

# PARADIGM SHIFT IN TURKISH-US RELATIONS

*Turkish-US relations arguably reached its highest point in 1999, highlighted by President Clinton's five-day visit to Turkey in November of the same year. A very strong argument can be made today that in a period of five years, Turkish-US relations have reached a low point, perhaps the lowest in decades. This paper analyzes how Turkey and the US got to this low point, with anecdotes, relating concrete cases and highlighting examples of mismanagement and bad judgment by both Turkey and the US. The past and present relations are compared on multiple dimensions with a critical yet constructive perspective, drawing conclusions on how to move forward, albeit incrementally and within the framework of a new paradigm.*

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Perhaps 1998 was the lowest point of Turkish-EU relations since Turkey had applied for membership in 1987. The fallout of the December 1997 Luxembourg summit was continuing as the Turkish government had lifted political dialogue with the EU. The government was determined to show the Europeans that they were serious about the process, would settle for no less than membership and believed that lifting all dialogue would shift world public opinion in Turkey's favor. On top of this, Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the terrorist organization PKK, had fled Syria due to rising Turkish threats and was seeking political asylum in Europe. Öcalan was rumored to have traveled to several countries before settling in a villa in Italy for a few months.

A tremendous amount of anti-EU sentiment was on the rise, and European products were being boycotted in Turkey. Italian flags were being burned in the streets and Italian cars were targeted by demonstrators. Within this environment US intelligence was instrumental in the capture of Öcalan outside the Greek Embassy in Kenya, while EU leaders not only did not provide assistance, but arguably provided misinformation. Six years later on December 17, 2004, Turkey was given a date by the EU for negotiations to begin in October of 2005. A far cry from 1998; yes, indeed a very far cry. Unbelievable to some; yes, and perhaps unbelievable to many on both sides. But in the short span of 5-6 years, Turkey had moved from deep mistrust of European countries at the state level and high levels of anti-EU sentiment within the public to taking a major step forward toward full integration. Now public opinion polls in Turkey are continually showing that over 70 percent of the public supports EU integration.

Turkish-US relations arguably reached its highest point in 1999, highlighted by President Clinton's five-day visit to Turkey in November of the same year. It was Clinton's remarks at the Grand National Assembly thanking Turkey "for half a century of friendship, mutual respect and partnership" and adding that the "partnership has become even more important."<sup>1</sup> I believe that it was Clinton who first officially used the term 'strategic alliance' in reference to Turkish-US relations, during this visit. Clinton also took the time and effort to positively influence Turkish public opinion by traveling within Turkey, promoting tourism, visiting the earthquake sites, being photographed with Turkish people and children, meeting with NGO's, etc.

1999 was indeed quite a rewarding year for Turkish-US relations with many critical developments occurring at once: US intelligence assistance in the capture of Öcalan in January, US leading the assistance of many nations after the devastating earthquakes in August, Clinton's historic 5-day visit which clearly moved the Turkish people, joint efforts made to finalize the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project, and Clinton's pressure/lobbying vis-a-vis EU leaders leading up to the Helsinki summit in December.

A very strong argument can be made today that in a period of five years, Turkish-US relations have reached a low point, perhaps the lowest in decades. A far cry from 1999; definitely, yes and also unbelievable to almost all who have ever been involved with this relationship. Impossible to fix? Certainly, not. Despite the fact that it will never be quite the same, it will definitely take a long-term sustained effort of good intentions from both sides to put relations back on track. I believe that a minimum of five years will be necessary since today, mutual confidence and trust levels are down considerably.

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<sup>1</sup> Remarks by the President in address to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Ankara, Turkey, November 15, 1999, <http://clinton4.nara.gov/WH/New/html/19991115.html>.

How did Turkey and the US get to this low point? It is actually a process that started well before March 1, 2003. Almost everyone believes that March 1 was the key date where the fallout began, but I believe that the build-up of mistrust began before that. March 1 was the result of this mistrust and the swift collapse of the relations clearly shows that the base was not solid. Perhaps the unsustainable nature of the relationship means there was no 'strategic partnership' after all, depending on how we define the term 'strategic partnership.' In any case, the fact that the trust once achieved was not consolidated and refreshed must be recognized, and the relationship should thus be evaluated in its entirety and not simply over the last two years or along limited lines. There have been many misunderstandings and unresolved issues that have prolonged during the last 10-15 years; unkept promises regarding the Gulf war, insufficient support regarding Cyprus, red lines of Turkey's strategic position, embargos on military equipment sales to Turkey, to name a few.

However, one thing is certain: if there was a strategic relationship between Turkey and the US once, today there clearly is not. This relationship needs to be redefined before it moves forward. The relationship was one based on mutual trust and respect and both partners would always look out for the others' interests, even on issues not directly related. For example, one of the three criteria that the US presented to Germany in order to reconcile after a serious fallout several years ago was Germany's support for Turkey in the 2002 Copenhagen EU summit. Germany did not appreciate this insistence which was an impact of the dimension of the US-Turkey relationship at that time. Washington, knowing that Germany did not take kindly to this approach, nevertheless persisted because of the relationship.

Another aspect of the relationship was that both sides mainly gave the other the benefit of the doubt on many issues. As an example, in 1998, circles in Ankara believed strongly that Germany and France were working together to support the establishment of a separate state in Northern Iraq. It was Washington's presence in northern Iraq that gave Ankara confidence that its interests would be protected. For the last several years the same circles in Ankara firmly believe that the US and Israel are working together for the formation of a Kurdish state. And the trust level is so low that no official statement from either Washington or Jerusalem will change that. This issue is one of the critical points in the breakdown of the relationship. The perception that has evolved in Ankara is one that now extends past these circles and is routinely debated in public. And it is this perception that has been a driving force behind the government's renewed efforts to approach Iran and Syria. There is a growing conviction, whether warranted or not, that the interests of all three countries overlap with regard to Iraq's territorial integrity.

The proper diagnosis of the problem is a prerequisite to applying an appropriate cure. Otherwise certain methods of treatment will not suffice; i.e., "this was a strategic partnership that has undergone several bumps in the road and with some effort we will get back to where we were" will not be sufficient. Prime Minister Erdogan is constantly claiming that there are no major problems with the relationship and the strategic partnership continues. Condoleezza Rice made similar remarks after her recent trip to Turkey. These examples of misinformation are doing more harm to the relationship than good. Because everyone involved in the relationship, be it government or diplomatic officials, civil society and media representatives, whoever it may be, knows that this is not the case. The relationship must be redefined and toned down immediately so that expectations are feasible.

Can we lift the political dialogue with the US as we did in 1998 with the EU? Perhaps a good idea in the short-term, but not a likely solution. There are too many ongoing issues that require attention to move forward. Can we prevent journalists and opinion leaders on both sides from writing/saying negative things about each other? This probably would be most effective, but not a good idea since both governments place freedom as a first priority. Can we prevent the respective militaries on both sides from mistrusting each other? Perhaps, but it will take time. The military aspect of the relationship was indeed once viewed as the strongest pillar, but that is no longer the case. At the lower levels of the military ranks, there are clearly antagonistic opinions of the US. And just imagine how that plays out in forming public opinion with over 700 thousand soldiers in the military.

What about business, investment and trade? Can this be the key pillar to revitalizing the relationship? Perhaps, but on its own it will not be enough. It is common sense that increasing anti-American sentiment in Turkey and deterioration of the overall relationship will in time discourage business, investment, tourism, and other aspects of the relationship. How about civil society, NGO's, think tanks and institutions? Before discussing civil society, perhaps it may be helpful to address the issue of relationship management, not simply between decision makers but including all levels of communication.

I believe that the institution I represent, the ARI Movement, is actually a good example to argue that Washington in general does not value its relationships as it once did. In 1999, once we found out that Clinton was to visit Turkey, we sent a letter to the White House which outlined our request to host an NGO meeting in Turkey during his visit. For the better part of a six-month period there was much positive correspondence on both sides. We were well aware that our request was a difficult one. The assistance that was given by NSC senior advisor Anthony Blinken, Ambassador Mark Parris, DCM Jim Jeffries, as well as others was of utmost importance. As Clinton's visit neared, we received conflicting signals with regard to the meeting. But one thing was clear, if it was to happen there would be at least 5 NGO's present so as to provide a broader representation of the NGO community. Two weeks before the visit, we actually received a written notice from the White House saying that although the intent was positive, Clinton's schedule would not allow for this meeting. But we did not give up and instead continued pushing. Blinken and Parris were just as excited as we were to have this meeting occur, and their support was critical to the end. The proposed NGO meeting did not have support from Turkish political circles, and the bureaucracy did not see any reason to have it on the schedule.

But the meeting did occur and it turned out to be one of the highlights of Clinton's visit in Turkey. There were five other NGO leaders present at the meeting in addition to myself. The meeting was a turning point for NGO's in Turkey as it was the first time that NGO's in Turkey had been received by a world leader of this stature. This was indeed the setting of a precedent. This meeting had not been an event planned upon by either Washington or Ankara. It was entirely our initiative and persistence that was consistently supported by key Washington officials who valued ARI's work and input into the Turkish-US relationship.

In November 2003, we, as ARI, were approached by the Turkish Foreign Ministry (TFM) about an important project. The 2004 NATO summit in Istanbul was to include a side function called the NATO Student Summit modeled after the one which had taken place a year earlier again on the sidelines of the 2002 NATO Prague Summit. NATO and its partner in Washington, The Atlantic Council of the United States (ACUS), had selected the ARI Movement as its local partner in Turkey to organize this important event. ARI had been

selected because of its experience and expertise with youth activities, security conferences, global exchange programs, and other similar activities of international relations. ARI is also one of the select institutes in Turkey that NATO works with. The TFM, which had worked with ARI on a number of issues in the past, approved our selection and in November 2003, there was a task force formed with the TFM, NATO, ACUS and ARI. The Atlantic Treaty Association (ATA) in Ankara was also a partner in this event along with its responsibilities in the overall Summit. And ATA was constantly informed of the entire process.

This task force was essentially responsible for every possible detail regarding the NATO Student Summit including logistics, organization, fund-raising, public relations, and many other issues. And this task force proceeded to work on these issues for a period of three months. Universities were visited so as to select the proper host for the 200 students and the decision to work with Koc University was made. I myself visited the Ambassadors of Great Britain, Germany and Greece to ask for their assistance in arranging that their respective leaders schedule an address to the Student Summit during their participation of the NATO Summit. Fund-raising efforts were started; potential sponsors visited, etc. During ARI's routine annual Washington trip in November 2003, we expressed to US administration officials our request to have President Bush address the students. As a strong back-up, we asked State Department and other officials to ensure that Secretary Powell would be available to address them in case Bush could not. All of this work was within our responsibilities as the task force and all of these developments were shared with the task force.

At the beginning of February 2004, three months into our work as a task force, we received a telephone call from the TFM informing us that there was a new development at the Prime Ministry. The Prime Ministry had decided to include another Turkish NGO to work with us as well. And we were told that there would be an addition to the task force in the near future. Several weeks later, the other NGO was announced and they were instructed to get in touch with ARI as three months of work had passed and we had all the accumulation of information. The NGO in question deliberately did not get in touch with ARI and subsequently informed the TFM that they would only participate in this project if they were allowed to be the sole local partner. Since the NGO had been recommended by the Prime Ministry, their request was eventually accommodated and ARI was slowly being left out of the process.

We proceeded to inform our counterparts and US officials that there was a problem brewing with regard to this event. We had researched and found out who was involved and how everything was playing out. It was actually another NGO that had interfered vis-a-vis the Prime Ministry and introduced the NGO in question to take our place. It was all a set-up aiming to prevent ARI's participation in the summit. ARI had been selected by highly respectable institutions and had redesigned its 2004 program and budget in order to accommodate this project. During this period of uncertainty, the task force essentially stopped working for a period of 4-5 weeks. The NATO Student Summit was actually in danger of being cancelled entirely due to internal games being played and this option of canceling was considered by the parties involved. It is rather regrettable that decisions regarding an international event of this depth and scope could actually be subject to such low standards.

The interesting ending to the saga was that ARI was never officially notified that it was no longer a member of the task force and it was our goodwill that allowed for a smooth transition. Nothing was leaked to the press. On our trip to Brussels and Washington in March, 2003, we informed our counterparts that we would withdraw from the task force and that they

could count on us as advisors on the Student Summit were the need to arise. Now, one year after this process and well after the NATO summit, I thought it appropriate to use this case as an example for the overall relationship and also to explain the process as we had made numerous contacts regarding this event in our capacity as the local organizer of the Student Summit, but were unfortunately prohibited from proceeding and following up on them.

We had thought that once US officials understood what was happening, they might put forth some kind of effort and support so that our work and participation within the task force was not wasted altogether. Surprisingly, no one really even made an effort to do so, and it became clear to me that relationships did not matter anymore. This approach resembled a recent trend we have observed with concern, that of the US making alliances with those who serve its short term interests at the expense of longer term relationships. In the medium and longer-term, this approach is not sustainable and explains why Washington's standing is declining in countries such as Turkey. This case that I have presented may be a micro issue that gets lost in a busy macro world, but small issues usually reflect larger trends. If Washington is worried about why things are going the way that they are, it would be worthwhile, among other things, for a reevaluation of how processes and relationships were managed to take place.

The ARI Movement has been an advocate for Turkish-US relations for the past 10 years. ARI has also worked to expand the dimensions of Turkish-Israeli relations beyond the areas of military cooperation and intelligence sharing. ARI has tried to explain to the Turkish public that the relationship with Israel is important not only for security reasons, but for other aspects as well. During the last 5 years, ARI has worked with not just the European Commission but with leading European institutes throughout Europe to assist Turkey's EU integration process. ARI has never tried to use one relationship against the other. Doing its best to be fair and balanced, ARI has never attempted to play Brussels off Washington, or vice-versa.

The ARI Movement supported the March 1 resolution and advocated to the Turkish public as to why overall it was to the benefit of Turkey. Unlike many institutes in Turkey, we did not use the rejection of the resolution to help position Turkey favorably within the eyes of the Europeans. And we never advocated that moving away from Washington would get us closer to our EU goals. The process of the March 1 resolution that began in December 2002 was clearly a mistake, a result of mismanagement of the Turkish government. To spin this issue into a positive element in order to further our European ambitions did not seem ethical or correct as it was simply a mistake. As for the October 6 resolution, ARI did not support this attempt to send 10 thousand troops to a specified location in Iraq. However, we did not advocate against its behalf respecting the sensitivities of Turkish-US relations. The resolution seemed to us an insufficient attempt to repair the relations that was going to place our soldiers in direct danger. However, we refrained from public admonition.

The AKP government has not accepted responsibility for the fallout of Turkish-US relations. Instead, a policy of cover-up is being implemented and misinformation is being provided to the Turkish public. The process of the March 1 resolution which has now extended beyond 25 months must be evaluated and accountable people must be identified. One of the reasons that relations have suffered is the advisors, who were never accountable in the first place, taking a leading role in the negotiations. Also, information was not sufficiently shared with the relevant government departments, such as the TFM or the Turkish General Staff. Three memorandum of understandings (MOU's) were under negotiation, but there was a lack

of coordination among the relevant departments and thus conflicts occurred. A significant amount of communication was never made official and this resulted in many gaps which were never consolidated.

Were the Americans pushy and sometimes even rude during their negotiations? Yes, they were. Did they bully us at times? Yes, they did. Did they consider Turkish public opinion or read into other factors of influence in Turkey? No, they did not. And this has been costly. Were some of their negotiators making life difficult? Yes, they were. Did the US policymakers ask for too much? Yes, they did. Why so many places were targeted within Turkey for military use by the US, we will never know. Were there communication problems between the US State Department and the Pentagon? Yes, there were. Did the Bush administration spend considerable senior political capital during the critical junctures as the Bush Senior team did in 1991? Not even close. This was a critical diplomatic and political failure on behalf of the Bush administration. But at the end of the day negotiations are a two-way street. Turkey, holding the stronger position at the table always had the final say with regard to details. But there were so many different groups and individuals involved; some were anxious to get more money, some were worried about losing influence over the future of Iraq, and some were suspicious of the prospect of the US military remaining in Turkey for an extended time.

The MOU's were completed and details were being finalized as the government took the resolution to vote. Even Ankara's demand that troops in northern Iraq be under the command of a Turkish general, among other critical issues, was accepted. If there was any kind of doubt with regard to this process and what it entailed, then the vote should have been postponed. If there was not enough confidence in the overall plan and principles of the project, then the negotiations should have been on much more limited grounds and the resolution should have called for less ambitious cooperation with the US in the first place. On any issue that they did not feel comfortable with, the Turkish side could have just said 'no' and declared it a deal breaker. This would have been fine and explainable. At the end, it was primarily the responsibility of the AKP government and they failed in their management.

The following two months were difficult for AKP as the fallout of the vote was playing out. But on May 6, in an interview with CNN Turk, Paul Wolfowitz made critical comments that significantly changed the domestic balance in Turkey. Wolfowitz said "many of the institutions in Turkey that we think of as the traditional strong support of the alliance were not as forceful in leading in that direction. ...I think you know which ones I mean but I think particularly the military...for whatever reason they did not play the strong leadership role on that issue."<sup>2</sup> These words were coming from the number two of the Pentagon. However, it was the fact that they were coming from someone who for a long-time had been a staunch supporter of Turkey and Turkish-US military relations that rendered the comments even more important. The statement shifted the responsibility and accountability issues partially from the government and placed it on the military. The military, already weary of Washington's political support for AKP, was not prepared for these comments and the situation created resentment among the military ranks. The inexcusable event which occurred two months later at Suleymaniya, where Turkish soldiers were physically abused and morally embarrassed, deepened the resentment.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Interview on CNN Turk, May 6, 2003, text available from:  
<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030506-depsecdef0156.html>

<sup>3</sup> The event referred to is that in which a Turkish special force in Northern Iraq was detained by the American military by sacks being put over their heads on July 4, 2003.

I believe the approach of the military was quite simple; Washington provided AKP with an unusually high level of political support and in exchange AKP was to provide the necessary political support for the resolution, bearing in mind that AKP had 365 seats in Parliament. The military was involved in its own MOU and for the most part knew its responsibilities within the overall resolution. I do not believe that there were too many individuals in the upper levels of the military that actually thought the resolution would not pass. As we now look back two years later, we can also see that since then, as a principle, the military has publicly refrained from joining key international political debates, such as the Cyprus problem and dealings with the EU in general. The traditional accusations of the military involving itself in the political decision making process have not been valid for the last 2.5 years. This period also coincides with the new Chief of Staff, Hilmi Özkök, taking over the military. There has been an obvious shift in the policies of the military in the period covering the process of the resolution on March 1. Washington did not anticipate this shift in policy and interpreted it as the military's support being insufficient. It should be noted that following the vote, on March 5, it was actually General Özkök who publicly offered his support, stating that should Turkey not cooperate with the US, it would stand to lose its position in the region and that result would not be in the national interest. He strongly implied that the resolution should be reconsidered. But the AKP government for some reason chose not to bring another resolution to vote even though they had been only three votes short. This issue also strengthens the argument that Washington failed to read the changing domestic dynamics in Turkey in the past few years.

Foreign Policy in Turkey over the last two years has taken an interesting course. I believe the proper analogy would be “when in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government has turned into a neutral one, one seeking safe ground on almost all issues. Using this approach obviously places Turkey at odds with Washington on almost all issues with regard to the Middle East. And with Erdogan using rhetoric which could be interpreted as anti-American, certain issues turned immediately into an anti-Washington oriented reflex. One example of this was Erdogan's comments on the Iraqi elections, calling them anti-democratic and not a fair representation of its people. An AKP Parliament Member labeled the US actions as genocide. Attempts to explain policy decisions based on public opinion show that AKP is relying on its traditional base to justify its actions and that emotions are increasingly affecting the relationship. This allows the base to “roam free” with regard to spreading opinions on these issues.

Leadership requires formulation of public opinion on critical issues; and this certainly is not the case here. The unfortunate component of the overall situation is that neutrality seldom works in an unstable and volatile world. And I think it is fair to say that the Middle East is unstable and volatile with multiple conflicts ongoing. It is safe to assume that AKP will consistently defer to its traditional base especially on issues regarding the Middle East, which means the US and Turkey will seldom see eye-to-eye on issues in this region. This point can translate into the following suggestion: if attempts are going to be made for Turkish-US relations to flourish once again, the Middle East is definitely not the area to concentrate on.

It is also apparent that Washington's approach toward AKP and issues in the Middle East has changed. During the last three years, in circles in Washington, one could hear many versions of what kind of a model Turkey, with its new government, could constitute in the framework of the Greater Middle East project: some would call Turkey an “Islamic model”, others would use the term “moderate Islam” or “Islamic democracy”. The debate revolved around such terms and thinking. I would repeatedly point out to friends in Washington that they were

approaching the issue in the wrong manner and that Turkey could never be used as a model in such a design. Using the term “moderate Islamic democratic model”, or a version thereof, for the Turkish government was entirely wrong. Turkey was always and is still a secular democratic state. This approach was also inappropriate as governments in Turkey have always been run by Muslims who were democrats. Were we now to redefine for example, Özal, Demirel, and Ecevit as anything other than leaders who believed in Islam and democracy? Now I can see that in Washington, models are not discussed as much anymore, which I believe is a step in the right direction. Furthermore, many circles in Washington see AKP not as a partner in the Middle East but rather as a potential spoiler. And one of Washington’s main goals now seems to be preventing AKP from being a disruptive force in the Middle East.

Several journalists from the US recently wrote negative articles about Turkey. The article by Robert Pollack in the *Wall Street Journal*<sup>4</sup> actually took up headlines in Turkey for almost two weeks. Almost every Turkish journalist in almost every paper wrote something in response to this article. When you think about it, it is amazing how just one article was able to affect the agenda of Turkish media to this extent. The vast majority of the reaction to Pollock’s comments was naturally quite negative and now the antennas are up awaiting other negative articles from US sources in order to cut them down as soon as possible. Other articles have since come out and again broad negative reactions have followed.

It is interesting that no one is really commenting about the fact that almost every night on Turkish TV channels there are at least several controversial programs about Turkish-US relations. I always thought that the number of US experts in Turkey was actually quite low. But it turns out that we have an inflation of such experts in Turkey. Otherwise it would be practically impossible to fill all the air space. We have a number of people actually calling on the Turkish military to take action in northern Iraq. We have so-called experts comparing Bush and Hitler and their respective courses of action. It would be important to note that Hitler’s autobiography *Mein Kampf* became a bestseller in Turkey selling 50.000 copies between January and March 2005. There is also a fictional Turkish best-seller called *Metal Storm* which centers on a US invasion of Turkey. So there obviously is a rising amount of interest in these extreme views. And these programs are not just on marginal channels like they used to be. They are actually on mainstream media channels, which is unusual. You can practically feel many individuals willing Washington to failure. It’s in their actions, their words and their manners. Most of these people are neglecting the most important point at hand, and that is that it is simply not in the interests of Turkey for the US to fail in Iraq. Also, a deterioration of Turkish-US relations is not in Turkey’s interests. But for the most part, these issues are not discussed.

Politically, Turkey is heading toward a potentially dangerous two-pillar axis. On one side you have a pillar of Islam and various interpretations of its political ideology by different groups. And on the other side you have rising nationalism and again different interpretations regarding this ideology. Should there be early elections in Turkey over the next 12 months, these two pillars will most likely take the leading roles in Turkey. Social democracy and liberal democracy have basically failed because the individuals representing these beliefs have spent most of their political capital, not for the formation of ideas and new thinking, but either fighting amongst themselves or with the state. There must be new movements on both these

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<sup>4</sup> See Robert Pollock, “The Sick Man of Europe – Again,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 16, 2005, p.A14.

fronts in the near future or Turkish public opinion will mainly be affected by these narrow political views which will create more antagonism towards outside influences. By outside influences, I do not mean just the US; I include the EU as well. Cautions and warnings that will come more frequently from the EU will result in similar reactions as we are seeing against Washington. There are already several examples that have occurred and more on the horizon.

In an environment such as this, it will become more and more difficult to advocate cooperation on various issues with international bodies. Even today one can notice a serious drop in the number of individuals and institutes that advocate for Turkish-US cooperation. Therefore, the public ends up generally being fed with negative perspectives and misinformation. Debates are weak and lacking substance. This vacuum of accurate information on issues can spread to other areas as well and before long the same lack of depth in debates will become the norm on critical current events. In Turkey, a good source of accurate information on the March 1 resolution process is Murat Yetkin's recently released book called *Tezkere (Resolution)*. This publication includes facts about the whole process and can add credibility as a reference point to debates on the issue.

An aspect of the relationship that is not frequently discussed is the indirect benefit that Turkey received from the relationship over the years. The debate is concentrated on the direct issues that affect both countries, neglecting the fact that Turkey has always enjoyed a windfall from the strategic relationship. One such example is the oil-for-food scandal that is currently under investigation: Turkey's involvement in this scandal was basically covered up by the US State Department due to Turkey's strategic importance to US national security. Should this scandal extend into further investigations, Turkey may now be held accountable regarding inappropriate trade practices with Iraq. In NATO, Turkey has always enjoyed a high standing due to its special relationship with the US. This has been evident on a number of issues when Turkey and the US have stood side by side creating a front. An example would be the invoking of Article 5 in the case of attack against Turkey during the Gulf War.

When evaluating the disadvantages to Turkey due to the deterioration of its relationship with the US, it is necessary to factor in the losses which will be incurred as a result of the US not taking action on Turkey's behalf as it did in the past. One issue that will immediately provide a good idea of the scope of the losses we face will be how Washington handles the initiatives of the Armenian diaspora this year. Initiatives of the Armenian diaspora for the US congress to recognize the so-called genocide occur almost annually in Washington. In 1999, at the height of our relationship, Clinton sent a letter to the Speaker of the House directly asking him to take the resolution off the agenda. And the Speaker did just that. Ankara may find that Washington does not have the appetite to stand up for Turkey on this issue as in previous years. Another example is the influence of the Jewish lobby, especially in Washington regarding critical Turkish issues. While in the past, this lobby has been proactive on most issues, again the approach in the future may not be as forthright as before. When evaluating Turkish-US relations, most people tend to concentrate on the direct give-and-take aspects and disregard the indirect gains and losses.

There is also much debate over the indirect influence of Turkish-US relations on the EU and especially on the EU's consideration of Turkey's membership. The traditional view of many in Turkey is that Turkey's moving away from the special relationship with the US will somehow have a positive effect on its prospects of EU membership. It is thought that these two international powers are no longer compatible with each other and that Turkey must

therefore choose a side. And since Turkey is trying to join the EU, the argument concludes that Turkey must choose the EU over the US. This argument applauds the fact that Turkish-US relations have drastically changed for the worse, thus adding value to Turkey's bid for EU membership. I not only do not agree with this argument, but I find it naive to think that the EU will actually view Turkey in a better light if Turkey's relations with the US are 'normal' or shall we say, less than 'special.' In my communications with Europeans, I have found that there was an inherent respect in the way they view the Turkey-US special relationship and this relationship in fact increased their respect of Turkey itself. This respect played a positive role in their evaluation of Turkey's prospective EU membership. Respect in international relations arises from a country's bilateral relations and the ability to develop and maintain critical relationships. In this context, to define the relations with the US as critical would be an understatement. To consider the weakening of this critical relationship as a positive factor that would enhance Turkey's international standing is difficult to comprehend.

There has obviously been a paradigm shift in Turkish-US relations. A strategic relationship may have once existed but does not anymore. Throughout my presentation, I have tried to emphasize several points which I believe needed to be stated openly. However now I will try to summarize these and tie them to a few conclusions. For those that have been involved in Turkish-US relations over the last decade or so, it is rather sad to see where we stand today: there is no solid base and every step brings a reaction to counter it. And it seems to be getting worse every day. Just recently, the US Ambassador to Turkey, Eric Edelman, announced his resignation from his post. His announcement, although not related, coincided with three days of public debate over statements he never made regarding President Sezer's trip to Syria. It has come to the point where every issue leads to controversy and such debates are foregone conclusions that the US simply has bad intentions. The relationship has to be redefined and expectations on both sides have to be lowered. In order for reactions against the US to be less harsh and cause less harm to the relationship, the Turkish public has to be informed more openly about the processes that have led both sides to the present point.

From Turkey's perspective, it must also be noted that the breakdown of relations has occurred under a Republican administration in the US, and the disagreements generally stemmed from hard power issues. The Turkish government initially attempted to embrace the tools of hard power policymaking, however was unable to manage the requirements involved, as became clear with the March 1 resolution process. This may mean that future US administrations which give more priority to soft power in policymaking will be more compatible with Turkey's new dynamics. Also, it is important to factor in the role that particular individuals have played and will play in the future. As the decision-makers on both sides who took part in the unfortunate downturn of Turkey-US relations in this period change posts, incoming individuals will bring fresh perspectives which might provide for new opportunities. Time is always necessary to heal deep wounds.

For the future, Turkish-US relations can not be taken for granted. The relationship has to be rebuilt once again. Each respective community, including political circles, military, diplomatic corps, civil society, academia, business, media, and youth have to do their own part. Individuals and institutes representing these sectors, both in Turkey and in the US, have to come together for dialogue to redefine the relationship. I believe the appointment of Karen Hughes as Deputy at the State Department in charge of Public Diplomacy and improving Washington's standing abroad is a wise choice. One of the first countries Karen Hughes should visit and use as a case study is Turkey. Washington must do a better job of reaching out to the Turkish public and better understand how domestic dynamics are changing.

The Middle East as an issue should be avoided to the extent possible. I realize the difficulty on this point but there are going to be more conflicts as each specific issue comes up. Ankara needs to tone down its rhetoric about being a regional power in the Middle East; the present changing situation simply does not allow for such a role or responsibility. Washington has a mission in the Middle East and it is not Turkey's responsibility to be a negative force in the region. Turkey should spend more effort in Europe and Eurasia and seek US cooperation in those and other areas. If the Middle East becomes an area fostering conflicts for the relationship, the opportunities for cooperation elsewhere will diminish. The fundamental difference between Washington and Ankara in their Middle East approach is that Washington supports change and Ankara is supporting the status quo. The relationship between Turkey and the US should not be restricted to the Middle East alone; there are areas of cooperation which have basically been forgotten in the confusion of the recent times. Those areas where we have worked together in the past need to be highlighted and further collaboration on these issues sought. Afghanistan and Southeast Europe are concrete examples where collaboration has been effective. Collaboration does not have to be on foreign policy issues only; energy is another area of collaboration which has been successful in the past. The Baku-Ceyhan pipeline was an excellent example of collaboration, the kind of which needs to be expanded upon.

Washington must come to the realization that insufficient action with regard to cracking down on PKK has derailed its remaining credibility in Turkey. One of the reasons this issue became so significant was that Washington's pre-war presentation of Iraq for the most part was misleading and people in Turkey resented this. The fact that weapons of mass destruction presence was claimed but ended up being false was particularly damaging to public opinion regarding US policy. And now we find ourselves in a post 9/11 situation with a terrorist group seeking safe haven in northern Iraq. Washington, which is motivated by its fight against terrorism, does not seem to be targeting the terrorist elements which they do not feel personally threatened by. It is simply impossible to convince anyone in Turkey that the US has a legitimate cause unless Washington takes a zero-tolerance stance against the PKK. Resentment among the Turkish public will become deeper unless this issue is taken very seriously by the US. The PKK is the most sensitive issue in Turkey and inaction on the part of Washington is viewed as sympathy toward the PKK. With the perception in Turkey regarding northern Iraq drastically shifting to a perceived threat from the US and Israel, I would think that it would be in the best interests of Washington to take action and finally remove this issue from the table. Fighting the PKK need not be a barrier to legitimate US cooperation with the Kurds in northern Iraq. And US calls for a front against terror and the sharing of common values should be reason enough to confront the PKK.

Ankara must find a way to put the two-year Iraqi process and emotions behind and start to move forward. Europe has already done this. The EU countries that strongly opposed the war, like France and Germany, have put aside their differences with the United States, and are now looking forward, working to develop areas of cooperation with the US. New areas of concentration are slowly being defined. Pending world issues do not allow for long gaps and somehow, someway are always pushed forward. The last two years have clearly placed Ankara out of the Middle Eastern equation and this must be accepted as a reality. Otherwise, emotions and pride will continue to play a key role in the relations.

The AKP government, especially Erdogan himself, must spend some more political capital explaining the dimensions of Turkish-US relations to the public. The government has been

extremely reluctant to do this, both before and after March 1. Their preferred approach has been to wait for public opinion to develop and then position themselves accordingly. One aspect of the relationship that the public does not have much information about is the indirect aspect which was outlined above. The fact that very strong relations between Turkey and the US affected Turkey's standing in other institutions such as NATO, OSCE and the UN is one that must be realized clearly. AKP must be held accountable for the breakdown of US relations. Erdogan has deservedly received a lot of praise for his proactive stance regarding Turkey's EU integration process and getting a date for negotiations. But it must be noted that it is under his watch that US relations have significantly deteriorated, for primarily political reasons.

Civil society and business will undoubtedly play a larger role than ever because these are probably the only two sectors that have not suffered from the strains of the political fallout. Business is always a critical part of a bilateral relationship, however in this case business leaders on both sides may have to play a stronger role than one involving simple business concerns. The interaction among NGO's and think-tanks will be critical in rebuilding confidence and trust. There is no bad blood right now between civil society groups on either side. Relations amongst them are ongoing and discussions are continuing. Roundtable discussions on the topic of US-Turkey relations have to be increased. More and more openness has to be brought to these discussions. If these discussions are surrounded by official rhetoric, they will be less useful. Official participation is important but official input should not dominate the debate.

One way in which Washington can come to understand Turkey better and increase its credibility would be to directly invest in the development of NGO's in Turkey. The European Union uses this method effectively and because of this approach can get a broader perspective of the country's path. Washington has maintained its traditional approach of direct aid to government and state institutions. These types of funds are considerably large in size and difficult to track. Accountability is not always required from the counterpart. It would serve US interests and be in line with its values for small portions of these funds to be reallocated for NGO use. An immediate example could be the allocation of the one billion dollar grant that was earmarked for cooperation in Iraq, which has received much criticism over the last two years and is yet to be utilized. If 50 million or so were to be placed under World Bank supervision to be allocated to NGO's that adhere to values such as rule of law, transparency, human rights and ethics, the US would be perceived as being genuine about Turkey's democratic progress.

Young people in general in Turkey are critical about rebuilding the relationship. To overcome this problem it might be a good idea to utilize the many young Turkish students studying in the US who are active within their universities. University programs can be designed throughout the US with topics involving Turkey and participation in Turkish decision making. This way the universities will get involved as well and wider audiences can be brought into the discussions, such as local media and local business. Cultural activities need to be highlighted as well; sports, the arts, exchange programs, and such activities will all help in reestablishing a better base for the Turkish-US relationship.

Finally, I would again underline the value of NGO's, think-tanks and other institutes that are concerned with the direction that Turkish-US relations are taking. These will be the platforms that bring together the necessary elements for free discussion and that continue to critically follow-up on the re-building up of the relationship. These institutes can all be useful

in dialoging with their respective governments and state officials. Journalism should also be targeted using input from these platforms and they should materialize into more sound coverage of US issues. It is vital that information-based debates occur and in this process, articles based on emotions and biases should at least be marginalized. It is also critical to emphasize the history and the critical turning points over the last few decades that got us to where we were. NGO's in Turkey can play more of a role in the Middle East on soft power issues such as democratization. For Turkey in the short term, perhaps less politics and more civil society would be useful.

As I stated, I believe this all to be a medium to long term process, one that will take at least five patient years. A paradigm shift has occurred, thus the elements that affected the previous relationship are no longer valid. Now we must establish new dynamics which will factor into the terms of the future relationship. Our shared goal during this period should be to build mutual confidence and trust. The constantly changing world does not allow for any country to make presumptions about which states its interests will overlap with in the future. However in the case of the US and Turkey, it is not only possible but arguably inevitable that the two will need each other. Why not be prepared?