

# An Address by the President of Turkey

by [Suleyman Demirel \(/experts/suleyman-demirel\)](/experts/suleyman-demirel)

Apr 3, 1996

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Suleyman Demirel \(/experts/suleyman-demirel\)](/experts/suleyman-demirel)

Suleyman Demirel served as the 9th President of Turkey from 1993 to 2000.



Brief Analysis

**W**hat is Turkey's role in the new world? Whichever way you look at it, the Turkish geography is a unique one. Turkey is a European country and at the same time a part of the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East. The Balkans are our access to Western Europe. The Black Sea is a bond between Turkey, Russia and Ukraine. The Caucasus are our opening to the Central Asian republics. And finally, the Middle East and the Mediterranean link us with the Arab Peninsula and Africa.

## TERRORISM/MIDDLE EAST PEACE

**J**ust when we all thought things were in order and hopes for reaching a comprehensive peace were heightened, the whole world was shaken again by terrorist bombs in Israel. In order to arrest the damaging effects of this new wave of terrorist attacks which threatened to derail the peace process and to discuss the ways and means for direct action to combat all forms of terrorism, the leaders of twenty-nine countries met two weeks ago at Sharm el-Sheik in Egypt. I was present there as president of my country, which has invested high hopes in the future of a peaceful and stable Middle East, and of a nation that has suffered much at the hands of terrorism.

It is no secret that terrorist organizations operate and survive with the active support of certain countries in the area. This is why Turkey works hard to enhance the awareness that if peace and stability in the Middle East are to be lasting, the international community has to put an end to all forms of terrorism in the area. We cannot be selective in this task. Whoever thinks that terrorism in one country is its problem and its problem alone, is tragically mistaken. This is why we insist that a united front is necessary to eradicate the scourge of terrorism.

The PKK . . . is a terrorist group, and ten years now they are operating outside of Turkey and inside of Turkey. Syria backs this terrorist group. We have a dialogue with Syria, and I myself went to Damascus and talked with the president of Syria. And they ignored [my message] . . . Syria is backing the terrorism in Lebanon, even in Israel.

. . . Turkey continues to establish close ties with Israel in everything. My visit two weeks ago was the first at the presidential level from Turkey to Israel. Coinciding with that visit, I went to Gaza under the Palestinian National Administration. This was also the first by a Turkish president.

Turkey's close and historical ties with the Arab countries of the region put us at an advantage to engage in efforts for building up the infrastructure and for enhancing economic cooperation in the region, which will help shore up the

future of the Middle East.

IRAQ/IRAN A key country for the stability of the Middle East is Iraq. Turkey advocates the preservation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of that country.

The Gulf War has brought a heavy economic burden to bear on Turkey. Our losses are estimated at some \$20 billion. Now we are waiting for the Iraqi regime to abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions and, consequently, for the international community to ease these sanctions.

In addition, the lack of authority in northern Iraq has created serious security concerns for my country. Terrorist elements have taken advantage of the existing power vacuum in northern Iraq to conduct hit-and-run attacks inside Turkey against our citizens, operating from their bases in northern Iraq. We cannot and will not allow this situation to continue.

Operation Provide Comfort served its purpose to protect the people living in northern Iraq from the aggression and from the tyranny of Baghdad. But now what is irritating the Turkish Parliament and the Turkish public is the power vacuum in northern Iraq. [T]here is a tendency [toward] the division of Iraq and setting up an independent state in northern Iraq. It shouldn't happen. I think there should be some ways and means to eliminate such worries.

Iran is our neighbor. And we don't have war within the last 360 years with Iran. . . . The regime in Iran is fundamentalist, and as far as Turkey is concerned, we are not afraid of fundamentalism. Turkey is a free country . . . you can see this way of thinking or that way of thinking, and the people like the secular democracy. We are not afraid that they may export . . . fundamentalism to Turkey. We have good, neighborly relations with Iran. We have some frictions sometimes with Iran, [but] we have an open dialogue . . . and at this stage [there is] no hostility between the two countries.

## **BALKANS/CAUCASUS/CENTRAL ASIA**

Other regional conflicts . . . [that have] erupted [near] Turkey's territory have unfortunately left deep-felt marks in the human conscience. Here I refer, first and foremost, to the tragedy we have witnessed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It seems almost unreal that such savagery and suffering should have happened in the heart of Europe at a time when all thought such affronts to human dignity had been buried in the dark pages of history. The tragic experience has shown us once again that if the international community doesn't act in unison against naked aggression, all values sacred to mankind would then be put at high risk. I am pleased to say that Turkey and the United States have joined hands in the efforts for the implementation of peace in Bosnia. But if the world wants peace in the Balkans, there is only one way: the Balkan countries should become a part of the European Union. All of them are desiring that [and] I think sooner or later it is going to be discussed.

The Azeri-Armenian conflict is an undesirable development from the point of view of stability of the Caucasus. Once we put this conflict behind, the impediments for the normalization of our relations with Armenia will be removed and the road to fruitful relations will open.

Turkey is now at the epicenter of a vast area called Eurasia, stretching from Europe to Central Asia, and is in a position to project itself as a role model for these countries. However, Turkey's efforts and contributions to Central Asian states can only meet a small portion of their needs. We strongly believe that the West has to extend more help [to them] as future partners of the civilized world.

In this quest, Turkey seeks collaboration, not confrontation, with Russia. The problem in Russia now is . . . [it is] no more . . . a superpower. [This situation has] created humiliation among the Russian people.

Among the problems in our vicinity, the Cyprus issue unfortunately remains on our agenda, and continues to be a sore point in Turkish-Greek relations, which have recently been strained by the Kardak crisis. The crisis has shown once again the importance of initiating a dialogue between the two countries with a view to solving the outstanding issue in

the Aegean by peaceful means. The Turkish government, on her side, has illustrated her responsibility last Sunday by calling on Greece to enter into negotiations without preconditions. We declared our readiness to discuss with our neighbor at any time, anywhere, and through any methods, the peaceful means to settle our dispute.

## CONCLUSION

**W**ith its democratic and secular institutions, Turkey is a role model for the Muslim world. The Turkish experience is living proof that Islam and secularism can coexist and that the Turkish model is the only viable alternative to fundamentalist tendencies.

The United States, as the only remaining superpower with global responsibilities, is in a position to appreciate Turkey's role as a major factor of stability in the region. We are very pleased with such recognition and value highly our enhanced partnership. Together we have a track record of acting as true friends and reliable allies for fifty years. ❖

---

## RECOMMENDED

---



BRIEF ANALYSIS

### [Bennett's Bahrain Visit Further Invigorates Israel-Gulf Diplomacy](#)

Feb 14, 2022

◆  
Simon Henderson

(/policy-analysis/bennetts-bahrain-visit-further-invigorates-israel-gulf-diplomacy)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

### [Libya's Renewed Legitimacy Crisis](#)

Feb 14, 2022

◆  
Ben Fishman

(/policy-analysis/libyas-renewed-legitimacy-crisis)



## BRIEF ANALYSIS

# [The UAE Formally Ceases to be a Tax-Free Haven](#)

Feb 14, 2022



Sana Quadri,  
Hamdullah Baycar

[\(/policy-analysis/uae-formally-ceases-be-tax-free-haven\)](#)

## REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Turkey \(/policy-analysis/turkey\)](#)