

# Turkey after the Iraq War:

## Still a U.S. Ally?

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Sep 19, 2003

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### In-Depth Reports

**S**oner Cagaptay, The Washington Institute: A year ago, it would have been difficult to question Turkey's status as a staunch U.S. ally. Much has changed. The Iraq war was the biggest test for the U.S.-Turkey relationship since the end of the Cold War. It followed the election of a new Turkish government in November 2002, led by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), a party rooted in Turkey's Islamist Welfare Party. When the AKP came to power there were many questions about whether the victory marked a fundamental shift in Turkish politics. Today Turkey's political structure is changing. Significant new reforms have been implemented. Turkish citizens have gained a significant increase in rights and liberties, and the military's role in Turkish society has been reconfigured.

The most immediate, pressing issue in U.S.-Turkish relations is the question of Turkish troop deployment to Iraq. What will happen? Some say we are witnessing events similar to those of winter 2002-2003. Once again, there is a likelihood of Turkish-American cooperation in Iraq, and once again, there are skeptics who say that cooperation should not occur.

When I look at the factors underlying Turkey's unwillingness to open up a northern front in March 2003, I come to a pessimistic conclusion, because some of those factors still loom large. There has first of all been a move to align Turkish foreign policy with that of the European Union (EU), including Turkey's Iraq policy. That would mean there must be UN authorization before Turkey can send any peacekeepers.

From Ankara's perspective, another of Turkey's concerns -- that Iraq remain united -- was not adequately addressed before the war, and that partly undermined Turkey's ability to commit itself fully in prewar planning. The Kurdish issue remains a factor but with a new twist: the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). We have not heard much about the PKK for the last three years. It declared a ceasefire in 1999 after its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, was captured. With the ceasefire, Turkey entered a period of peace and quiet, and the PKK fell off the radar screen. Now it is back, with the September 2003 renunciation of its ceasefire. There has been a limited amount of PKK-led violence and terrorism

since, though not on the previous scale. Still, now that the organization has renounced its ceasefire, it is a concern in the Turkish mind.

The PKK figures in the debate over Iraq because the organization's main base is in the northern part of that country, along the Turkish border. Northern Iraq has had weak central authority since the end of the 1991 Gulf War. The PKK uses its bases there to launch attacks into Turkey. When the organization was under ceasefire, its 4,000 to 5,000 militants in northern Iraq did not attract much attention. But now that the ceasefire has been renounced, many in Ankara believe that the PKK is Turkey's most pressing security concern.

Leaving the PKK untouched could threaten the security of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In the long run, northern Iraq could become like Lebanon in the 1980s: an area of nominal government authority where terrorist groups operate freely. That would make the American effort in Iraq look bad, and it would hurt Turkey tremendously. So until the United States takes some serious steps toward shutting down the PKK in the north, it will be difficult to get Turkish cooperation on postwar concerns.

Two issues have emerged since the prewar discussions that make me pessimistic about the likelihood of Turkish peacekeepers going to Iraq. One is the growing indecisiveness of Turkey's ruling party, the AKP, on the issue. Before the decisive parliamentary vote on March 1, 2003, a lot of experts tried to explain what was happening in Turkey. Some argued that this was a new government lacking in experience. Others said the government did not push hard enough for the measure authorizing Turkish participation in the war.

We all remember what happened: by a very slim margin, the motion failed in the Turkish parliament, and about 100 AKP parliamentarians voted against it. This result came about because the government decided not to use what the British call the "whipping system," or voting en bloc. This is a common procedure in most European democracies, where the ruling party makes a decision and asks all of its members to vote accordingly. If they do not, they get punished by the party or even thrown out. Instead, in the March 1 vote, the AKP deputies were left free to vote according to their individual preferences.

Despite the fact that we increasingly hear about the AKP wanting to send Turkish troops to Iraq, the government has not yet come to a final determination on this issue. Many in the AKP, and many Turks in general, share the perception that things in Iraq are going badly and will get worse. As a result of this perception, the government's willingness to get involved diminishes every day. Sending peacekeepers could mean Turkish casualties, which would look bad as the AKP goes into elections in March 2004. The AKP will continue to act according to its campaign interests, because it would like to do better than it did in the last nationwide elections (when it received about 34 percent of the vote). In short, election considerations will increase the government's indecisiveness on Iraq.

These factors also lead me to believe that domestic policy in Turkey has become a factor in foreign policy considerations, especially when it comes to troop deployment to Iraq. The government looks at foreign policy in terms of how certain moves will strengthen its position within the country, especially vis-à-vis the Turkish military. Over the past few months, the government adamantly wanted the military to take a clear position on intervention in Iraq, hoping that the military leaders would take responsibility for any decision to send peacekeepers. But the Turkish National Security Council has made no firm decision, so it remains up to the government to decide the question.

U.S.-Turkish relations were tested by the March 1 vote against Turkish participation in the Iraq war. Another test will be the convening of the Turkish parliament on October 1, after a summer recess. Iraq will be on the parliament's agenda when it reassembles. The question is how it will handle Iraq this time. Whatever the ultimate decision, the sooner the Turkish government makes up its mind about Iraq, the better for both Turkey and the United States. If the decisionmaking process drags on beyond October into November or even later, it will increase frustration on both

sides.

Aside from this upcoming test, there is much that can be done to rebuild the U.S.-Turkish relationship. A lot of people say that relations between the two have not been this poor for many decades, and may have hit rock bottom. I agree with some of that. Over the past year we have seen a deterioration in the bedrock of U.S.- Turkish relations, even the military-to-military relationship. Unlike U.S. relations with other allies, in which the alliance had strong military, but also social, economic, and cultural components, relations with Turkey, for many decades, were built almost entirely on military-to-military contacts. Economic relations are still almost negligible. Turkey ranks twenty-ninth among U.S. trading partners.

The Iraq war reveals that a lot of confidence has been lost between the two militaries. The July 4, 2003, arrest of Turkish special-operations troops in northern Iraq on the alleged grounds that the Turkish soldiers were trying to assassinate an elected Kurdish official in the region was symbolic of the current state of U.S.-Turkish military relations. That incident caused a major problem. And today, as a result of the complex chess game that was played out over Iraq, many in Ankara believe that there is an attempt to create a Kurdish state in northern Iraq.

On the other hand, many in Washington believe that Turkey is not interested in helping the United States, but rather in complicating things by working for its own interests. If we are to move ahead, the two governments and their militaries must clear the air and build trust again.

This will require confidence-building measures such as increasing the use of liaison officers, establishing better intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and communicating plans more openly -- measures that have not been taken effectively over the past year. A common complaint in Ankara is that before the Iraq war, the Turkish side was never privy to the full postwar plan; it perhaps did not want to commit itself to a war about whose outcome it was not fully informed.

Sedat Ergin, *Hurriyet*: Is Turkey still a U.S. ally? The title of this session clearly suggests that there is some degree of uncertainty about the answer to that question. For Dr. Cagaptay to have raised such a topic just a year ago would have been inconceivable.

The fact that we have congregated here to discuss this issue shows that something has gone wrong. Before I try to answer the question, I would like to draw your attention to a new geopolitical reality. Some of us in this room may not be sure whether Turkey and the United States are still allies. But the two countries have most definitely become neighbors, in a sense, because of the strong U.S. presence now in Iraq. Communication channels between the United States and Turkey, which used to go across the Atlantic Ocean, now go across the Iraqi border as well. When the United States decided to come to Turkey's neighborhood, many things changed. Today, the neighborhood looks quite unsettled. It will take years, perhaps decades, until we have a new status quo in Iraq. Until that time, until we have a new political structure in Iraq, U.S.-Turkish relations will remain vulnerable to potential crises. As a matter of fact, the first casualty of the U.S. military campaign against Iraq, weeks before Saddam Husayn was overthrown, was the U.S.-Turkish relationship.

A whole constellation of factors culminated in the world-shaking incident of March 1, 2003, when the Turkish parliament failed to approve the motion for full cooperation with the United States on the northern front in Iraq. The episode is behind us now, but if we are to ensure that the U.S.-Turkish relationship does not encounter similar accidents in the future, we must attempt to discover what went wrong. An objective analysis would reveal that both sides committed serious mistakes.

On the American side, the Bush administration's heavy-handed treatment of the newly elected and inexperienced Turkish government was a major factor. Perhaps the problem was overconfidence on the part of the U.S. administration. The risks taken by the Bush team in the presence of so many intangibles on the Turkish side were

simply too great. The administration never fully understood the sentiments of Turkish society, especially in the absence of a strong UN mandate for the war. It was inevitable that this resentment would manifest itself in the Turkish parliament. The administration also failed to consider the undercurrents in the AKP, which draw from strong Islamist roots.

On the Turkish side, the government's biggest mistake was to undertake the huge commitment of "delivering parliament" to the United States. In foreign relations, when you make a commitment, you must deliver. There were perceptual problems as well. Many Turkish policymakers did not fully grasp the resolve of the Bush administration to overthrow the Saddam Husayn regime at any cost.

Both sides made a mistake in defining the only possible scope of the military relationship as full cooperation. Instead, a modest level of cooperation, limited to air corridors and perhaps the use of air bases, would have been a much more reasonable and, more important, achievable option. It would have saved the relationship from the hazards of failure. (Ironically, the use of air corridors turned out to be the level of cooperation that was actually agreed upon between the two countries.)

The U.S.-Turkish relationship suffered further damage due to the heavy-handed reaction of some American decisionmakers after the March 1 vote. Some Americans made statements to the effect that Turks should acknowledge that they made a mistake in parliament. Statements reflecting a desire to punish Turkey led to growing anti-U.S. sentiments and more frustration on the part of the Turkish public. It was a vicious circle.

These sentiments reached a peak when U.S. forces, with the help of Kurdish peshmerga fighters, captured Turkey's special forces in Sulaymaniya on July 4, 2003, and covered their heads with hoods -- the kind of treatment usually reserved for members of al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. It was ironic that NATO Supreme Commander Gen. James Jones, who was sent to resolve this unfortunate predicament, used the occasion to make a sounding as to whether Turkey could contribute forces in Iraq.

While Turkish and U.S. military authorities were investigating the Sulaymaniya incident, discussions had already begun on a different military-to-military channel regarding possible Turkish troop commitments for Iraq. This was the picture almost a week after the chief of the Turkish General Staff, Gen. Hilmi  $\tilde{A}$ -zk $\tilde{A}$ Jk, described the deepest crisis of confidence between the militaries of both countries. The symbolism here is worth underlining. It highlights the fact that independent of their sentiments toward one another, independent of the problems they encounter at any given time, Turkey and the United States often share the same agenda and have to work together to address common challenges. Today, it is Iraq, and tomorrow, it will be other trouble spots.

There appears to be a change in Washington in the wake of March 1, when U.S.- Turkish relations were captured by emotion. The relationship now faces a new, crucial test. This time the test centers on the question of sending Turkish troops to Iraq. The Turkish government and the Turkish parliament will soon decide on this issue, which, like the previous prospect of Turkish involvement in Iraq, does not enjoy popular support in Turkey.

A UN Security Council resolution authorizing the presence of an international peacekeeping force would undoubtedly ease the pressure on both the government and the parliament. So would a U.S. commitment to take concrete steps to eliminate the PKK groups in northern Iraq. But even if these conditions are met, the possibility that Turkish soldiers could become targets of unknown assassins in Iraq makes this decision a highly emotional one for Turks.

Both the treatment of Turkey during and after the northern-front controversy and the treatment of Turkish troops in Sulaymaniya by American forces still affect Turkish perceptions. And, in order to avoid the kind of downturn seen after the March 1 vote, it is important that the issue of sending troops not be overemphasized now in U.S.-Turkish relations. If the effort encounters another defeat in the Turkish parliament, the relationship may suffer even more.

The relationship between Turkey and the United States will continue to encounter turbulence, but history shows that those ties have resilience. They can endure these problems. As long as the United States continues as a global power and does not resort to isolationism, and as long as Turkey remains the regional power in that part of the world, the strategic incentives will be present for Turkey and the United States to continue their alliance.

Mark Parris, The Washington Institute: Are Turkey and the United States still allies? Yes. Both countries are members of NATO, and as long as that is the case, both will remain allies in a formal sense. My time as U.S. ambassador to Turkey has been described as one of travail and difficulty. I do not see it that way. Certainly, a lot was going on between 1997 and 2000, but it was a period when most of the news was good. U.S. and Turkish interests during that period overlapped to a degree that they have not before or since.

We developed a way of working together during those years in which we were consciously coordinating our efforts. The results were remarkable. We did things like make the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline a reality, which most people thought was a pipe dream. The United States was a key factor in protecting Muslims in the Balkans during this period -- putting troops on the ground and planes in the air in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia. We did some very important things to combat terrorism in the region, essentially placing the PKK out of business in Turkey itself. We had a common and complementary approach to the Middle East. People forget that Turkish observers were in Hebron beginning in 1996 and that Turkey's former premiere and president, Suleyman Demirel, was a member of the Mitchell Commission.

Even in Europe, we had a common agenda. We wanted Turkey to join the European Union, and we twisted a lot of arms and made ourselves obnoxious in a lot of European capitals on Turkey's behalf. We had a common approach to issues like the European Strategic Defense Initiative, which the United States and Turkey viewed in very much the same way. The result was that polls taken during my years as ambassador almost inevitably showed Turks regarding America as their best friend in the world.

We were also beginning to gain some ground on American perceptions of Turkey. Americans were increasingly recognizing Turkey as one of our most reliable, consistent allies and friends anywhere. The establishment of Turkish research programs like the one at The Washington Institute speaks to that change of perception.

Unfortunately, we have lost a lot of ground in the last year. Polls show that an overwhelming preponderance of Turks view the United States as the greatest strategic threat to Turkey. Most Americans, when they find out that I have been in Turkey, ask me how the Turks could have voted the way they did on March 1, 2003.

The proximate cause of this relational shift is the Iraq war. Most Turks, upwards of 90 percent, believe that the war was questionable in terms of international law and unwise in terms of strategy. They have not been reassured by the disorder that has followed the impressive military victory. They have been concerned by perceptions that Turkish firms have been cut out of rebuilding contracts by the Bush administration. There are lingering suspicions that we will at some point allow the establishment of Turkey's nightmare, a de facto or de jure Kurdish state in the north of Iraq.

On the American side, the perception of Turkey as a reliable partner -- as it was in Korea and Somalia and elsewhere -- has been shaken. There is lingering resentment over the tough bargaining that the Turks did before the March 1 vote. And many in Washington share the perception that the Turks have a hidden agenda in northern Iraq to use the Turkmen population as pawns to advance Turkish interests.

You could conclude from all this that the U.S.-Turkish relationship is on the rocks. But that would be an exaggeration. If you carefully look at what has happened between the two countries since March 1, you find that there is actually an impressive record of cooperation between Turkey and the United States on Iraq. Turkey has as much interest in Iraq coming out right as we do. The Turkish government has repeatedly expressed its willingness to

help. It has assisted by opening Turkish airspace during the war, by serving as a major source of humanitarian and other supplies after the war, and by making formal proposals to the Bush administration in a variety of technical fields.

As a practical matter, Turkish firms are winning contracts from the prime American contractors in Iraq. And the American government has been true to its commitment to keep Iraq together, contrary to the worst predictions one hears in Turkey. There is reason for optimism at the broader level as well. Turkey has a new neighbor: the United States. That fact has broad implications for Turkey's long-term interests in the region. Turks will have to get used to it. And for the United States, despite the disappointment created by the March 1 vote, America's strategic focus is increasingly on the region around Turkey and the Muslim world, much as it was on the communist world during the Cold War. For the foreseeable future, the United States will have to work around Turkey if it does not work with Turkey.

In most cases, Turkey and the United States will find that it is to their mutual benefit to work together rather than to work around one another. I regret that the issue of sending Turkish peacekeepers into Iraq has resurfaced. It is not the right question to be asking right now. If Turkey's answer is yes, it would go a long way toward repairing some of the emotional damage that was done to egos and perceptions here in Washington. It would give Turkey a better seat at the table as the coalition considers how to put Iraq back together. If Turkey's answer is no, its relationship with the United States will be consigned to chilly correctness for a long time to come.

But Turkey's agreement to send peacekeepers to Iraq may not be a panacea for the U.S.-Turkish relationship. When Turkish politicians address the question, they go to great pains to differentiate between what they would do in Iraq and what the United States is doing in Iraq. "We are not going there to be policemen for the Americans," they say. "We are not going there to take a bullet for the Americans. We are going there to help the Iraqi people." If Ankara puts Turkish boots on the ground in Iraq, they may not be on the same page as U.S. forces on every issue. And if bombs like the one that struck the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad in August 2003 hit Turkish forces, Turkish perceptions of the United States will surely suffer.

I don't know where this is going to come out. I share a lot of the doubts that have been expressed here. I cannot imagine that the prime minister is going to be able to go up and get a yes vote on this from parliament if he can't explain in concrete terms what the Americans are doing to finish off the PKK in northern Iraq. The decision is not in the bag, and it may mask a more fundamental set of developments.

Regardless of whether Turkey sends peacekeepers to Iraq, its relationship with the United States will be different than it was in the past. When Saddam disappeared, so did the notion of containment as it related to Turkey. Containment of the Soviet Union was the core of U.S. policy from 1949 to 1989. For another decade, the United States was containing Saddam. In both cases, Turkey was an essential component of U.S. policy. In the future, Turkey will be important in some circumstances. The issue of peacekeeping in Iraq is one such example. But Turkey will not be essential in the same way that it was during the past fifty years. That will change the way that people in Washington look at Turkey. It will change the readiness with which they will agree to official visits. It will change the level at which Turkish officials are received when they come here. It will make a difference in terms of the attention that people give to the relationship.

Turkey's quest to join the European Union is the single largest political consideration in Turkey today. It was the central plank of the platform on which the AKP was elected last fall. It is clearly the top priority of Turkey's current administration, and it is the basis on which it is passing far-reaching reforms that are, day by day, changing Turkish society, including the relationship between the military and civilian authorities.

In the years ahead, while this process plays itself out, Turks will probably worry more about what Europeans think

than what Americans think, an attitude that differs considerably from when I was in Turkey. This new policy approach will make a big difference in the way the U.S.-Turkish relationship evolves in the years ahead.

Does this mean U.S.-Turkish relations will deteriorate further? No. But it does mean they will change. They will continue to be strategic for all the reasons we have discussed today; in more cases than not, Turkey and the United States will be partners. I can even imagine circumstances under which Turkey could regain the official attention in Washington beyond its political weight that it used to enjoy.

The key will be Turkey's closing the gap on democracy, economic progress, and social harmony. If Turkish reforms succeed, Turkey could be a very compelling society at a time when many are coming to view this century as a clash of civilizations. It would also go far toward putting the U.S.-Turkish relationship back on better footing.

Cagaptay: Turkey's strategic value to the United States is like a box of foreign currency. It is not necessarily valuable unless you convert it. Over the past year, Turkey's potential value to the United States has remained the same, but Washington has not converted it. That has led many Americans to question the value of the relationship.

I have a friend who works on the Turkey desk at one of the government agencies. When I called her about a week after the March 1, 2003, vote, I got her voicemail as I usually do. But this time I was surprised. The voice would normally say, "You have reached the Turkey desk, please leave a message." But now it said, "You have reached the desk for Turkey, Malta, and Portugal." That was revealing, and, in some ways, it illustrated a certain paradigm shift (although by mid-June the message was back to normal).

If Turkey does not contribute to coalition efforts in Iraq, will the United States still view Turkey as a strategic ally?

Parris: I would make a distinction between countries that want to play and countries that want to watch. During the late 1990s, Turkey was a country that wanted to play and it did so effectively in a range of fields. We could not have had the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline built had it not been for the vigorous diplomatic efforts of the Turkish foreign ministry and President Demirel. Turkish leaders like Demirel liked the game, they wanted to be in it, and they were willing to pay the price.

According to the March 1 vote and what we are seeing now, the current leadership -- whether because they have not been playing the game as long, because they lack imagination, or because they have other domestic or international priorities like EU candidacy -- would just as soon see all these problems disappear as play the game. If the United States could find a way to make the issue of troop deployments go away, for example, the Turkish leadership would be absolutely delighted.

Turkey will be a strategic partner for the United States if it brings something to the partnership; that was the lesson of the late 1990s. If Turkey merely sits on an important piece of real estate with which the United States must engage -- if it is not prepared to pay the price of admission to a strategic relationship -- it will be no more than a strategic observer. That could be an important distinguishing characteristic if Turkish policy does not change.

Ergin: Turkey and the United States will continue their partnership. Future developments will redefine their relationship. On the question of troop deployments in Iraq, it was a big mistake on the part of the AKP government to give encouraging signals to the Bush administration.

First, Turkish foreign minister Abdullah Gul gave Washington encouragement. Then he paid an official visit to Washington this year in late July. (By the way, there was no official invitation extended for this visit.) While in the United States, he exposed himself to American plans for Turkish troops in Iraq. I do not know what message he communicated behind closed doors, but the general tone of Gul's public statements was very encouraging to the American side. It reflected an inclination and a willingness on the part of the Turkish government to commit troops to Iraq. Then, by late August and early September, the Turkish government's resolve was gone. The prime minister

and the foreign minister began trying to disengage the government from all efforts on this issue.

This is not the way to conduct foreign policy. It was unprofessional. The problem could have easily been avoided. Now the Turkish government is repeating the same pattern. Washington and Ankara have to be innovative and somehow find a way to downplay their difficulties over this issue. Resolving the tensions over Iraq will not be easy; the more they linger, the more difficult it will become, particularly for the Turkish parliament.

Patrick Clawson, The Washington Institute: I was intrigued that the panel did not discuss the issue of loan guarantees and the U.S.-Turkish financial relationship. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, for example, has said that U.S. loan guarantees for Turkey will proceed irrespective of what happens with troop deployments. How does this play into Turkish and American thinking?

Also, the panel has suggested that Turkey has placed its bet on the European Union. What would be the impact on the U.S.-Turkish relationship if things go badly between Turkey and the EU over the next few years?

Parris: The loan guarantee issue arose in the weeks after March 1, when everyone understood that things had gotten way out of hand during the previous negotiations. The amount of money on the table was enormous, and it perverted discussion of the merits of the case.

The motives of the Bush administration, at that point, were relatively straightforward. They continued to be concerned that the war could cause some negative economic fallout for Turkey just when it was beginning to recover from the economic crisis of a few years ago. Both sides made very clear that there was no quid pro quo between the loan guarantees and Turkish assistance in the war.

That seems to remain the case. We have heard any number of authoritative statements by American officials saying that there is no link between financial assistance for Turkey and Turkish assistance in Iraq. It would be very difficult for the Bush administration to reverse course in the event that Turkey does not deploy troops.

Clawson: Suppose Turkey does not send troops to Iraq and the loan guarantees go through. How will that influence continued U.S. economic support for Turkey?

Parris: In that case, the loan guarantees will have seemed like a better idea in April than in October. There would be some criticism from the domestic press and Congress. But if Washington takes the guarantees off the table, it will have a dramatic impact on the Turkish stock exchange and the value of the lira. I do not believe the Bush administration is prepared to take responsibility for the consequences to Turkey's creditors.

Ergin: I tend to believe that Turkey's accession to the European Union is irreversible. Turkey may not end up as a full EU member, but somehow the Europeans will have to find a formula to accommodate Turkey. Anyway, a full membership would probably not happen before 2015 and would depend on the EU's common foreign policy in 2016 or 2020. For the time being, we do not even know whether the EU will be able to absorb its first major expansion in 2004. If somehow Turkey does not get in the EU, it will put more emphasis on its relations with the United States. Still, Turkey's relationship with the EU is not an alternative to Washington. This is not a zero-sum game; Turkey should try to balance both components.

Cagaptay: I agree with Mr. Ergin that Turkey's EU accession will be with us for a long time. Those hopes will not dissipate. I also agree that we should not expect Turkey to become a member any time soon. Turkey initiated dialogue with the Europeans in 1963, it applied officially to become a member in 1987, and it has been waiting ever since. In the meantime, more than a dozen countries have acceded. The chances of the EU offering Turkey accession in this decade are very low.

Despite those poor odds, the AKP government is becoming increasingly pro-European in its foreign policy. The AKP sees this as a way of guaranteeing EU accession; they see Europe as Turkey's new global partner. One of the

fundamental elements of U.S.-Turkish relations was always the idea that Turkey would take care of America's regional interests while the United States took care of Turkey's global interests. I am skeptical about any alternative in which the EU takes care of Turkey's global interests while Turkey guards European interests in the Middle East. In the long run, the EU has neither the resources nor the willingness to commit itself to doing so.

The best example is the issue of the PKK, which has been on the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations since that list's emergence in 1996. In 2002, the PKK formally disbanded and transformed itself into a new organization called KADEK, while retaining the original structure. The United States put the new KADEK on its terrorism list right away. The EU did not; it kept the defunct PKK on its list. So now the EU has a nonexistent terrorist organization on its list, while the PKK is permitted to function freely within the European Union.

Richard Borow, The Washington Institute: Elegant solution. (Laughter.)

James Schreiber, The Washington Institute: Dr. Cagaptay said the PKK changed its mind on the ceasefire. How did that happen?

Ergin: That has to do with the repentance law enacted by the Turkish parliament in August 2003. The Bush administration is an advocate of this law. The law gave a kind of amnesty to PKK militants, but not to the organization's leadership. The idea is that if the PKK fighters who are hiding in the mountains of northern Iraq take the option given them by the repentance law, they could cross the border into Turkey and surrender, go through certain procedures, and rejoin Turkish society. The PKK leadership was afraid that a significant number of the approximately 5,000 PKK guerillas in northern Iraq would choose to surrender and accept the incentives in the repentance law. To prevent this, PKK leaders changed their course on ceasefire.

The second reason has to do with the United States. Officials in the Bush administration have stated on several occasions that they will not let northern Iraq remain a sanctuary for PKK terrorists. President Bush made a commitment to the Turkish government that his administration would eliminate the terrorist threat in northern Iraq. The former U.S. ambassador to Turkey, Robert Pearson, went public on several occasions to say that if the PKK guerillas did not accept the repentance law and surrender, they would face U.S. forces in northern Iraq. He said explicitly that the United States would take action against the PKK.

The PKK has never targeted U.S. interests. In fact, the organization has done its best to avoid any direct confrontation with those interests. But according to Turkish intelligence, there has been some communication between U.S. military personnel and the PKK in northern Iraq. The Americans are encouraging the PKK to surrender. When PKK leaders got signals from the Bush administration that the United States might attack them, they decided they would rather be in a position of strength. The PKK is looking for legitimacy and recognition from the United States.

Schreiber: I am amazed that the panelists can still smile. I see Turkey as an ally, and I am sick that the alliance is unraveling before our eyes. Many Americans have a disdain for France, and their feelings about Turkey are moving in the same direction. In fall 2002, Turkish foreign minister Abdullah Gul and economic minister Ali Babacan showed up at Secretary of State Powell's office and asked for \$92 billion in return for Turkish help in the coming war with Iraq. They were chased home without even a cup of coffee.

Turkey's request was obscene and preposterous. It was followed by the AKP's commitment to allow the transit of 62,000 U.S. troops through Turkey, but the Turkish parliament voted against the offer. Turkey's commitment was not honored because of a lot of misperception. There was a belief in Turkey that the United States had no "Plan B." On March 8, Powell asked the Turkish government for an answer to the U.S. request to transit troops through Turkey within forty-eight hours. The Turkish government got back to Powell on March 11. Powell said, "It is too late. We have implemented Plan B." And everyone in Turkey was shocked.

More recently, we have had the Turkish foreign minister's expression of optimism that Turkey will send

peacekeepers to Iraq, followed by more equivocation from Ankara. From an American point of view, the Turkish government looks like a neurotic person who invites you in and then chases you away -- who makes commitments and does not honor them. Anyone who has dealt with someone neurotic knows that after the first one or two times, you stay away. You learn there is no reliability.

The Turkish government might argue that it is currently focusing on EU accession, but Turkey will not be invited to join the EU in the next ten years. So it seems that the most probable outcome is for Turkey not to have a benefactor. If Turkey does not commit peacekeeping troops to this effort, will the United States decide that it cannot rely on Turkey as a strategic ally?

Parris: Why are we smiling? It is easier than crying, I suppose. No one is happy about what has happened, and we are sickened to watch the worsening of U.S.-Turkish relations. You describe the Turkish government as neurotic.

Ultimately, all politics is local, whether it is in Washington or Paris or Ankara. A lot of what we saw before and after the March 1 vote had to do with the fact that the ruling party had come almost from nowhere in less than two years to win national elections. How did they do it? By giving the people what they wanted. And 90 percent of the people did not want Turkey to assist the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Despite the government's best intentions to get parliamentary approval, that approval got away.

I have no doubt that when the leadership of the AKP went to their members that day and said, "We must do this," they thought they were going to get the right vote. You can argue that if the government had had another couple of weeks, it might have won that vote. But what was happening during those two weeks? The future prime minister was getting himself elected to parliament. (He was not a member of parliament at the time.) He then had to get a vote of confidence from the same assembly that had surprised the party a week before. So big-time local politics were going on at the time. It was unfortunate that the Turkish timeline and the American timeline collided.

What if Turkey does not send troops to Iraq and simply goes along with Europe? The U.S.-Turkish relationship will not necessarily deteriorate, but it will become more ad hoc and pragmatic. Issues will arise and both countries will deal with them. Sometimes cooperation will succeed, sometimes it will not, but this pragmatism will define the relationship rather than any overarching conceptual framework.

At the moment, Europe is more a state of mind for Turkey than a concrete objective. Turkey's leaders are intellectually closer to most Europeans than to Americans on issues like Yasir Arafat, Iran, Iraq, and the United Nations. That is a psychological and emotional sea change from when I was dealing with leaders like Suleyman Demirel. Still, this government is not completely in the European camp. For example, no senior Turkish leader has met with Arafat in his recent isolation. Earlier this year, there was a high probability that they would blunder into that one.

Borow: Was the French government also working against the United States by suggesting that it would oppose Turkey's EU accession if Ankara allowed American troops to use Turkish bases in the invasion of Iraq?

Parris: That was not what caused the Turkish government to be half a dozen votes short on the day of the vote.

David Stone, The Washington Institute: How concerned should the United States be about the fact that Turkey is now ruled by an Islamist party? The AKP seems to be increasing in popularity. And in an effort to court the European Union, it is marginalizing the army, which has historically been the guarantor of last resort for a secular constitution.

Ergin: Many segments of Turkish society are concerned about the AKP government. There are some in Turkey who believe that the AKP is going through a transformation and that it no longer advocates an Islamist agenda. But others are skeptical of the new discourse of the party.

A majority of Turks tend to be skeptical of the AKP government. Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his cadre within the AKP

have been careful to avoid confrontation with the establishment and with the secular segments of Turkish society. There have been some frictions here and there, but no confrontation that would really shake up the regime.

At the same time, the secular institutions are monitoring the situation carefully. It is a tense relationship. Often, for example, we see in the newspapers a photograph from 1983 showing Erdogan sitting on the floor in front of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the mujahedin leader in Afghanistan; Erdogan is looking up at him like a disciple. The irony is that after he became prime minister, Erdogan signed a decree in which he declared Hekmatyar a terrorist. Erdogan is going through a transformation that needs to be encouraged. He should enjoy the benefit of the doubt. At the same time, Turkish civil society and secular institutions should closely monitor the AKP's actions.

It will not be an easy period for Turkey. The current government has another four years to go. But Turkey is a democracy, and we need democratic patience. If the AKP does not try to alter the secular foundations of the Turkish Republic, we can find a way to coexist with this party. There is no alternative in a democracy.

Parris: The Bush administration handled Turkey's new government in the winter of 2002-2003 as if it were dealing with the same Turkey we had been dealing with for the past decade. In the past, an administration could push Button A, and something would come out of Door B. Many of those buttons are not connected anymore, and Turkey works differently now. The people at the top in Ankara look at the world -- and certainly at Israeli-Turkish and U.S.-Turkish relations -- differently than they ever have in the history of the republic. If you think Turkey is the same place, you will probably get yourself in trouble.

My concern is that we in Washington have not adjusted to this new reality. Our so-called experts still speak as if Turkey is the same country they once knew. It is not. Turkey's new direction does not necessarily pose a threat to us, but it does demand a degree of rigorous analysis. We must adopt a more self-conscious policy of engaging with Turkey and trying to parse what is going on there.

For example, Turkey's new government cares more about what the Muslim and Arab world thinks. This is also a government that tends to have a more European view of most issues that Americans care about. These differences will count. I have sensed over the past six months that my Israeli friends are in denial about this, which is a big mistake.

Cagaptay: That is a good point. This government is different than past Turkish governments, and it looks at the world with certain sensitivities. It is a government that takes the EU issue very seriously. There are two interpretations of why the AKP aggressively pushes the reforms that Ambassador Parris mentioned. These reforms have, at least in theory, fundamentally changed the Turkish political structure.

One explanation is that the AKP is sincerely interested in reforming Turkey, with EU accession in mind and also with the goal of making Turkey a more liberal democracy. The other take is that the party is using the EU issue as a means to an end, because EU accession is now the biggest political catalyst in Turkey. The hope of EU accession makes the impossible possible. A few years ago, the death penalty issue could not have been debated in Turkey. Last year, Turkey took it off the books because the country needed to get into the European Union. AKP is aware of this power, and it is using it as a weapon to circumscribe the military's influence in Turkish politics.

The EU is about to end up with a responsibility that it did not wish for. Many in the past would have considered the Turkish military to be the failsafe of Turkish democracy, and the military has acted accordingly. Now that the Turkish military will be subject to the civilian authority of the executive in Turkey, the European Union or the promise of EU accession is becoming the failsafe of Turkish democracy. I hope the Europeans are aware of this.

Schreiber: The consensus here seems to be that EU accession will not happen in the next decade. Will Turkish reforms get rolled back?

Cagaptay: Accession will not happen, but nonaccession will not occur, either. The EU's answer will be neither yes nor no. Turkey will be in a gray zone. It will get incrementally closer, an inch every year. Brussels will keep Turkey somewhere in the periphery -- not outside, but not inside.

Schreiber: And Turkey will put up with that?

Ergin: The Europeans have to make up their minds. The European Union has not come to a decision about Turkey. There are major divisions within Europe. The Christian democrats categorically oppose Turkish entry. The liberals and the social democrats, ostensibly, seem to be supporting Turkish accession.

Parris: At least in public.

Ergin: It is fair to say that the social democrats and the liberals in Europe are more positively inclined toward Turkish entry. At the 1999 European Summit in Helsinki, German chancellor Gerhardt Schroeder and British prime minister Tony Blair paved the way for the Turkish entry. In 1997, at the EU Summit in Luxembourg, European leaders excluded Turkey from the prospect of EU enlargement. That was also led by German chancellor Helmut Kohl and British prime minister John Major.

So much of the EU's attitude toward Turkey reflects the swing of the political pendulum in Europe. And the European debate will become increasingly tense in the future. At least in Turkey, there seems to be a consensus; the overriding majority of Turks favor the European Union. But in Europe there is no consensus about Turkey; the balance could easily shift to either side. For Europeans, this will be a decision about their own identity, whether they are able to welcome a Muslim country with a different culture into their club. It will be a difficult decision.

Capt. Coskun Aytulug, The Washington Institute: Turkey is the link between the Caucasus, the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and Europe. And today, the United States has an interest in the hot spots near Turkey, especially Iraq. Can the United States successfully confront the problems in the Middle East without Turkey?

Also, much of the suspicion in Turkey about U.S. strategic plans before the war stemmed from a lack of information. Washington could get more support from Turkey if it could share more intelligence. Of course, this raises questions of trust in an already strained relationship.

Parris: Any time you want someone's cooperation, the smart thing to do is to be as transparent, forthcoming, and open as possible. That way, he can see that you do not have a hidden agenda and can get inside the logic of your case. The Bush administration made an effort to do that in the fall of 2002, but clearly failed. Many of the parliamentarians who voted on March 1 had not been exposed to some of the U.S. arguments, or if they had heard them, they had not heard them in a convincing fashion. So if your point is that the United States needs to do a better job of communicating, you are absolutely right. Hopefully, this kind of improvement will occur over the next phase of the relationship.

Can the United States work without Turkey in the region? It probably can, but it would be stupid to try. In most cases, it is simply easier to have Turkey's cooperation. Here is what I worry about. The United States is heading for a crisis with Iran. It will probably want to cut off regional trade with that country. But the current Turkish government may resist cutting off trade or closing its border with Iran in the face of the most persuasive U.S. analysis and information.

Similarly, the United States is determined to push Arafat out of his current job, one way or another. Again, even if the Bush administration were to share everything it has on Arafat, and make the most compelling case it could possibly make as to why Arafat should be removed from his current position of authority, it would not convince most people in Ankara. The United States and Turkey are simply bringing different conceptual approaches to a lot of problems in a way that we did not in the late 1990s. This difference will affect how we relate to one another over the months and years to come. ❖

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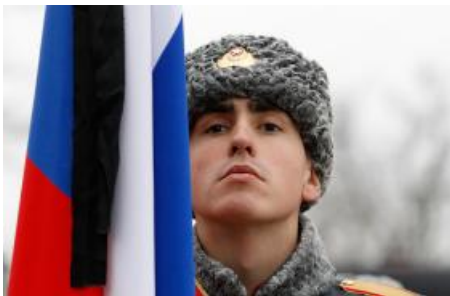
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