen principles. Among those declared issues, autonomous development for the non-Turkish people of the Ottoman Empire meant the establishment of an independent Armenian State in East Anatolia. At that time, the Ottoman Empire was on the verge of collapse. Wilson's proposal worsened the feelings against USA.

Historical Overview of Turkish-American Relations

SECOND PERIOD: TURKISH REPUBLIC-USA RELATIONS

The Turkish Republic was established on October 29, 1923, as a new sovereign nation. In those years Turkey's motto was "Peace at home, peace in the world" and the vital goal was to maintain Turkey's international political status created by the Lausanne Peace Treaty. Turkey signed a series of treaties with its neighbors and many other countries to safeguard its territorial integrity and gain international recognition. These include the 1934 Balkan Entente, the 1936 Mediterranean Pact and the 1937 Sadabat Pact.

Turkish Grand National Assembly approved the "Chester" Project on April 10, 1923, to ensure USA support during Lausanne Treaty Talks. The Chester Project was based on the principle of obtaining multiple precious metals mining privileges in return for the railway construction, which was first prepared by Colonel Colby M. Chester in 1900. Ottoman-American Development Company was the contractor and the project was to be carried out in Eastern Anatolia. Due to the company's failure to fulfill the terms of the contract, the Turkish Grand National Assembly terminated the agreement on December 18, 1923.

"Friendship and Commerce Treaty" was signed between Turkey and the US on August 6, 1923. Due to the extensive campaignings of the Armenian and Greek lobbies in the USA, the American Senate did not ratify this treaty at its meeting on January 18, 1927. Rejection of the Senate to ratify the "Friendship and Commerce Treaty" created unrest within the US population, especially in the commercial community, who had business interests in the young republic. To settle this unrest, Admiral Bristol was sent to Ankara to negotiate with Dr. Tevfik Rüştü Aras, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs. After a three day negotiation, on 17th February, 1927, the ten years of interruption was ended by a modus vivendi for the re-establishment of Turkish- American diplomatic relations. (Mango, 2002). The USA participated in the Lausanne Conference as an observer, but she recognized the Lausanne Peace Treaty four years later.

The USA was annoyed by the abolition of capitulations with the Lausanne Treaty. This hindered the development of Turkish-American relations at that period. The United States and Turkey have re-established diplomatic relations on February 17, 1927. Joseph C. Grew was appointed as ambassador. A maritime treaty was signed between the two countries which consisted of five articles and granted privileges to both sides.

On October 25, 1934, a treaty was signed between Turkey and the USA to compensate the USA citizens who were harmed in İzmir during the First World War, amounting to a total of 1,300,000 dollars. Turkey and the USA signed a trade agreement on April 1, 1939 to be effective as of May 5, 1939.

THIRD PERIOD: COLD WAR ERA

The liaison between the USA, Britain, and the Soviet Union, the three important winners of the Second World War, did not last long. The American administration's realization of the Soviet expansion policy, albeit with a delay, initiated the USA to develop a containment policy against Russia. It was believed that without Western economic support, the Soviets would have control over Turkey and Greece, and consequently, with a domino effect the whole region would be under communist influence.

Cold War was a state of geopolitical tension, hostility, and threat between the Western Bloc led by the USA and the Eastern Bloc under the leadership of the Soviet Union. This new bipolar world political order started soon after the Second World War and ended with the disintegration of the Soviet regime and the collapse of the East European Communist governments in 1991. The Cold War was characterized by proxy wars, nuclear equilibrium, propaganda, deterrence, spying, and efforts of gaining regional political and economic influence.

In the first years of the Cold War, Turkey and the USA established a strong alliance. Turkey needed American support for security against Soviet threats, economic aid and modernization projects. The United States realized that Turkey might play an important role against Russia's expansionist policy and her cooperation would contribute to the struggle aiming to prevent the spread of communist ideology.

The Truman Doctrine in 1947, Marshall aid in 1948 and acceptance of Turkey's NATO membership in 1952 have been milestones that have tremendously contributed to the development of Turkish- American relations.

Turkey received 225 million dollars of economic and 305 million dollars of military aid during the 1949-1953 period. Additional economic aid of 867 million dollars and military aid of 1,550 million dollars was made during the years 1954-1962. While Turkey received support for the economy and for defense expenses, she permitted the use of her military bases, facilities, and intelligence collection stations for the national interests of the USA. The İncirlik air-base was opened in December 1954 in Southern Turkey and Jupiter missiles were installed in 1961.

Some events that took place in the 1960s caused tension and fluctuation in Turkish-American relations. Besides, detente between West and East blocks during the 1960s and 1970s diminished the importance of Turkey.

Cyprus crisis

The Cyprus island was conquered by the Ottomans in 1571 and it remained under Ottoman rule until the end of the 19th century. An alliance agreement was signed between Britain and the Ottoman Empire on June 4, 1878. Britain gave the guarantee to protect the Asian lands of the Ottoman Empire. The possession of the island was given to England with the Lausanne treaty. After the withdrawal of Britain from Suez in 1954, the Cyprus issue exhibited a different phase. The Enosis project, which means the union of the island with mainland Greece, gained momentum. Greece appealed to the United Nations on August 16, 1954, arguing that

Historical Overview of Turkish-American Relations

Turkey's relations with the island had ended. In the content of the application, it was stated that the problem had an international character and requested a solution by the will of the people. Starting from the mid-1950s, the Cyprus problem has become the most important item in Turkish foreign affairs. The Republic of Cyprus was established in 1960 under international agreements based on the partnership of Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. According to the treaty, Turkey, Greece and Britain were designated as guarantor states.

Upon the escalation of conflicts in Cyprus and the murders committed by Greek fanatics, the Turkish Government decided to intervene militarily in Cyprus on June 2, 1964 and informed the American Ambassador in Ankara of its intention. The USA administration was rapidly briefed about the news and President Johnson sent a letter to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü on June 5, 1964. President Johnson stated that the Turkish invasion may lead to a war between Greece and Turkey and defined this development as unacceptable and mentioned the probable risk of Soviet invasion of Turkey as a consequence of the war. In such a case, as the President emphasized, the USA is reluctant to defend Turkey. Furthermore, it was stated that the weapons donated by the USA, would not be allowed to be used in this military intervention.

Turkey refrained from military action in Cyprus and Prime Minister Mr. İnönü went to Washington on June 21, 1964, and met with President Johnson. The letter was made public two years later and naturally sparked a strong reaction (www.ismetinonu.org.tr> tarih-te-bugun-16 Ocak). President Johnson's humiliating letter to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü stating not to use American weapons in the Cyprus conflict became one of the milestones for Turkish foreign policy because the content of the letter revealed that total loyalty to the USA has been a mistake.

Turkey and the USA revised the previous agreements between the two countries and signed the " Joint Defense and Cooperation" agreement on July 3, 1969. The agreement was based on Article 51 of the United Nations and Article 3 of the NATO Treaty. The agreement changed the use and status of the bases. Thus, many bases were transferred to the Turkish government and the remaining were given the status of "joint defense facility" under the NATO umbrella.

Turkey intervened in Cyprus on July 20, 1974, because the constitutional order was broken by Greek Cypriots. The second military operation was accomplished on August 14, 1974. Upon these developments, the USA administration initiated an arms embargo on February 5, 1975. After the USA arms embargo, the 1969 treaty was terminated by the Turkish government. On July 25, 1975, the Turkish government declared that the 1969 agreement and all other associated agreements lost their validity. All USA military facilities in the country were taken under the control of Turkish officials except for the İncirlik air-base which was defined as NATO Common Defense Facility. President Jimmy Carter removed the embargo on August 26, 1978.

A new Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA) was signed on March 29, 1980. The objectives of the agreement were the modernization of the Turkish army, the contribution of the USA to the Turkish economy, and USA use of Turkish armed forces facilities. The agreement did not only revised the Turkish-American bilateral relations, but also set a new era in terms of Turkey's NATO obligations.

Besides the Cyprus problem, there were many events causing tension and frustration in Turkish-American relations in the 1960s.

U-2 spy plane problem

The Lockheed U-2 spy plane which took off from İncirlik Air Base in Turkey was shut down in Sverdlovsk ,present Yekaterinburg, Russia. Turkey was not informed about these spying flights. Initially, Americans claimed that the plane flew for meteorological purposes and that the destination was Norway. Eventuall the Russians clearly realized that it was a spy plane. Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev warned that any nation permitting their land for similar action would be considered a target.

Cuba crisis

The "Cuban Crisis" of October 1962 brought the world to the brink of war. The problem was solved with the insightful approach of President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev. The agreement required mutual withdrawal of missiles which meant the removal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey.

Armenian conflict

The American missionary activities that apparently increased in the second half of the 19th century in the Ottoman Empire and Middle East created an atmosphere of sympathy for Armenians. Events of 1915 were defined as genocide by Armenians and allegations against Turkey intensified over the years. Hostility and a strong desire for revenge continued for generations. American Congress kept the issue as a pendulous sword over Turkey each year.

Opium agriculture

Turkey and other-opium producing countries were held responsible for illegal trade by the USA government. Nixon administration requested the banning of opium cultivation and in 1969 requested buying of all the year's product which was refused by Turkish Government. During the course of negotiations to solve the problem, Turkey's first step was to limit the plantation area, and finally, poppy cultivation was definitely forbidden in June 1971. The Turkish government passed a law in July, 1974 permitting the cultivation of opium in seven provinces under state control and only for medical purposes. USA administration initiated an arms embargo on February 5, 1975 lasting more than three years. President JJimmy Carter removed the embargo on August 26, 1978.

Historical Overview of Turkish-American Relations

Modification of Turkish Foreign policy

Turkey's extreme pro-American and West-dependent foreign policy induced international loneliness and antipathy particularly in the Middle East and in the newly decolonized states of Asia and Africa. Turkey, starting from the mid-sixties began to reconsider her political options and followed a more flexible policy that included multidimensional relations including the Arab world. Bilateral relations with the Soviet Union were improved and many important industrial projects were realized with Russian technology and financial support during that time frame. Turkey refused to allow the USA to use its military facilities to support Israel during the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973.

The religious ideology which materialized a revolution in Iran on February 1, 1979 started extreme Western and particularly American hatred. Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan on December 27, 1979, and the hostage crisis at the USA embassy in Tehran proved that Turkey is the most reliable ally in the region.

After three years of military rule, Turgut Özal, who became Prime Minister following the 1983 election, had different approaches in foreign policy. His basic idea was to promote export, develop commercial and economic relations, and prioritize more easily solvable problems. Mr. Özal thought that the good atmosphere created by cooperation and economic welfare would contribute to addressing difficult problems later. He spent efforts to integrate Turkey into the global capitalist economy and he fully supported the economic policies of President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Turgut Özal became the eighth President of the Turkish Republic on October 31, 1989.

FOURTH PERIOD: POST-COLD WAR DEVELOPMENTS

East and West Germany were formally reunited on October 1990 following the collapse of the Berlin wall on November 9, 1989. Mikhail Gorbachev, who served as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and as the head of the state between 1985-1991, followed the policies of Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (restructuring). The collapse and dissolution of the Soviet Union and communist regimes in Eastern European countries mark the end of the cold war. This tremendous collapse naturally had very important consequences in the international balance of power. Francis Fukuyama declared that the capitalist liberal system is the last stage in which human thought and history reached its end (Fukuyama). America remained the sole superpower, and the Soviet threat was largely eliminated. Post-Cold War was characterized by instability and uncertainty.

Henry Kissinger suggests that disintegrating empires create two kinds of tension. Either peripheral countries take advantage of this situation or empires in the process of fragmentation seek to establish authority over their neighbors. Dr. Kissinger claims that the Soviet Union, Turkey, and Iran serve as examples of this event and they try to grab a role in the central Asia states which harbor a Muslim majority population (Kissinger, 1994)

New roles were attributed for Turkey in the Balkans, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. Turkey was regarded as a successful example of a country combining democracy, a liberal economy, and Islam. With these features, Turkey was presented as a role model and a big brother to Central Asian countries. The rapprochement of Turkey and Central Asian countries has not realized the expected benefits.

The international political system changed after the end of the Cold-War. Turkey had a special role as a front-line, bulwark nation during the Cold-War years. The uncertainty in the global political arena during the initial phase of the post-Cold-War era aroused doubt the fluctuation of Turkey's importance. It turned out that Turkey's importance increased due to various reasons.

This new situation provoked the discussion over the function of NATO and naturally the importance of Turkey was questioned. On the other hand, Turkey's geostrategic location as being on the energy transmission lines, has increased the importance of the country. Regional problems and conflict risks increased in the post-Cold War era. Ethnic expansion, terrorism, religious and sectarian fanaticism emerged, affecting the entire Balkans and the Caucasus. Problems such as rapid population growth, global pollution, racial segregation, and xenophobia began to appear in different regions of the globe.

Turkey has also been considered as a balancing power against Russia and Iran. The natural resources of the Caspian Sea region would be accessed by projects intersecting Turkey and transporting of oil and natural gas safely to Western consumption regions.

The areas of conflict between Turkey, Iran, and Russia, either bilaterally or involving all parts, were influence in Turkic republics, question of the division of the Caspian Sea's oil wealth, question of Armenia, problem of Nagorny-Karabagh, uncertainty about pipeline routes, and relations with Georgia and Azerbaijan (Pope Nicole and Pope Hugh, 1997).

Turkey wanted the Central Asian states to be pro-Western, secular and if possible democratic. The US administration reinforced this development with mutual economic cooperation and military assistance under NATO's Partnership for Peace program. US interests showed an excellent match with that of Turkey's goals related to this geography. Turkey targeted especially the energy-rich states of Central Asia to be a decisive power in the region. For this to happen, it was necessary to restrict Russia's influence and prevent Iranian requests for oil and gas transmission lines. When considering the limited capacity of Turkey, this would have been realized only with the support of the USA (Kramer, 2003).

Turkey's transition to the free market economy was supported by the transfer of 13 billion dollars including IMF loans, debt relief, and military aid during 1980-1987.

Historical Overview of Turkish-American Relations

Invasion of Kuwait by Iraq

Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, thus claiming possession over the oil industry in this country. Turkey has given full support to the USA during the First Gulf War and the importance of Turkey increased in the Middle East from the USA's stand-point. Turkey quitted trade with Iraq and closed the oil pipeline from Northern Iraq to Turkish Yumurtalık harbor (Hale,2000). In April 1991, nearly 500,000 Kurds were settled near the Turkish border and a safety zone was created for the security of Kurds. The possibility of an independent Kurdish state created security concerns.

During the last decade of the 20th century, Turkey and the USA shared similar opinions on many issues and acted together. The two countries signed a Defence and Economic Cooperation agreement in 1992. They supported the acceptance of some former communist Eastern European countries in to NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. (Hale, 2000). The USA also stimulated the transport of Caspian underground resources to West through Turkey but by-passing Russia.

Turkey's strong desire for full membership in the European Union began in 1959. The USA has vigorously supported Turkey during those years by diplomatic and lobbying efforts among European allies on Turkey's behalf. An important step was the signing of the Customs Union Agreement in 1995 (Ziya,2014). During the Helsinki Summit organized on December 10-11, 1999, the European Council officially accepted Turkey as a candidate state. Simultaneously the European countries contemplated over a new security concept for the continent as a result of Turkey's role in NATO becoming questionable (Hale, 2000).

Condoleezza Rice believed that not allowing Turkey to enter the European Union would be a huge strategic mistake. She considered the refusal of Turkey to the union would mean a divide between Muslim Turkey and Christian Europe and eventually support Sam Huntington's theory of " The Clash of Civilizations" (Rice, 2011).

On November 15, 1999, President Bill Clinton addressed the Turkish Grand National Assembly. One of the main themes he emphasized was the fact that the friendship between Turkey and the USA did not depend upon a common concern with the Soviet Union, instead he emphasized that the partnership of the two countries has become even more important in the post-cold war era (Clinton <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/228987>).

The United Nations Security Council decided on June 12, 1999 to establish a NATO-led armed force to keep peace and security in Kosova. Turkey contributed to this force by sending troops.

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), under NATO command, was established following the decision of the United Nations Security Council on 20 December, 2001 based on the Bonn Treaty. It aimed to provide security against the authority vacuum that may arise in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime and to support the restructuring of the country in the military, administrative and jurisdiction fields. Turkish armed forces contributed to this multinational UN-mandated force with 1840 men.

As the September 11 incident showed that the USA was not the only superpower, it caused great trauma and significant changes in its foreign policy.

The USA invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003. American administration requested permission from the Turkish government to give access to Turkish land to mobilize fifteen thousand troops from the Fourth Infantry Division to enter Iraq from the North. In return, American economic and military aid, access to key programs from IMF, and strong support for European Union membership was promised. The refusal of the request by the Turkish parliament frustrated and disappointed president George Bush (Bush, 2010). This event has led to a deterioration in bilateral relations. The following incidents further escalated the tension between the two countries. In fact, the timing of negotiating with the Turkish government about the transit passage of the US military from southern Turkey to Iraq, was on the agenda of the briefing by General Franks to President Bush and the National Security Council. General Franks was suspicious about Turkey's reaction because the general parliamentary elections were approaching in the country. Anyway, he proposed to ask permission from the Turkish government bearing in mind that a negative answer was likely (Woodward, 2004).

Turkey, during her United Nations Security Council permanent membership, tried to prevent the sanctions imposed on Iran to halt its nuclear program.

The New York district prosecutor accused the Turkish Halkbank of breaking the USA embargo on Iran over its nuclear program. For this reason, a businessman and deputy general manager of Halkbank were tried in America.

The protests that started in Tunisia on 18 December 2013 for the first time and spread to Egypt, Yemen, Algeria, and Jordan were called " Arab Spring". The movement ultimately spread to Syria causing a devastating civil war. Turkey and the US had very diverging opinions about the solution to the Syrian crisis. The US cooperated with PKK's Syrian branch, PYD, and YPG, in the north of the country, claiming that they fought against ISIS. This justification was naturally not acceptable by Turkey since PKK has been a separatist Kurdish organization involved in terrorist activities since 1984 within Turkey.

Turkey has carried three military operations in Syria respectively in 2016, 2018, and 2019. The aim was to maintain border safety, protect territorial integrity, and prevent illegal human migration. The political goal was to block the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish regional administration, similar to the Iraqi example.

Fethullah Gülen was once believed to be a clergy and a leader of religious movement claiming to serve interfaith rapprochement and world wide education. Fethullah Gülen has been living in self-exile in the USA near Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania since 1999. A coup d'état attempt took place on July 15, 2016, in Turkey which was organized by Gülen's followers. This major crime clearly

Historical Overview of Turkish-American Relations

revealed that Gülen's movement was a terrorist organization. Although the Turkish government requested the extradition of Gülen as the first-degree criminal from the US government several times, this request was rejected. There is a widespread belief in the Turkish public opinion that the USA was behind this failed coup. The American presence in this incidence seems to further exacerbate the already uneasy relationship between Turkey and the USA.

Turkey, despite the opposition of the USA, bought S-400 Air Defense Systems from Russia. The US is contemplating how to respond to Turkey's purchase. Even the CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) is on the table. CAATSA is a federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia. The USA suspended Turkey's participation in the F-35 program by July 31, 2019. On the other hand, Turkey underlines USA refusal to sell Patriots and expresses the vital importance of S-400 missiles for the country's air defense. Turkey recently test-fired the S-400 missile system for which a 2.5 billion dollar contract was signed with Russia in 2017. The testing was condemned by the USA and the European Union.

Turkish-American relations are over two centuries old, but the rapprochement between the two countries occurred after the Second World War. The nature of the relations during such a long time can not be defined in simple terms. Tremendous changes both in international affairs and in domestic issues occurring over time have inevitably affected Turkish-American relations. Therefore it is reasonable to analyze this relation in different time frames .

The early phase of the relations takes place when the Ottoman Empire was in decline and on the contrary USA was flourishing and searching for overseas commercial opportunities. The extensive missionary activities following the initial relations may be defined as the ordinate-subordinate type where the USA had religious, medical, educational, economic, and social influence throughout Anatolia and the Middle East. The Ottoman Sultan of the time recognized the potential risks of such development and relations froze upon the attempt of closing American schools in the Ottoman Empire.

The reluctant attitude of the USA towards the new Turkish Republic has slowly changed over time. The relations progressed slowly but surely over time.

The concept of the alliance in its contemporary meaning can be attributed to Turkish-American relations after the end of 2nd World War and particularly after Turkey's NATO membership. Alliance stems from power gain and security concerns. For an alliance to be established, the presence of an existing or probable common enemy for partners is required. Since states aim to achieve economic, political, military, social, scientific, and technological gains in power relations, they want to benefit from alliance relations while struggling for regional and/or global power.

The Soviet Union, as a victorious state of the Second World War and a superpower afterward, was a real regional threat for Turkey. Meanwhile the Soviets posed threat to the USA on a global scale because the international political system post Second World War consisted the ideologic hard struggle between the Capitalist-West and Communist-East.

The main goals of the USA during the Cold War period were to prevent Soviet expansion, to continue the trade of Western countries through the Mediterranean, to ensure the security of Middle Eastern oil and Israel (Atmaca, 2014). Turkey gained importance with its geopolitical position and as the southeastern flank of NATO. The mutual interests of Turkey and USA coincided for more than a decade during the years of the Cold War. The second rapprochement of the USA and Turkey has been in the 1980s. Apart from these two episodes of rapprochement caused by conjuncture, the sides experienced structural and periodical problems.

First of all, America is a superpower while Turkey is a regional power. The threat perceptions, priorities, goals, and interests of the two countries often contradicted each other. During the post-Cold War era, terms like "model partnership", "enhanced partnership", "strategic partnership" and "key country" were used to designate the importance of Turkey. The use of so many adjectives is due to the inability to describe the true nature of the relationship of Turkey with the USA and the Western World.

The mutual interests and threats that were faced, facilitated the formation of an alliance between Turkey and the USA. But the alliance was an asymmetrical one where the great share of responsibility was taken by the USA. Many incidents in the mid-sixties downgraded the alliance between the two countries and even some leftist circles demanded dropping NATO membership.

In the 2000's the relations between Turkey and the USA were described by two opposite points of view. Some politicians and analysts in both countries have described this relationship as a strategic partnership or even as a strategic alliance. On the other hand, some circles claimed that Turkey followed an independent policy, did not act in accordance with the USA interests, and regarded the bilateral relations as cooperation between two equals.

Concept of alliance

The strategic alliance is the pinnacle of alliances, its strongest expression, the highest degree in terms of hierarchies and the most comprehensive form. A strategic alliance is pursuing and long-term alliance.

Turkey- USA alliance can not be defined as a historic or natural alliance. Turkish-USA alliance was most close during the early years of the Cold War and it developed under real political conditions and was pragmatic in nature. So it may be called a tactical alliance.

Henri J Barkey thinks that the strategic value of Turkey within the alliance does not seem to be a function that leaves a deep impact on the US people and on the institutions that represent the US public, especially the US Congress. Unlike other US allies, Turkey does not possess strong cultural, historical, emotional and economic ties to enhance her position towards America (Barkey, 1992).

Historical Overview of Turkish-American Relations

İsa Afacan claims that the refusal of the American request to station troops in southeast Turkey and move them to Northern Iraq by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on March 1, 2003, is the hallmark of Turkish-American relations during the post- Cold-War period. He points out that the initial political vacuum in Northern Iraq and following the formation of an autonomous Kurdish administration in the region accelerated the long- enduring Kurdish problem of Turkey. The refugee influx, terrorist activities of PKK, sanctions over Iraq all had destructive political, economic, and social effects on Turkey. Afacan views the Kurdish question as the major element in shaping and redefining Turkish-American relations. He proposes three important domestic and two structural processes influencing Turkish foreign affairs and in particular relations with the USA. According to Afacan, Turkey's changing economic, social, and political landscape, the conviction of a new identity, and new political elite are the domestic processes whereas the European Union membership issue and international post Cold-War environment are external processes (Afacan, 2011).

The new elite, specifically the Justice and Development Party (JDP, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi), showed extreme diversity from the basic foreign policy principles of the Turkish Republic. The founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk believed in not interfering with domestic problems of the Arab world. He cautiously refrained from being involved in conflicts of the Middle East neighbors. The concept of keeping peace at home and sustaining peace in the world, preserving the status quo, neutrality in international affairs, and non-alignment were the main themes that shaped the foreign relations of the new Turkish state. This policy was continued by the second president, İsmet İnönü, during the Second World War despite strong pressure from both the Axis and Allied sides. The JDP leadership often criticized the foreign policy of the founders of the Turkish Republic openly or implicitly. The main accusations were; being passive, too much involvement with domestic issues and negligence of the Arab World. It should be remembered that Turkey initiated multifaceted policies during the decades 1960 and 1970. In my opinion, the foreign policy approaches of JDP were ephemeral and caused serious repercussions and these policies have a cause-effect relationship with the current problems which Turkey is facing.

The foreign policy theorist of JDP, Ahmet Davutoğlu, then Minister of foreign affairs and afterwards Prime Minister, believed that Turkey may and should attain a regional preeminence geographically derived from its imperial Ottoman past. The dissertation of Mr. Davutoğlu in his book entitled " Strategic Depth" included the notion that Turkey is a regional leader in the areas that once belonged to the Ottoman Empire. His "Zero problems with neighbors" goal became popular in the Turkish political lexicon. The proactive foreign policy he suggested, did not stem from the religious considerations but from a historical-geopolitical motivation (Brzezinski, 2012).

In the recent past, the USA-Turkish relations were maintained on a personal basis; that is between the leaders of the respective countries. It can be predicted that the president-elect Joe Biden, as a very experienced senior politician, is completely aware of the importance of the established institutions of the USA and he will work in close cooperation with them. In this context, it may be assumed that he will care about NATO. Joe Biden has visited Turkey officially a few times and he knows the country well. It is expected that his administration will be composed of people who know Turkey as well. These thoughts lead to the possibility of an increase in Turkey's importance. It is most likely that the Biden administration will make a general evaluation of the relations with Turkey and follow a policy according to resolutions they arrive.

CONCLUSION

The optimistic option is that the Biden administration reaches reasonable solutions in the interests of the two countries. Conflicting issues can be minimalized through goodwill and cooperation. Turkey is expected to compromise more in the process of solving problems. However, it should be noted that Turkey is capable of disrupting any games planned by the superpowers in the region. The achievement of a fair and sustainable solution in the region will not only ensure stability and peace in the region but will serve the interests of Turkey and the USA as well.

The pessimistic alternative is that no solution can be provided in Syria, Iraq, Iran, the Eastern Mediterranean, and S-400 Air Defense System crises. Such a situation will undoubtedly will increase the tension in the region gradually.

Morton Abramowitz, a former US ambassador in Ankara, reports that Turkey has not been much of an issue in the United States and due to perceived lack of public interest, has received little media attention. He also draws attention to two pressure groups of ethnic origin, the Greek-American and Armenian-American lobbies. These groups are effective on Congress, the executive branch and media thus propagating their anti-Turkish views (Abramowitz, 2000).

Turkey, on her part, has to increase relations with USA Congress to lessen the existing anti-Turkish atmosphere, look for new ways to reach the people of the USA by appearing more in the USA press, and concentrate on public diplomacy.

The most crucial three issues that will shape the Turkish -American relations in near future and also, in the long run, are the activation of the S-400 Air Defense System, the military and political support of the US to PKK associated YPG/PYD Kurdish groups in northern Syria and the court decision about Halkbank case.

There are two main reasons for Congress to oppose the S-400 Air Defense System. Congress wants to prevent Russian influence on Europe and believes that the invisibility feature of F-35 aircraft will be tested once the S-400 Air Defense System is activated. If the implementation of sanctions is considered against Turkey for S-400 Air Defense System, then similar steps for countries

Historical Overview of Turkish-American Relations

including Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Syria, and Qatar who have already bought advanced weaponry systems from Russia, should be taken.

Turkey perceives the formation of an independent Kurdish state in northern Syria as a vital threat to its territorial integrity and she has clearly declared this as its red line. Turkish officials must openly explain to their American counterparts and lobby the Congress about the reason and importance of Turkish military presence in Northern Syria.

It can easily be predicted that the Turkey's relations with Iran and Israel will be determining factors, at least to some degree, of the direction in which Turkish-American relations will evolve in near future.

The decision-makers of both sides will largely determine the direction in which Turkish-American relations will evolve. In order for the relations to progress in a positive way, mutual interests must be promoted while conflicting interests must be resolved most reasonably by reviewing the past experiences and bilateral costs in case of failure.

The unsolved difficult problems paint a gloomy picture for the foreseen future and the deadlock may cause an escalation of deterioration of Turkish-USA relations and this may reach the level of hostility from the divergence of opinion. The involvement of other powers, primarily Russia, who attempt to play a role in the region, may cause unpredictable consequences.

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