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**An Analysis of 200 years of Turkish-American  
Relations from the Turkish perspective**

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## ***Introduction***

Turkish-American relations are going through one of their most complicated periods, with no one talking about a positive agenda in recent years as new problems accumulate with each new development while existing problems remain unresolved. Actually, crisis has never been absent in the history of Turkish-American relations over almost two centuries. While an alliance was formed after the Second World War based on common threat perception, this could not make the relationship unproblematic. In particular, experiences between 1960 and 1980 prepared the ground for the current mutual distrust.

On the other hand, although crises and divergent views have caused tensions between Türkiye and the United States (US) from time to time, these temporary crises never became structural. More recently, despite Turkey's long-standing place in the transatlantic alliance since the 1950s, recent developments, different perceptions, and divergent interests and approaches have raised questions about Türkiye's future in the western alliance and its relationship with the US. In the past, although such differences caused rifts that sometimes weakened transatlantic solidarity, there was always a way for transatlantic partners to make their alliance work.

Türkiye and the US have extensive relations at every level on bilateral, regional and global issues. In addition to bilateral topics, official talks cover counterterrorism, developments in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, the threat posed by the PYD/YPG/PKK and DEASH, the Cyprus issue, the Eastern Mediterranean, Iran, the Caucasus, NATO, energy security, food security and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (mfa.gov). Given both actors' involvement in these issues, the war in Ukraine provides a chance for the US and Türkiye to reconsider their foreign policy approaches and bilateral relations.

This report historically evaluates bilateral relations between Türkiye and the US since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The report focuses on internationalism versus isolationism and realism versus liberalism in US foreign policy making, and the impacts of these approaches on Turkish-American relations. This comprehensive historical assessment can help the reader to understand the origins of disagreements between Türkiye and the US and suggest possible solutions to bring their relations back on track in the light of the latest developments.

## ***Historical Assessment of Turkish-US Relations during the Ottoman Empire***

Prior to the First World War, US foreign policy had almost always been isolationist since independence did not guarantee security for the newly established US. The first US President, George Washington, had advised Americans to stay away from European conflicts. The US policy of isolation thus started in 1783 to keep the country out of the "Old World" and European rivalries (Jentleson 2010, p. 73). The founding fathers, who supported this idea, also wanted to keep European powers out of the Americas and control sphere of influence in North America. Under the Monroe Doctrine, this sphere of influence was extended to the Latin American colonies.

At that time, the US and the Ottoman Empire differed in their approaches to revolutions and monarchy. Since its foundation in 1776, the US was built in opposition to the European imperial and colonial legacy that Americans had fought against (Walker & Miel 2018, p.56). In 1821, US Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, emphasized that the US should prioritize protecting the American revolution and perfecting the union (Rose 2019, p. 10). Nevertheless, The US under Thomas Jefferson and the Monroe Doctrine (the first draft of 1823) had a sympathy and ideological influence on the Greek Revolution for its independence from the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of a self-governing republic instead of monarchy.

The Ottoman Empire's early foreign policy was motivated by military expansionism. However, this policy changed during the Empire's decline to focus on preserving the status quo by

military and diplomatic means against any revolutionary moves within the Empire (Aydın 2004). Although the US sympathized with the Greek revolution, it did not get involved to avoid the risk of direct conflict with the Ottoman Empire and European Great Powers opposed to any revolutionary movement on the European continent.<sup>1</sup>

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to counter Russian efforts to gain control of the Bosphorus Straits and enter the Mediterranean, Britain and France made the Ottoman Empire part of the European balance of power system. In contrast, the Americans, who viewed their nation as motivated by principles higher than European Empires, preferred to avoid participating in European balance of power (Kissinger 2001, p. 238). According to this American exceptionalism, American values, history, and system are unique. This belief became part of the US foreign policy in the thinking that this special virtue is the American determination to spread American ideals around the world.

Although the Ottoman Empire had mastery of the eastern Mediterranean during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and US President Thomas Jefferson dispatched the US navy against Barbary pirates attacking American commercial shipping in the Mediterranean, the first real contacts between the Ottoman Empire and the US began since the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century through maritime trade with Turkish Mediterranean ports (Jentleson 2010, p. 76, mfa.gov).

Despite earlier interactions between the Ottoman Empire and the US, and the appointment of an American Consul in Izmir in 1802, formal relations were not established until in 1831 (Wasti 2012, state.gov 2021). The first formal act of diplomatic engagement and recognition occurred on February 11, 1830, when a US negotiating team presented their credentials to the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs. A treaty of navigation and commerce between the US and Turkey was negotiated. Diplomatic relations and the American Legation at Istanbul were established in 1831. David Porter became the first American *chargé d'affaires* in the American legation (Wasti 2012), which was elevated to Embassy status in 1906, when John G. A. Leishman presented his credentials as the Ambassador (U.S. Embassy).

The Ottoman Empire was also slow to establish its mission in the US in comparison to its diplomatic missions established in Europe during the 1830s. The first official Ottoman government visit to the US was by Edouard Blacque Bey (first ambassador of the Ottoman Empire to the US) while the first Ottoman honorary consulate in the US opened in 1858. The Empire sent its first permanent envoy to the US in 1867 to create the Ottoman Legation in Washington, DC. This was elevated to embassy status in 1909.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century at a time of Western imperial expansion into Ottoman dominions, American missionaries enjoyed opportunities for political and economic access, protected by American and British consuls. Hence, until 1914, the most important aspect of American diplomacy was protecting hundreds of American Protestant missionaries in the Ottoman Empire (Sharkey 2010).

Since Thomas Jefferson's presidency, US foreign policy had prioritized extending commercial relations. President William Howard Taft, for example, followed his predecessors by adopting a strategy known as Dollar Diplomacy (1909-1913). Rather than military power, this foreign policy approach was based on using economic power through involvement in business transactions and loan guarantees (Jentleson 2010, p. 77). However, this strategy failed in the Ottoman Empire because of opposition from the US ambassador and Turkish vacillation under pressure from entrenched European powers who did not wish to see American competition. Trade hence remained a minor factor in American-Ottoman relations.

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<sup>1</sup> Holy Alliance of the balance of power system: Russia, Prussia, Austria, and a restored French monarch.

## *The First World War*

When the First World War broke out in 1914, the US declared its neutrality as part of its isolationist policy based on the understanding that the First World War was not its problem and the US should stay away from Europe. However, this isolationism did not last long, with the US entering the war in 1917. This was primarily due to Germany's efforts to cut off transatlantic shipping through submarine warfare in order to force the Allied forces into submission (Rose 2019, p. 12). However, before the US entered to the war, the Wilson administration had already been providing aid to the UK as part of its foreign policy of allowing the UK do whatever was necessary to restrain continental European powers (Mearsheimer 2012, p. xii).

US President Woodrow Wilson was already planning a new post-war liberal international order to replace the older form based on balance of power, military rivals, and alliances. In a speech to the US Congress in 1917, President Wilson planted the seeds of the future liberal tradition of American foreign policy (Ikenberry 2011, p. 10). His liberal vision of world order was based on the belief that "autocratic and militarist states make war, democracies make peace". President Wilson said that war against Germany was necessary for the world to be "made safe for democracy". Wilson's internationalism thus emphasized principles of liberalism rather than power (Jentleson 2010, p. 84).

Having entered the First World War in 1914 on the side of the Central Powers - the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Bulgaria - the Ottoman Empire severed diplomatic relations with the US on April 20, 1917, after the US declared war against Germany on April 4, 1917 (Office of the Historian). After 1917, the US contributed to the Allied military forces before playing a leading role in negotiating the peace agreements and creating the League of Nations (Jentleson 2010, p. 76).

President Wilson called for a post-war order based on collective security rather than competitive self-interest. His liberal internationalism also aimed at regime change in Europe's empires and rejected the Westphalian international system that forbade states from intervening in others' internal affairs (Rose 2019, p. 12, Posner 2021).<sup>2</sup> More specifically, one of the Fourteen Points<sup>3</sup> that Wilson declared were necessary for post-war peace was the right of self-determination. This provided a theoretical framework to justify secessionist demands from empires, including the Ottoman Empire. The concept actually first emerged in the United States Declaration of Independence of 1776, based on understanding that people were no longer subjects of the monarch but they were individuals who control their own fate.

Although the Ottoman Empire and the US were on opposing sides during the First World War, they never formally declared war on each other. Nevertheless, American ships carried weapons for the Entente Powers – the UK, France, New Zealand, and Australia – that sought to weaken Ottoman Empire and take control of the Turkish Straits during the Gallipoli War (1915-1916).<sup>4</sup>

Besides this, relocation of Armenians that sided with invading Russians and revolted against Ottoman forces resulted in numerous casualties and deaths in 1915. The US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, criticized the Ottoman Empire's Armenian policy and tried to get help for Armenians during the First World War.

President Wilson's principles were more compatible with American historical experiences than those of the European equilibrium as he aimed to abolish the European balance of power and Westphalian system (Kissinger 2001, p. 242). Accordingly, he supported national self-determination for peoples in the collapsing Ottoman Empire to establish their own states (Ikenberry

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<sup>2</sup> Liberal internationalism uses both military and economic power to compel other countries to embrace liberal democracy and uphold human rights (Posner 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Wilson's Fourteen Points, considered the most important statement of American foreign policy, stated American aims in war and to reorganize world politics (Ikenberry 2011, p. 10).

<sup>4</sup> The Entente was defeated at Gallipoli.

2011, p. 10). Under the Treaty of Sévres, for example, the boundaries of a new Armenian state, including Ottoman vilayets, was drawn up by the US Department of State and signed on August 10, 1920 after the Ottoman Empire's defeat. Meanwhile, the Entente powers requested that Constantinople (Istanbul), the Marmara region, and Greater Armenia be placed under an American mandate. However, the US Senate rejected President Wilson's request to the US Congress on May 24, 1920 for the authority to establish a mandate for Armenia (Demirci 2015, p. 70).

Treaty of Sévres stipulated that Greece would receive the remaining portion of the Ottoman Empire's European territory, which was under Entente Powers' occupation, as well as Izmir and Western Anatolia. The treaty also decided the futures of all Arab territories, a new Armenian state, and Kurdistan. Thus, it planted the seeds of Kurdish nationalism since Kurdish people's primary identification changed from religion to ethnicity. Meanwhile, Turks, whose sovereign rights and independence were disregarded by the Entente Powers, were forced to fight to regain their independence and territories (Aydın 2004).

Having lost its status among the great empires and its role in Europe's balance of power, the Ottoman Empire's rulers felt betrayed by the British, who formed secret alliances with Ottoman Arabs to stir up revolts against the Ottoman Empire. The UK had also negotiated the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 with France to take control of much of the Empire's Arabic territories (Bostanci 2014).

Despite the Ottoman Empire's defeat in the First World War, war continued for the Turks in the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923). Turks won the war of independence and established Republic of Turkey, the Treaty of Sévres was superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne on July 14, 1923. This ended the Eastern Question and Armenian Question (Demirci 2015, p. 65).

The Turkish nation-state that emerged from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire after First World War successfully responded to the challenges of the new international system without endangering its existence. The newly established state's main concern was to preserve its independence and sovereignty. The founder of the Republic of Türkiye, President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, adopted the motto of "Peace at home, peace in the world" to reflect his aim of preserving the new status quo (Aydın 2004). Four years after the Republic of Türkiye was declared, the US finally re-established diplomatic relations on February 17, 1927 (Office of the Historian).

Wilson's efforts to create a collective security order through his Fourteen Points and the League of Nations neither encouraged US internationalism during the inter-war period nor prevented the outbreak of Second World War. On the contrary, having rejected both the Versailles Peace Treaty and membership of the League of Nations the US returned back to its isolationist foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, Türkiye joined the League of Nations on July 18, 1932 after Spain and Greece made a bid for Türkiye to be accepted as a member of the League of Nations.

Unlike the Vienna order, which was based on balance of powers, the Versailles order was based on punishment, which was an important reason for the League's dysfunction. Both the US and the USSR<sup>6</sup> (1934-1939) were absent while revisionist states, whose demands were ignored, left. Consequently, because it did not reflect the world system's existing power structure, the League could not fulfill its function of preserving peace.

### ***The Second World War***

After the Second World War broke out, the US again remained outside in line with its isolationist policy of non-involvement in European affairs. However, this stance was

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<sup>5</sup> Article X of the League Covenant, which is a collective security commitment, obliged the US to go to war to defend other League members. Isolationists in the US Senate therefore refused to ratify US membership.

<sup>6</sup> Soviet Union was member of the League of Nations between 1934 and 1939.

questioned when President Franklin Roosevelt proposed to provide military aid to help the UK defend itself against Germany as the administration's main aim was to prevent Germany from dominating Europe. Primarily, the US feared that a victorious Germany would meddle in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>7</sup> The US then prioritized realism over liberalism when Roosevelt chose to work closely with Stalin to defeat Germany (Mearsheimer 2012, p. xxxiii).

Roosevelt also sought to change the US isolationist policy with his Four Freedoms speech and the Atlantic Charter he signed with the UK Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, to create the United Nations (UN) as an international organization to prevent wars and maintain peace (Jentleson 2010, p. 79). All debates between internationalists and isolationists ended, however, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, which forced the US into the war. During the Second World War, Roosevelt revived key ideals of liberal internationalism, such as democracy, human rights, self-determination, and international institutions (Posner 2021).

Türkiye refused to enter the Second World War despite pressure from Allied forces. Instead, between 1923 and 1945, its foreign policy remained based on neutrality and non-alignment, and prioritized peace, sovereignty, and national development over expansionist revisionism.<sup>8</sup>

Türkiye is located in one of the most strategic regions in world politics, which makes it susceptible to international developments and sensitive to the regional political balance. Hence, geography matters in Turkish foreign policy making. Because it borders on many states, Türkiye faces a high risk of attack, which creates the need to defend itself against all opponents. Accordingly, between 1920 and 1955, Turkish foreign policy makers agreed several pacts and friendship declarations with neighboring countries.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, despite these regional pacts, Turkish foreign policy remained independent, with Türkiye maintaining friendly relations with all the major states while avoiding any formal attachments until 1939 (Aydın 2004).

After the Second World War, Turkish-US relations rapidly expanded and deepened (mfa.gov). In the bipolar post-Second World War environment, the US gave up its traditional isolationist policy and undertook new responsibilities to contain the Soviet Union's expansionism under Stalin. When the Soviet Union cancelled the Friendship and Neutrality Treaty signed with Turkey in 1925, and later demanded a military base on the Turkish Straits and the return of Kars and Ardahan in 1945, Türkiye abandoned its traditional neutralist policy that had prevented it from establishing alliances (Walker & Miel 2018, p. 57). In 1946, as an important sign of American readiness to protect Türkiye against Soviet aggression, the US battleship Missouri, carrying the body of Turkish Ambassador Münir Ertegün, who had died in Washington, anchored in Istanbul (Aydın 2004).

The Second World War ended with a victory for US foreign policy over fascism. Like Wilson, Roosevelt believed that the best way to protect American interests was to use American power to create a rule-based liberal international order (Rose 2019, p. 13; Ikenberry 2011, p. 14) based on economic openness, cooperative security, democratic solidarity, and multilateral institutions (Ikenberry 2017, p. 3). These principles paved the way for establishing the Bretton Woods system, IMF, World Bank, UN, Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, and NATO. These new systems, doctrines, and institutions were all designed to revive and protect an American sphere of influence based on liberalism (Rose 2019, p. 14).

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<sup>7</sup> The Roosevelt Corollary aimed to protect US national interests in both Europe and Asia through a global equilibrium policy to prevent Russia from dominating Asia (Kissinger 2001, p. 241).

<sup>8</sup> Although Türkiye enjoyed good neighborly relations, she had problem with the UK regarding Mosul, with France regarding Hatay, and with Italy regarding the Eastern Mediterranean after the 1930s (Aydın 2004).

<sup>9</sup> NATO (1952), Balkan Pact (1953), the Baghdad Pact (1955)

In March 1947, US President Harry Truman announced a new doctrine, the Truman Doctrine, which aimed to “assist and support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures.” This planted the seeds of Türkiye’s transatlantic relations as Truman highlighted the dangers facing Athens and Ankara, saying that no other country could help them (Kaine 2017, p. 38). In June 1947, US Secretary of State George C. Marshall proposed a European recovery program, the Marshall Plan, which established the roots of the transatlantic alliance. The economic recovery plan was designed to use economic aid to promote stability and reduce Soviet influence and Communism in post-war Europe (Kaine 2017, p. 38). Seventeen European countries, including Türkiye, benefitted. The Turkish-US relations were further advanced when the two countries signed the Economic and Technical Cooperation agreement on July 12, 1947. This agreement implemented the Truman Doctrine’s policy (state.gov. 2021).

Although the Soviet threat was one of the major reasons for Türkiye’s willingness to position itself in the West, there were other normative reasons. That is, Turkish foreign policy was not only shaped by realism but also by liberalism. Türkiye’s orientation with the West, which began through Westernization and modernization during the Ottoman Empire between 1839 and 1876, continued with political reforms after the establishment of Republic of Türkiye to become a major feature of Turkish foreign policy. As a result of this policy choice, Türkiye joined several Western organizations from 1947 onwards. More specifically, its association with the West began with the Truman Doctrine of 1947, which led to membership of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in 1948 to benefit from the Marshall Plan. Membership of the Council of Europe followed in 1949 while Türkiye gained admission to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952. Türkiye then joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1961, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1975. Türkiye first applied for association with the European Economic Community in 1959, although its EU journey started with the Ankara Agreement signed between Türkiye and the EC in 1963. This continued with the Additional Protocol (1970), the Customs Union (1995), and the launch of official accession negotiations (2005) (Unver Noi 2017, p.20).

After the 1950s, Turkish foreign policy was also dramatically changed by the country’s transition to a multi-party system and the needs of liberal economy. By joining the organizations listed above and assuming their principles, Türkiye has positioned itself as part of the rule-based liberal international order pioneered by the US after the Second World War: that is, committed to human rights, collective security, and economic advancement to avoid any return to war.

### ***The Cold War***

For the US, there was a new disequilibrium in Europe after the Second World War. The post-war goodwill between the US and the USSR was short-lived after Soviet occupations in Europe and the division of Germany (Kissinger 2001, p. 72). The Soviet Union emerged as the most powerful state in Europe with no group of European countries capable of forming a balancing coalition to contain it (Mearsheimer 2012, p. xiii). The US therefore developed the containment strategy. Meanwhile, post-world international relations became bipolar as the two superpowers confronted each other across dividing lines (Kissinger 2001, p. 72). The US liberal internationalist agenda was aimed to deepen and expand the rule-based liberal international order and spread liberty and democracy worldwide, particularly to nations struggling to be free. This started to play an important role in American foreign policy making (Ikenberry 2011, p. 20).

During the Cold War, the common strategic threat binding the US and Türkiye together was the Soviet Union. Türkiye played an important role in the US containment policy as a buffer state against the Soviet Union as its geostrategic location made it an important Western ally on NATO’s southern flank while it was in turn protected from Soviet aggression (Walker & Miel

2018, p. 58). For the US, “Turkey, which has the strongest military power in the region, allied to the western organizations and principles, friendly to Israel, was a pivotal country” (Kissinger 2001, p. 165).

The Turkish-American relationship that commenced with the Truman Doctrine flourished in the 1950s as Turkish foreign policy remained pro-western (Aydın 2004). However, this could not be sustained during the 1960s when both domestic changes and US policy toward Cyprus, led to a re-evaluation of Türkiye’s pro-western alignment that left it isolated internationally. Following this cooling during the 1960s, the relationship deteriorated further in the 1970s (Aydın 2004).

The 1964 Cyprus crisis was a turning point in the relationship. For many Turks, developments in Cyprus during the 1950s represented a first step towards achieving the Greek aim of Megali, namely re-establishing the Byzantine Empire, starting with Enosis – the unification of Cyprus with Greece. Consequently, at the end of 1963, Turkish foreign policy focused on protecting Turkish Cypriots under attack from Greek Cypriots. The US was reluctant to impose any solution on the issue while the Cypriot parliament announced general conscription for the Greek Cypriot defence force. In response, Türkiye launched a unilateral intervention. President Johnson then wrote a letter warning Türkiye that “NATO allies have not had a chance to consider whether they have an obligation to protect Türkiye against the Soviet Union if Türkiye takes a step which results in Soviet intervention without the full consent and understanding of its NATO Allies. The US cannot agree to the use of any US supplied military equipment for a Turkish intervention in Cyprus under present circumstances”. This extremely disappointing letter questioning NATO support for Türkiye raised serious concerns among Turks about the reliability of its alliance with the West (Aydın 2004).

While the Cyprus issue and the Johnson letter were the major problems at that time, other developments encouraged the deterioration of the relationship between Türkiye and the US. Following the reduced superpower rivalry due to détente, the world became more economically and politically interdependent, which also enabled members of alliance systems to form relations with members of the opposite bloc. Meanwhile, there was a growing anti-American sentiment within the Turkish for various reasons: American sovereignty over military bases on Turkish soil; the CIA’s alleged covert activities; the insufficient American military aid; misuse of US installations in Türkiye; NATO’s adoption of the flexible response strategy that no longer entailed an automatic nuclear response against the aggressor; and the withdrawal of Jupiter missiles during the Cuban missile crisis from Türkiye without consulting the Turkish government. Because the US acted without consulting its allies, Turkish people perceived that the US was treating Türkiye as a client-state with negotiable interests. Meanwhile, new political parties emerged calling for Türkiye to break its ties with the West and normalize relations with communist countries, which indirectly contributed to a reorientation of Turkish foreign policy during the 1960s (Aydın 2004).

In the 1970s, another Cyprus crisis led to fundamental changes in Turkish foreign policy that caused alienation from the west. Another issue that affected Turkish and American policies during and after the 1974 Cyprus crisis was opium poppy cultivation in Türkiye. In 1971, the US Congress required the President to suspend all military sales and economic assistance to governments that failed to prevent narcotics produced in their countries from reaching the US. While American pressure ultimately led to a ban on poppy farming in Türkiye, it provoked anti-Americanism in the Turkish public since Turks learned that the US had asked India to increase its opium production to meet a worldwide shortage forecast by the International Narcotics Board. In response, the coalition government in 1974 revoked Türkiye’s ban on opium cultivation. In return, the US implemented an embargo that ended all assistance to Türkiye’s government (Aydın 2004).

Meanwhile, in Cyprus, colonels launched a coup against Cypriot President Makarios as they felt that the US would tolerate it and restrain Türkiye, as in 1964 and 1967. However, by 1974, the US no longer had the same leverage as before. After Türkiye's intervention and invasion of part of the island, the US Congress imposed an arms embargo on Türkiye between 1975 and 1978. In response, the Turkish government suspended activities at all American bases in Türkiye, except those related to NATO (Aydın 2004).

Between 1980 and 1983, Türkiye experienced fundamental changes after a military coup d'état launched on September 12, 1980. During this time, the European Community suspended formal relations with Türkiye. In contrast, the US improved her relationship with Türkiye under military regime by providing military and economic aid, thereby abandoning its focus on liberal principles in favor of a realist foreign policy based on national interest and strategic considerations (Aydın 2004). This heyday of Turkish-American relations continued after Turgut Özal became Türkiye's Prime Minister following the transition to a civilian regime in 1983 and peaked during the First Gulf War when Türkiye supported the American stand (Aydın 2004).

### ***The Post-Cold War Era***

The Cold War ended with the collapse of Communism and disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. After that, the Truman Doctrine lost its validity. However, no US administration has produced a comprehensive plan to replace it (Kaine 2017, p. 36). The common threat to the US and Türkiye disappeared, raising questions about the future of the relationship. However, this change in the world order did not change Türkiye's geostrategic importance for the western alliance. Indeed, it enabled Türkiye to play a potentially more influential role in world politics (Aydın 2004) while the convergence of interests in the uncertain and volatile post-Cold War international environment made Türkiye and the US "strategic partners" (Müftüler Baç 2005-2006, p. 61).

At the same time, the emergence of new conflict centers led Türkiye to reconsider its foreign policy choices and become reluctant to commit itself to the US's international political priorities. In contrast to the preferences of previous administrations, coalition governments in Türkiye after 1991 preferred to improve relations with Europe instead of increasing dependency on the US (Aydın 2004).

Nevertheless, strengthening its relationship with Türkiye was still important for the US since Türkiye's proximity to Iraq, Iran, and the Caucasus made cooperation in any crisis indispensable (Kissenger 2001, p. 188). The 1991 Gulf War, which started over Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, marked a watershed in US-Turkish relations. The fear of Iraq's disintegration was one justification for ending the war quickly. In particular, the US believed that an independent Kurdish Republic in northern Iraq could harm Turkish-American relations and undermine Türkiye's commitment to support American foreign policy in the Gulf. Thus, Iraq's dismemberment was not a US goal since it required Türkiye's support for its military operations there. The US administration realized that Türkiye would not cooperate if it predicted the emergence of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq with the potential to inflame the Kurds in Türkiye (Kissenger 2001, p. 190, 299).

After 1991, Türkiye's common linguistic and religious bonds with the newly independent Central Asian and Caucasian republics positioned it as an economic and secular and democratic political model. With these developments, ethnic, religious, and historical links became more important in Turkish foreign policy making. The US also favored Turkish influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia as a counterweight to Iran's regional ambitions, encouraged by the vacuum left by the collapse of communism (Aydın 2004).

This new reality also created opportunities for Türkiye to become an energy hub due to its geographical proximity to the region. The Caspian region's vast hydrocarbon reserves made the new states energy suppliers for Türkiye and European countries. The US supported the building of multiple gas pipelines to prevent any single actor from gaining a monopoly over the export of these energy resources. These developments made Ankara an important strategic partner for transatlantic energy projects since the 1990s. The Southern Gas Corridor, which was a priority project during the George W. Bush and Obama administrations, received bipartisan support in the US. In contrast, despite strong US political support, the Nabucco project was not completed due to its commercial and financial shortcomings. Instead, the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) and Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) were planned to deliver Azerbaijani gas via Türkiye to Italy, thereby reducing Europe's energy dependency on Russia (Sartori 2017, p. 159).

Another post-Cold War development has been ethnic conflicts within states (Anne-Marie Slaughter 2011, p. 107). In the Balkans, for example, the struggle between Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians, which ended with ethnic cleansing of Bosnians, raised concerns in Türkiye, where there are five million Boshnaks (Turkish citizens of Bosnian origin). Despite trying to keep out of European affairs, the US ultimately emerged as an important actor of the UN's operation in the Balkans (Kissinger 2001, p. 271).

The 1990s' wars in the Balkans, the war in the Caucasus (over Nagorno Karabakh) between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and Western policies towards these two conflicts were perceived by the Turkish public as Christian solidarity against Muslims. This resulted in questioning Türkiye's western orientation and a reassessment of Turkish identity. Whereas Türkiye's traditional isolationist policy avoided involvement in regional politics and conflicts, the country was now forced to take sides and implement an active foreign policy. Türkiye adopted a new multi-dimensional foreign policy approach, which allowed more space for new actors, and bridged different cultures and geographical settings while maintaining the traditional pro-western orientation (Aydın 2004).

Domestic issues, such as the Kurdish separatist movement and the rising power of Islamic forces connected with international developments, became important factors in Turkish foreign policy making in the 1990s (Aydın 2004). Given increasing PKK terrorist attacks and bomb attacks and assassinations by reactionary terrorist organizations in the 1990s, the National Security Council considered both separatism and reactionarism to be domestic threats associated with foreign countries (Balçı, 2015).

### ***The post 9/11 era***

After 2001, Al-Qaeda's 9/11 terror attacks on the US and subsequent attacks in London, Madrid, and Istanbul made the fight against international terrorism a primary area for security cooperation. Türkiye supported and participated in US-led missions in the war against terrorism in Afghanistan. However, the US could not get the same support from its allies when it launched a unilateral pre-emptive military strike against Iraq to destroy Iraqis Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD-chemical weapons). Turkish-US relations were further strained by disagreements over Iraq's future and the after effects of the Turkish Parliament's refusal on March 1, 2003 to permit US forces to cross Turkish territory *en route* to Iraq due to concerns that American actions could allow an independent Kurdish state to emerge in Northern Iraq. These developments led to the collapse of the Turkish-American strategic partnership.

Realpolitik that shaped the US foreign policy making at the beginning of the war in Iraq changed when the WMD were not found in Iraq. The US liberal tradition came to the fore through Bush Doctrine of exporting democracy to Iraq. Türkiye did not support the US strategy to use military power in Iraq but it played an important role in the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA) of the US as being co-partner of Democracy Assistance

Dialogue (DAD) with Italy and Yemen in 2005 with the aim to advance dialogue between civil society and governments on topics such as women's empowerment, freedom of expression, electoral and political processes in the BMENA (Kramer 2008).

### ***Current Problems and Challenges in Turkish-US Relations***

Some of the current problems in bilateral relations are related to historical experiences. In particular, issues between Türkiye and the US that were historically considered as a direct or indirect threat to Türkiye's territorial integrity, independence, and democracy still have raised concerns for Turkish side.<sup>10</sup>

In recent years, the US's post-Cold War defensive support for Türkiye has gradually declined, eventually to indirect or direct embargoes. This has forced Türkiye to seek alternatives in the defense sector. This raised concerns for the US side and created further frictions in bilateral relations. These disagreements include CAATSA sanctions on Türkiye's defence industry following the purchase of S400 defence missiles from Russia, clashes of interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, US support for the YPG in Syria and its refusal to extradite Fethullah Gülen to Türkiye. Despite changing US administrations and strategic mechanism established between two countries, there is no concrete sign for resolution of these disagreements.

### ***The US support to the PKK/PYD in Syria***

The Obama administration's policy of a "new beginning" to repair the US's negative image in the Middle East was also an important step towards improving its relationship with Türkiye specifically. The second meeting of this policy took place in Türkiye, following one in Egypt in 2009. The US presented Türkiye during the Arab Spring as role model that had successfully combined Islam and democracy. Liberal values, particularly democratization, played an important role in Turkish-American relations and both countries supported the Arab uprisings and democratization in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

However, support for regime change in MENA during the Arab Spring started to change as new threats emerged from the prolonged conflicts that led to failed states and growing terrorism. In contrast to Türkiye, the US administration then abandoned its policy of supporting revolutions out of its concern that it would alienate its counterrevolutionary, monarchical Arab allies, such as Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. Thus, once again, realism predominated over liberalism in American foreign policy making.

The partnership between Türkiye and the US was broken when the Arab Spring turned into a Kurdish Spring in Türkiye's neighborhood, with US military support for PKK-affiliated groups in Syria like YPG. Distrust was caused in the bilateral relationship after the two countries took opposite stances on three key issues: the Obama administration's reluctance to overthrow the Assad regime; its reduction of the entire Syrian problem to countering Daesh and subsequent cooperation with YPG, and Türkiye's support for anti-Assad opposition groups. Thus, conflicting interests and approaches to the civil war in Syria caused the two countries to drift apart.

Between these issues, the major disagreement was over US support for Syria's PYD/YPG. Although the US recognizes the PKK as a terrorist organization, it considers the PYD, which

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<sup>10</sup> The re-emergence of some historical issues related to the Treaty of Sévres has encouraged the perception that the US is trying to complete its unfinished plans from First World War and deepened Turkish society's crisis of confidence regarding the US.

is a Syrian offshoot of the PKK, along with its armed wing, the YPG, as its most effective partner in the fight against Daesh in Syria. Türkiye has understandable concerns that the PYD/YPG may try to follow a similar path to that of the northern Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) to create an autonomous Kurdish region in northern Syria. This in turn could embolden Kurds of Türkiye to make similar territorial demands. In addition, Türkiye argues that US logistical support for the YPG is being transferred to PKK terrorists in Türkiye while the US's continued supply of heavy weapons to the YPG, even after the defeat of Daesh, has increased bilateral tensions further. The issue may be further complicated by Türkiye's planned military operations in northern Syria and the US Treasury Department's decision to exempt private companies in north-eastern and western Syria from US sanctions and the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act.

### ***The US policy regarding Fethullah Gulen and FETO***

After the failed coup attempt in Türkiye on July 15, 2016 relations between the US and Türkiye has become more complicated. In particular, Türkiye's fight against FETO (Fetullahist Terrorist Organization) and demands for the extradition of its leader, Fethullah Gulen, whose loyalists within the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) attempted the coup, from the US have been at the top of the bilateral agenda (mfa.gov). The US, however, refuses to extradite him. This reluctance has raised concerns in Ankara about the US stance regarding democracy in Türkiye.

This issue was heightened further following the arrest by the Turkish police of two Turkish employees of the US Consulate on charges of having ties to the PKK and FETO. In response, the US stopped issuing visas for Turkish citizens in Turkey, after which the Turkish government introduced reciprocal measures against US citizens. Moreover, twelve US citizens were imprisoned on terrorism charges, including Pastor Andrew Brunson, who was charged with supporting FETO. Relations remained tense until the courts ordered Brunson's release. FETO issue still remains one of main areas of disagreement between the two countries.

### ***The US Policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean***

Overlapping claims over the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean have caused tension between Türkiye and Greece (CIFE). The proximity of some Greek islands to Türkiye's coast has caused problems in reaching agreement over the maritime boundary between Türkiye and Greece in the Aegean Sea. According to international law, islands may have full, partial, or no effect on boundary delimitation. That is, islands do not automatically generate full maritime jurisdiction areas. Rather, they can be ignored or allowed limited effect if their location prevents equitable delimitation between two states. In the Aegean, however, Greece wants Greek islands to have full effect, which distorts the requirement for equitable delimitation, thereby ignoring Türkiye's rights as the country with the Aegean's longest coastline and making the Aegean purely Greek. In short, given that the Aegean is a shared sea, a fair and equitable maritime boundary delimitation is required based on mutual consent (CIFE).

The US Congress approved the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act in 2019. This Act supported the alliance between the US, Greece, Israel, and Greek Cypriot Administration while excluding Türkiye. The former US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, the former US Ambassador to Greece, Geoffrey Pyatt, and the Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Bob Menendez, played significant roles in developing Greek-US relations and supporting Greece's arguments over the Eastern Mediterranean (Fikirturu 2021). The US's Eastern Mediterranean policy may thus become another source of distrust between Türkiye and the US, which has raised concerns in Ankara.

### ***Armament of Greek Islands in the Aegean Sea***

Tensions between Türkiye and Greece have escalated further following Greece military deployments and military drills on Greek islands near Türkiye's coastline. Another irritant for Ankara and that Greece uses to provoke Türkiye is the increasing US military presence and weaponization of Greek islands that should remain demilitarized according to the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty (CIFE).

Renewal of Defense Cooperation Agreement between the US and Greece for another five years and expansion of its scope that allow the US to deploy more troops at its Greek bases, including Alexandroupoli Base and Suda Base on Crete, 45 km from the Turkish border along with the US access to Greek military bases and expanded areas for US forces to exercise have raised questions in Türkiye against whom this defense cooperation is (Fikirturu 2021).

### ***Cyprus Issue***

The Greek Cypriots have twice rejected a federal solution for Cyprus: first in the referendum for the Annan Peace Plan and then by abandoning negotiations at the Crans-Montana summit. The resulting fading prospects of a resolution of the Cyprus dispute on the basis of federalism has caused Türkiye to change its stance towards the issue. Thus, the Turkish government decided to counter the stalemate by claiming that the status quo is no longer sustainable and unfairly damages the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) due to Greek Cypriot intransigence. Although the US previously played no role in resolving the issue, it now states that it opposes Türkiye and the TRNC's offer of a two-state solution.

The major change in US foreign policy regarding Cyprus issue is the US Congress's approval of the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act in 2019. The Act lifts the US arms embargo on the Greek Cypriot administration and provides military assistance to the Greek Cypriots Administration (Act of 2019). This Act added a new source of tensions in Türkiye and the US relations.

### ***The Armenian issue in Turkish-American relations***

The relocation of the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, who had assisted its enemies, resulted in numerous casualties. Arguments about these deaths formed the basis of subsequent Armenian claims and Armenians charge that the campaign was a deliberate attempt to destroy the Armenian people - an act of genocide (Aydın 2004). Türkiye, however, objects to the description of the incidents as "genocide" as it contends that there was no official extermination policy implemented against the Armenian people as a group. Instead, the issue is described as a tragedy in which both sides suffered casualties. Ankara has repeatedly proposed the creation of a joint commission of historians from Türkiye and Armenia and international experts to tackle the issue.

US presidents had declined to call the 1915 events in the Ottoman Empire "genocide", instead referring to them as the mass atrocity of the 20th century, the Armenian Meds Yeghern. On April 24, 2021, however, Joe Biden formally recognized the "Armenian genocide", which created a new rift with Türkiye.

### ***The US extradition of an ASALA terrorist to Armenia***

The first murder occurred in 1973, when Gurgen Yanikyan, an Armenian, killed the Turkish Consul General in Los Angeles, Mehmet Baydar, and his aide, Bahadır Demir. Yanikyan's attack started a chain of assassinations of Turkish diplomats and triggered organized Armenian

terrorism in the form of ASALA.<sup>11</sup> Another victim was the Turkish Consul General in Los Angeles, Kemal Arıkan, killed in 1982 by Hampig Sassounian.

Another cause of friction between Türkiye and the US occurred in 2021 when the US authorities decided to extradite Hampig Sassounian to Armenia. The Turkish government condemned the releasing and extradition of Sassounian, who was serving a life sentence. This decision of the US court took place just after President Biden's recognition of the Armenian genocide claims.<sup>12</sup>

### ***The Purchase of S400 Defence Missiles from Russia and the Impact of CAATSA on Turkish-American Relations***

Another cause of tension was Türkiye's purchase in 2017 of S-400 air defence systems from Russia. Although the defence minister said that Ankara has no plans to integrate the S-400s into NATO's system, the purchase led to security concerns and questions about their compatibility with NATO infrastructure. Türkiye experienced similar tensions in 2013 after deciding to purchase a missile defence system from China. However, it abandoned the plan in 2015.

After the purchase of S400 air defence systems from Russia, Türkiye was removed from the F-35 fighter jet program, delivery of F-35 jets was blocked (cancelling contracts worth billions of dollars), and a de facto arms embargo was imposed. In addition, in 2020, the US President, Donald Trump, approved of a decision to target Türkiye's defense industry under the "Combating America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act" (CAATSA).

Türkiye has become the first NATO member subject to CAATSA sanctions although Türkiye-US relations since 1947 have focused on developing strategic cooperation and sharing defense opportunities. CAATSA sanctions thus eliminated the most important dimension underlying the Türkiye-US alliance, when Washington decided not to meet Ankara's defense needs by withholding F16 fighter jets and spare parts.

### ***Democracy, the Rule of Law, and Human Rights in Turkish-American Relations***

The US considers itself both the source and guarantor of democracy worldwide, and applies sanctions and other pressures if other countries fail to meet its criteria (Kissinger 2001, p. 17). While the US condemned the coup attempt in Türkiye on July 15, 2016, it emphasized the importance of the Turkish government's adherence to policies and actions to build public trust in the country's democratic institutions and the rule of law, as well as upholding human rights commitments (state.gov. 2021). However, the US's reluctance to extradite Fethullah Gulen (person considered behind the plot) to Türkiye have received criticism from the Turkish government.

The arrest of Pastor Andrew Brunson in October 2016 after FETO's failed coup attempt for allegedly aiding FETO and PKK and obtaining confidential information for political and military espionage became another source of friction between Türkiye and the US. The US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) accused Turkish Minister of Justice, Abdulhamit Gul, and Minister of Interior, Suleyman Soylu, of human rights abuses and targeted them under Executive Order 13818, known as the Treasury's Global Magnitsky Act (Magnitsky Act 2018).

Another source of friction was the decision to convict Osman Kavala. The US described the court's ruling as inconsistent with respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

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<sup>11</sup> Since the 1970s, the Armenian terror organization, ASALA, has murdered 31 Turkish diplomats and family members to put pressure on the Turkish government to acknowledge the alleged genocide, pay reparations, and support the creation of an Armenian state.

<sup>12</sup> This action also breaks US law. According to Clause 1116 of Article 18 of the US Criminal Code, it is a crime to murder a diplomat, and the punishment of the crime is a life sentence (Elbir 2022, p. 101).

Generally, the US criticized “prolonged pretrial detention, [and] overly broad claims of support for terrorism and criminal insult cases” (Ned Price 2022). As given above, liberal principles remain important part of and one of the main determinants of Turkish-American relations.

### ***The Ambassadors in Turkish-American Relations***

Ambassadors can play a constructive role between states which have disagreements by facilitating negotiation and dialogue. For a long time, the US had no ambassador in Ankara, which meant there was no US official to quickly mend bilateral relations between the US and Türkiye. Although a US Ambassador has been present in Ankara since 2017, various issues have damaged bilateral relations, such as the arrest of US embassy employee. Following the arrest, the US stopped processing new visas for Turkish citizens in Turkey, followed by other measures, such as selling off Turkish assets and the Turkish Lira. Ankara retaliated with similar measures (Financial Times 2017).

### ***Challenges in Bilateral Economic Relations: Protectionism and Neo-mercantilism***

American history is full of political conflict over free trade versus protectionism (Jenthleson 2010, p. 109). The most recent version of American protectionism/economic nationalism based on “America First” trade policy led to trade restrictions with Türkiye that caused historical changes in Turkish-American commercial relations. The Trump administration first imposed 25% tariffs on steel and 10% tariffs on aluminium in March 2018, based on national security grounds (Section 232). In August 2018, tariffs were doubled to 50% on steel as pressure the Turkish government to release Pastor Andrew Brunson. President Donald Trump clearly stated that he doubled duties on steel and aluminium in response to the plummeting value of the Turkish Lira. Türkiye responded to Trump’s tariff escalation by raising tariffs on US cars, alcohol, and tobacco (Politico 2019).

Although a Turkish judge released Brunson and he returned to the US in October 2018, tariffs remained in place until they were reduced to 25% in May 2018 (Daily Sabah 2020). Moreover, in March 2019, President Donald Trump removed Türkiye and India from a decades-old US program - the Generalized System of Preferences - that allows developing countries to export many goods to the US duty free. The administration argued that Türkiye was now sufficiently economically developed that it should no longer benefit from preferential market access to the US (Politico 2019).

These protectionist steps as well as hidden and open arms embargo implemented by the US to Türkiye hindered both countries to reach the goal of 100 billion USD bilateral trade since protectionism begets protectionism. As Irwin (2017, p. 56) notes, “trade barriers are easy to impose but hard to remove. It can take decades to repair damages”. According to Barry Posen, neo-mercantilist and protectionist economic policies led to an illiberal economic trend since economic openness and lifting barriers on trade is one of the main objectives of the liberal international order and its institutions. However, trust is needed to keep the common project moving forward, so without trust, the order may gradually fall apart (Rose 2019, p. 18).

### ***The Impact of Iran Sanctions on Turkish-American Relations***

The final issue is the Halkbank trial, which became a very sensitive issue between Türkiye and the US. In the trial, Reza Zarrab, a prominent Turkish-Iranian gold dealer, was charged with banking fraud to evade US sanctions on Iran by using gold to buy Iranian oil and gas over five years from 2010 to 2015. The former deputy CEO of Halkbank, a Turkish state-owned bank, was accused of conspiring with Zarrab and arrested in the US. Zarrab pleaded guilty and testified as a prosecution witness at the trial of the former Halkbank executive on charges of

violating US economic sanctions against Iran. Among other possible outcomes, Türkiye faces the risk of exclusion from the international banking system and seizure of assets. These economic challenges may hit Türkiye as a trading state also pose political challenges for the ruling party since a weakened economy could hinder its prospects in the 2023 elections. Halkbank has pleaded not guilty to bank fraud and conspiracy over its alleged use of servicers to evade sanctions. On January 2022, a US appeals court ruled that Halkbank can appeal to the US Supreme Court without having to defend itself in a Manhattan Federal Court. This case could have significant implications for Türkiye and damage the already strained relations between Türkiye and the US.

### ***Is there a still way forward in Turkey-US relations?***

Security and defence cooperation is the main determinant of Türkiye-US bilateral relationship. As highlighted by the US State Department, “Türkiye is a key NATO ally and critical regional partner, and improving the relationship between two countries and keeping Türkiye anchored to the Euro-Atlantic community is in American interest” (state.gov. 2021). The two countries’ armed forces are highly integrated with the NATO framework while, even before Türkiye joined NATO, Turkish and American soldiers fought together in the Korean War of 1950-1953.

As an important US security partner and valued NATO ally since 1952, Türkiye has played significant roles in NATO missions and operations worldwide. Since 2011, it has hosted NATO radar installations in Malatya Kurecik needed for US missile defence systems. Türkiye was a leader in NATO’s Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan and serves as NATO’s vital eastern anchor, controlling the straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, which link the Black Sea with the Mediterranean in accordance with Montreaux convention. Türkiye is engaged in intensive efforts to defeat terrorist organizations. As a vital member of the Defeat ISIS Coalition, Türkiye opened its military bases to the US and its coalition partners in July 2015. Incirlik Air Base was critical in the effort to degrade and ultimately destroy Daesh in Syria and Iraq (state.gov., 2021).

However, defence cooperation between Türkiye and the US has been complicated by Türkiye’s purchase of S-400 anti-air missile defence system while deteriorating relations resulted in sanctions and Ankara’s expulsion from the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program, as previously explained. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Menendez said there would be no new sales to Türkiye unless the S-400 was abandoned. However, the war in Ukraine has allowed this topic to be reopened, with several US lawmakers favoring the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Türkiye as critically important for the US (Daily Sabah 2022).

Ambassador Flake highlighted that “Türkiye has the second largest F-16 fleet, the third largest contributor in NATO missions and playing an important role in the alliance. Türkiye shares the alliance’s commitment to a diplomatic solution in the Russia-Ukraine war”. Ambassador Flake also emphasized “the importance of American relationship with Türkiye which is even more important with threats like we have right now in the region in Ukraine” (AA 2022).

Bilateral economic relations are also vital for the relationship. The legal framework for economic and commercial relations is based on the Agreement on Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments of 1990, the Treaty On Avoiding Double Taxation of 1997, and the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) of 2000 (mfa.gov). Although overall bilateral trade increased from \$10.8 billion in 2009 to \$21 billion in 2020, it remains modest compared to its potential. The top categories of US exports to Türkiye include aircraft, mineral fuels, iron and steel, machinery, optical and medical instruments while US liquefied natural gas has also become important as Türkiye became the seventh largest purchaser worldwide. Türkiye mainly exports machinery, vehicles, carpets and other textile coverings, precious metals, and stone, plaster, and cement to the US (state.gov 2021). US companies have made a significant contribution to Türkiye’s economic development by creating thousands of jobs, 1,874 US companies currently

registered in Türkiye (mfa.gov) At a meeting held in Ankara on March 3, 2022, US Ambassador Jeff Flake highlighted that “the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) Türkiye plays as a key partner in our bilateral trade and investment relationship”. AmCham plays role in foreign direct investment (FDI) to Türkiye from the US, which has reached 14.1 billion USD since 2003.

If the US provides active support for new investment and trade opportunities, Türkiye can become a regional hub. The Covid-19 pandemic revealed that Türkiye is already a transport hub and producer, making it an important actor in the global supply chain. Türkiye stands at the intersection of key transport corridors that make it a bridge between east and the west and between Asia, Europe, and Africa, and regions like the Black Sea, Mediterranean, the Balkans, and the Middle East.

Transportation is a significant element in supply chains and value networks by allowing goods to be distributed efficiently. With its strong transport network and connections, Türkiye can drive trade and contribute to a sustainable supply chain. Türkiye is an important part of both North Atlantic and intra-European supply chains and value networks as well as maritime and air routes (Unver Noi 2018, p. 76, 77). The Biden administration’s policy focused on improving transatlantic relations and resisting Chinese competition may change US attitudes towards Türkiye.

### ***Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine, the New Cold War and the Future of Turkish-American Relations***

During the Cold War, US foreign policy, particularly George Kennan’s containment policy assumed that the Soviet Union was expansionist and a dangerous threat to the US, and described as a rival rather than a partner (Mearsheimer 2012, p. xii). US American foreign policy therefore focused on containment. The Cold War resulted in the victory of the rule-based liberal world order over communism and led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. As Russia was included in the new international system, new foreign policy approaches emerged. For example, Russia adopted the Sinatra Doctrine<sup>13</sup> regarding ex-Warsaw Pact countries and reached a gentleman’s agreement<sup>14</sup> with the US regarding NATO enlargement into the former Soviet space. However, the optimism that emerged with Russia’s integration into the new world order did not last long. In 2007, for example, Russian President Vladimir Putin clearly expressed his dissatisfaction with the current unipolar world system and Europe’s post-Cold War security architecture.

The Kremlin’s current discourses indicate a continuity of this dissatisfaction and reveal Russia’s desire to change the international system to rebuild a greater Russia both within and beyond the Soviet space. The major difference from 2007 is that Russia is getting bolder to increase its sphere of influence by using military force. This may reflect the international community’s weak response to earlier Russians aggression in Georgia in 2008 or its annexation

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<sup>13</sup> Eduard A. Shevardnadze, the USSR Foreign Minister at the time, said that the USSR recognized absolute freedom of choice for the Warsaw Pact members. In the program Good Morning America on the American TV channel ABC to discuss this issue, in 1989 the spokesman of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gennadi I. Gerasimov, stated that the Soviet Union adopted the “Sinatra Doctrine” in its policy towards the Warsaw Pact countries – that’s why every country said that it could decide for itself which path it would take. In other words, the Soviet Union claimed that it would respect the foreign policy preferences of Warsaw Pact countries.

<sup>14</sup> While Russia and Ukraine continued their relations with NATO as part of the policy of normalizing their relations with the West, the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, asked the US President for a gentlemen’s agreement that no former Soviet Republic could join NATO. Yeltsin did not want NATO to expand into the former Soviet geography.

of Crimea in 2014. Whatever the reason is, the current war in Ukraine and Kremlin discourses raise the question of which country or region will be the next target of Russia?

More importantly, this new emerging security environment validates George Kennan's prediction from 1998. Concerning NATO's post-Cold War enlargement, he said, "I think this is the beginning of a new Cold War. The Russians will gradually react quite negatively and this will affect their policy" (Friedman 1998). Some experts predict that the new Cold War launched by Russia's invasion of Ukraine will be open ended (Bremmer 2022). We do not know whether liberalism and its value democracy win again.

Europe's equilibrium has been clearly affected following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, this new security environment also emerged when the US is seeking to minimize its involvement in European affairs and partly isolate itself from Europe to focus more on Asia with its pivot to Asia policy. However, the war in Ukraine ended the US isolationism from Europe and drew US attention back to the war in Europe. Biden described the war in Ukraine as a "...battle between democracy and autocracy, between liberty and repression, between a rule-based order and one governed by brute force" (The White House 2022).<sup>15</sup>

Russia's invasion of Ukraine also shows the limits of NATO and UN deterrence to prevent the war. In other words, this war indicates the limits of those institutions established to protect the rule-based liberal international order after the Second World War. It also shows how important it is to restore these institutions urgently.

After the Cold War, Türkiye and the US no longer shared the overarching threats and interests that bound them together. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, however, provides a critical moment that has forced states, especially those neighboring Russia, to reconsider their security policies. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also helped NATO's consolidation and rebuild its cohesion by highlighting the importance of NATO membership.

To sum up, great power rivalry has thus returned, but this time to Europe. As Brzezinski (1997) stated clearly, the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea are complex regions located at the center of a new chess board since the return of great power rivalry. Türkiye lies at the center of this most critical region of the war in Ukraine, thereby highlighting Türkiye's strategic importance. The following eight reasons are enough to demonstrate Türkiye's importance for transatlantic security.

- 1) Türkiye is a unique actor due to its geographic location in the Black Sea and the instruments it can use, particularly the Montreaux Convention, which gives Türkiye rights to control straits. In addition, Türkiye is a NATO member state that nevertheless has good relations with both Ukraine and Russia. This provides a unique opportunity to use Türkiye as a mediator between them. This may partly explain why the first high-level negotiations between them was held in Türkiye. Türkiye's facilitator role has also been supported by Western allies, including the US.
- 2) This uniqueness of Türkiye also provided an opportunity to play facilitator role in exchange of prisoners between the US and Russia. The prisoners exchange between the US and Russia became possible with the support of Türkiye in April 2022 during war in Ukraine. The US and Russia thanked Türkiye for its support in this exchange.
- 3) The war in Ukraine has caused a humanitarian crisis with mass refugee flows into neighbouring countries. As a country hosting four million Syrian refugees for over 10 years, Türkiye has collaborated intensively by sharing experience and know-how with countries like Romania, Poland and Moldova that have faced similar flows from Ukraine. Turkish Red Crescent and state-run Disaster and Emergency Management

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<sup>15</sup> When Biden came to power he said that human rights will remain at the centre of American foreign policy making (Posner 2021).

(AFAD) provide humanitarian aid to Ukrainians either in Ukraine or at the border between Romania and Ukraine, Moldova and Ukraine.

- 4) The Ukraine crisis holds special risks for the region and states locked in ethno-national disputes. The Balkans seems one of the region that will be most likely affected from Ukraine crisis. Türkiye can also mediate if disagreements and conflicts erupt in the Balkans. Thus, Türkiye as one of the unique players in the international system, having developed a complex set of interrelations with other players, its role in preventing such crises in the Balkans is precious, especially during this time of turmoil.
- 5) In this emerging security environment, Türkiye's normalization efforts with other countries in the region could impact Turkish-American relations. For example, Türkiye's new policy to mend ties with Armenia has received a positive response from the US. The development of this relationship may also enable wider collaboration in the Caucasus.
- 6) The war in Ukraine has accelerated the steps already taken in Türkiye's new foreign policy approach, based on mending ties and normalizing relationships with all countries in the region. This policy and the need for energy diversification may create new areas of cooperation, such as energy cooperation between Türkiye and her neighbors in the Eastern Mediterranean. The US can play a critical role in normalizing relations between its allies in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>16</sup> This could not only prevent military confrontation that would destabilize Europe's security but keep NATO's southern flank secure. Energy security, secure drilling, and the free flow of gas all necessitate dispute resolution. Energy sources can thus serve as tools for settling disputes in the Aegean Sea and Eastern Mediterranean if regional and global actors give it a chance (Ünver Noi, 2018). The war in Ukraine has also revealed the fact that Türkiye can play an important role as an energy hub due to her geographical proximity to energy sources of Caucasus and the Middle East and hosting multiple-pipelines that can carry the gas and oil from these regions.
- 7) Türkiye played an important role in food security by engaging in talks with Russia and Ukraine to establish a safe shipping corridor for the transportation of Ukrainian grains to world markets. Russia and Ukraine signed separate grain export agreements with the UN and Türkiye in Istanbul. This is a crucial role for ending the global food supply crisis and the increase in food prices caused by the war in Ukraine.
- 8) Finally, this emerging security environment reminded that Türkiye is vital member of NATO and transatlantic security. Türkiye's support for Ukraine by providing Turkish drones not only highlights how important developing defense industry for a NATO member state to support its ally and also indicates the importance of cooperation on defence between Transatlantic allies that is needed to strengthen NATO's deterrence. The President Biden's change his decision and his willingness to approve the sale of the F16 fighter jets to Türkiye and NATO Secretary General Jen Stoltenberg's statement on Turkish support for Ukraine to maintain solidarity within the alliance should be read from this perspective.

Since war broke out in Ukraine, visits and phone conversations between Türkiye and the US have increased. Such mutual high-level contacts and visits allow both countries to regularly address the challenges and opportunities affecting their bilateral relations. The strategic mechanism that was established in October 2022 to allow Turkish-American relations to get back on track was activated after the War in Ukraine. This raises hopes that both sides are trying to put their relations on a better path. This strategic mechanism can help broaden bilateral

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<sup>16</sup> Opening Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on NATO 2030, NATO, [https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/opinions\\_181208.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/opinions_181208.htm)

relations, so there is a need to bolster this moment. If both countries can use this moment wisely by making appropriate policy choices, they can rebuild mutual trust. Otherwise, the results may be similar to those of the working groups established to resolve disputes on several issues in 2018 that failed to deliver results (Coşkun 2022).

This emerging security environment with the war in Ukraine diverted attentions to the need for NATO to reconsider new ways of strengthening its deterrence. This is also a test case for the US administration to show whether America is back and ready to support its NATO allies. This seems more likely through strengthening each member state's defence capabilities and increasing solidarity between allies. However, this will only be possible by considering each member state's security threats and concerns without discrimination by embracing all member states' concerns on more equal terms. Finland and Sweden's application for NATO membership and Türkiye's stance towards Scandinavian enlargement of NATO is evaluated from this perspective in order to enable NATO to complete its next enlargement and, more importantly, boost cohesion and solidarity.<sup>17</sup>

Solidarity among NATO members can be revived by opening new channels. One of the regional implications of the war in Ukraine is the recognition of Türkiye's strategic importance for the Western alliance system and transatlantic security, which might possibly then revive the stagnated relationship with the US. Realism seems more decisive than liberalism in alliance relationship in the light of current security environment. Maybe it is time for both Türkiye and the US to abandon old templates, think flexibly in this changing international environment, and reconsider the opportunities and their alliance relationship accordingly.

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<sup>17</sup> Türkiye opposes Finland and Sweden's applications because of their alleged support of the PKK and their arms embargo against Türkiye.

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