

THE MISSING ELEMENT: TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION TOWARDS THE US

Recent developments in US-Turkey relations, especially with regard to Turkish public opinion, have attracted the attention of decision makers. Sparked by the findings of some public opinion polls, the media has engaged in a discussion of the “anti-Americanism” of the Turkish public. This paper aims to elaborate the attitudes of the Turkish public towards the US, using the findings of several public opinion polls conducted recently. Polls show that anti-Americanism has increased in recent years, probably as a result of the Iraqi War and foreign policy conducted by the Bush administration. Nevertheless, this attitude is accompanied by an appreciation of the American way of life. Such a complex situation emphasizes the fact that much more effort must be exerted to understand this previously forgotten element: the element of public opinion.

Emre Erdoğan*

* Dr. Emre Erdoğan is the founding partner of Infakto research workshop based in Istanbul, Turkey.
emre.erdogan@infakto.com.tr

Public opinion is a crucial component in the relationships between states. Although study of the role of public opinion is a relatively new field of scientific inquiry, Post-Cold War developments highlight the importance of domestic actors as players on the international scene.

In the Turkish tradition of foreign policy, public opinion has always been accepted as an important component of international relations. Policy makers and diplomats have always underscored the importance of the role played by Turkish public opinion and used it as a bargaining tool during negotiation processes.

In tandem with the paradigmatic shift in the study of international relations, the heightened importance of relations with the European Union created a significant opportunity for the study of domestic actors in the context of international relations. The number of academic works has increased and a significant amount of funds are now channeled to field research. Academicians, Nongovernmental Organizations and market research companies have begun to produce information regarding Turkish public opinion towards international problems, such as the European Union, the Cyprus issue, relations with Greece and finally relations with the US.

However, the intellectual effort spent on the analysis of domestic actors, especially public opinion, is limited to individual efforts and largely channeled to EU-related issues. The analysis of public opinion towards the US has been conducted mostly by US-based organizations such as The Pew Center and The German Marshall Fund. The interests of Turkish institutions have shifted depending on the international climate and a systematic effort to analyze Turkish public opinion has never been realized.

This paper aims to present an overall evaluation of Turkish public opinion towards the US. Since available data to the public is very limited, the findings from various field research projects conducted by different actors will be presented in the subsequent sections of the paper. Such a lack of coherence may confuse the reader; however, the findings are so clear that there is a little room for misunderstanding.

The paper starts with a short explanation of the missing element in the study of international relations, namely public opinion. Thereafter, attitudes towards the US, attitudes towards the Bush administration, opinions about the Iraqi War and finally the Turkish world view will be presented.

The Missing Element: Public Opinion

Understanding the attitudes and preferences of individual citizens is not a major area of scientific inquiry for scholars of international relations, which is most likely due to the supremacy of the heritage of realist school. Politics are considered residual factors in the study of international relations. However, following the end of the Cold War, the emphasis putting on the role of public opinion in international relations increased fundamentally and the interaction of systemic and domestic factors became an important focal point.¹

¹ Andrew Moravcsik, "Introduction, Integrating International and Domestic Policies," in Peter Evans, Harold K. Jacobson and Robert D. Putnam (eds.), *Double Edged Diplomacy, International Bargaining and Domestic Politics* (California: University of California Press, 1993), p.5.

There are several reasons for the exclusion of “the domestic residual” from analysis, but the most important is surely the indifferent positions of citizens on international issues. Gabriel Almond, a leading political scientist, concluded that “foreign policy attitudes among most Americans lack intellectual structure and factual content. Under normal circumstances the American public has tended to be indifferent to questions of foreign policy because of their remoteness from every day interests and activities... Foreign policy, save in moments of grave crisis, has to labor under a handicap; it has to shout loudly to be heard even a little.”² This “mood” theory gathered significant empirical evidence during the following years.

This “mood” theory was challenged by Sydney Verba, who demonstrated correlations between positions in international issues and domestic issues.³ Whether this relationship is a function of an ideological positioning of individuals such as hawks versus doves, or whether positions on separate issues are determined through a hierarchy of issues is still a matter of discussion, but, nowadays, domestic politics is accepted as an important component of international diplomacy.

The most important contribution to this “grey” field of scientific inquiry came from a political scientist, Robert Putnam, and his article “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two Level Games.” Putnam’s article is important because it deals with the puzzle of “how and when domestic and international interacts?” According to him, “neither a purely domestic nor a purely international analysis could account for this episode.”⁴ Putnam offers a two-level game framework in order to conceptualize the politics of many international negotiations. At the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among these groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments. Neither of the two games can be ignored by central decision makers, so long as their countries remain interdependent, yet sovereign.⁵ This approach puts significant emphasis on public opinion in the study of international relations.

The study of domestic factors in the analysis of Turkish foreign relations is a relatively new area of interest. Of course, decision makers were always aware of the power of the public as a negotiating tool. For example, following the declaration of the Constitution in 1908, political leaders called people to boycott Austrian products to protest occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. After the end of the First World War, public meetings were major tools used to communicate the demands of Turkish citizens to the Allied Forces. The most extreme use of public opinion as a negotiation tool was exhibited by the Democratic Party government on 6 September 1956: As a result of agitation by government officials, a riot against the Greek citizens of Istanbul started and seriously harmed relations between Turkey and Greece. The use of domestic factors as foreign policy tools in the Turkish tradition requires much more detailed analysis.

² Gabriel A. Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1950), pp. 69-71.

³ Jonathan Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, “How Are Foreign Policy Attitudes Structured? A Hierarchical Model,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 81, No. 4, (December 1987), p. 1101.

⁴ Robert Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics, The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3, (Summer 1998), p.430.

⁵ Putnam (1998), p. 434.

Nevertheless, scholars and politicians generally neglected the preferences of Turkish citizens, most probably because of their belief that the Turkish public lacks information and interest necessary for international issues. The study of Turkish public opinion within the context of Putnam's two level game described above is very new.

Çarkoğlu, Eder and Kirişçi employed the two level game approach in their study entitled *Regional Cooperation in Turkey and the Middle East*: "Each involved government not only has concerns shaped by the international political and economic environment but also a domestic environment composed of different interest groups with various conflicting motives and political leverage upon the government."⁶ These authors allocated a specific chapter to the analysis of public opinion about the Middle East.⁷

Another good example of the use of the two level game paradigm in the analysis of international relations issues is exhibited by Kirişçi. He used this paradigm to analyze the rivalry between Greece and Turkey and concluded that it would take a miracle to get a breakthrough in this enduring rivalry: "The 'miracle' here seems to depend on ensuring that decision-makers willing to cooperate find domestic constituencies that will support their efforts but as a corollary also encounter a greater number of constituencies that demand from them cooperation rather than defection."⁸

Improved relations between Turkey and the European Union and prospects for full membership stimulated academic interest on public opinion and indirectly components of domestic coalitions as actors in the second level of the game.

Ziya Öniş, in his paper comparing the paths that Poland and Turkey are taking to full membership to the European Union (EU), employed the "two level game" approach of Putnam intensively: "It is interesting to observe in this context the Europeanization process of Turkey from the early 1990s onwards has helped to produce a powerful rift within the elite structures or the dominant power bloc of Turkish society."⁹

In his detailed article about the characteristics of Turkish public support for EU membership, Ali Çarkoğlu¹⁰ discussed Euroskeptics empirically and presented a profile of them. A similar phenomenon is analyzed by Hakan Yılmaz.¹¹ Based on a field survey, Yılmaz discussed determinants of Euroskepticism and defined different dimensions of Euroskepticism in Turkey.

Such an increased interest in the domestic factor did not remain confined to academic circles. The number of field surveys has increased during the last ten years. These surveys are

⁶ Ali Çarkoğlu, Kemal Kirişçi, and Mine Eder (eds.), *Türkiye ve Ortadoğu'da Bölgesel İşbirliği* (Regional Cooperation in Turkey and the Middle East), (İstanbul: TESEV Yayınları, 1998), p. vi.

⁷ Ali Çarkoğlu et al. (1998), pp. 227-230.

⁸ Kemal Kirişçi, "The 'Enduring Rivalry' between Greece and Turkey, can 'Democratic Peace' Break it?" *Alternatives*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (2002).

⁹ Ziya Öniş, "Diverse but Converging Paths to EU Membership, Poland and Turkey in Comparative Perspective," paper presented to the Second Pan-European Conference Standing Group on EU Politics, Bologna, 2004, p.25.

¹⁰ Ali Çarkoğlu, "Who Wants Full Membership? Characteristics of Turkish Public Support for EU Membership," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (Spring 2003).

¹¹ Hakan Yılmaz, "Turkey, within or outside Europe? A Historical Perspective," paper presented to the Seminar held at IMEIS and Collingwood College, University of Durham, 2004.

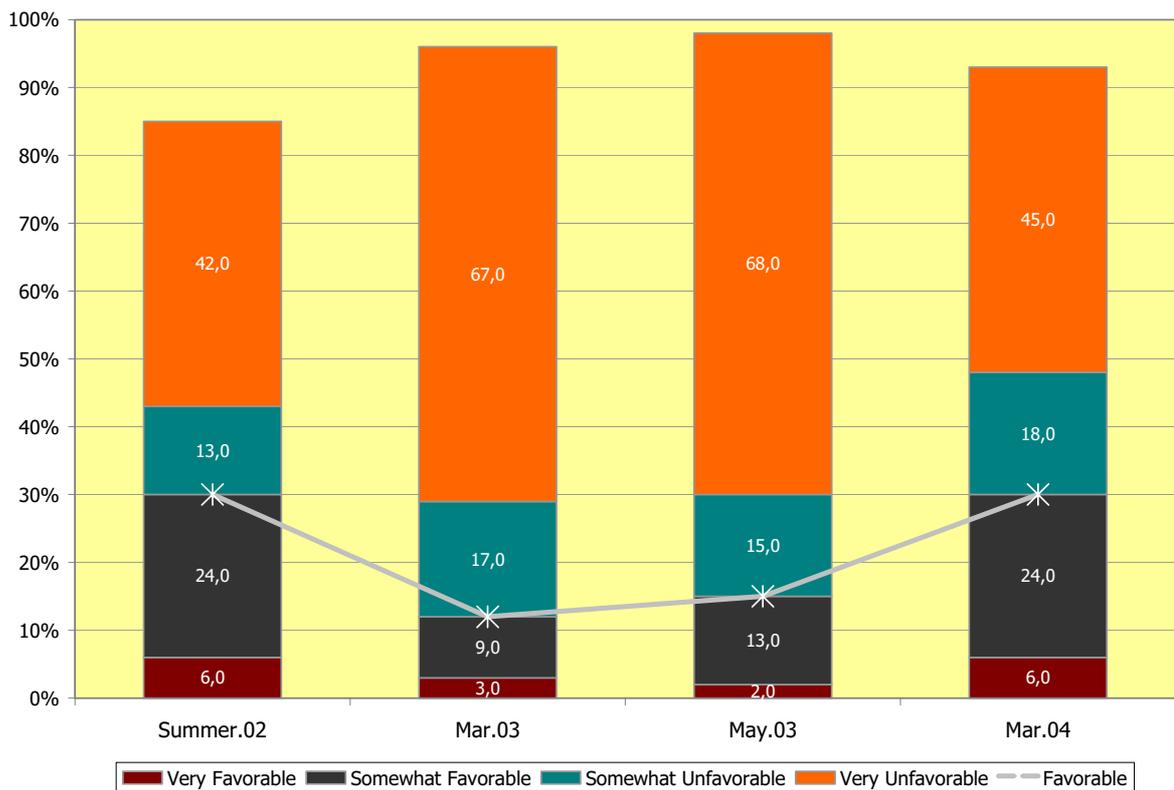
conducted by academics, nongovernmental organizations and commercial market researchers. The interest increased so much that the State Institute of Statistics conducted research to measure Turkish public opinion towards the EU.¹²

Nevertheless, all these efforts are focused on the relationship between Turkey and the EU. Measuring the attitudes of the Turkish public towards the United States (US) has been the exclusive domain of international institutions. At least three US-based institutions conduct regular public opinion research in Turkey. Turkish institutions emphasize the importance of this issue depending on the international climate. Most likely a number of public opinion surveys will be available publicly following disputes between Turkey and US. However, these efforts are far from being systematic and information obtained from this kind of ad hoc field research is limited to some descriptive statistics.

Information presented in the following section is based largely upon the works of US-based institutions. This paper tries to enrich findings by using secondary data collected by Turkish institutions such as TÜSES, TESEV and Pollmark. However, analyses will be limited and the hypotheses presented need to be tested specifically.

Attitudes Towards the US and Americans

Figure 1. Attitudes Towards the US¹³



¹² Results of this survey are available through the web site of State Institute of Statistics: www.die.gov.tr

¹³ The PEW, 2004; *A Year After Iraq War, Mistrust of America in Europe Ever Higher, Muslim Anger Persists*, available at <http://people-press.org/pgap/>. The question was: “Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of US?”

The Global Attitudes Project of the Pew Research Center headed by ex-secretary of state Madeleine Albright provides us with time series data about the attitudes of Turkish citizens towards the US. The above figure presents change of these attitudes overtime. Following the Iraqi War, it is clearly observable that Turkish public opinion became increasingly negative. The total percentage of “very favorable” and “somewhat favorable” answers declined to 12 percent in March 2003, from 24 percent in the summer of 2002. When another study conducted by USIA and referred to by PEW is considered, this decline is much more electrifying. According to this research, the total percentage of favorable answers was 52 percent in 2000, most probably following Clinton’s unforgettable visit to Turkey. The latest survey conducted by PEW shows that the percentage of pro-US replies increased again to 30 percent in March 2004, returning to pre-Iraqi War levels. Another interesting finding is that the percentage of people who did not respond to the survey declined to less than 10 percent from 15 percent in 2002. This may be interpreted as an early signal of the emergence of attitudes towards the US among the Turkish polity.

A recent survey conducted by the POLLMARK Research Institute (2005) shows that this anti-US climate continues to dominate public opinion. According to this survey, 14.6 percent of respondents stated that they have a positive attitude towards the US, while 76 percent have an anti-American attitude.¹⁴ This survey exposes the relationship between party identification and attitudes towards the US: The percentage of pro-US respondents among AKP voters is 15 percent and 24 percent among CHP voters.¹⁵ When the harsh rhetoric of Deniz Baykal, the head of the CHP, is taken into consideration this result is very surprising. Although this report does not include information about the attitudes of voters of other political parties, it is realistic to assume that their view of the US is not that much more positive.

Although information about the attitudes of Turkish society towards the US is not measured empirically overtime and data available to the public is seriously restricted, there are other figures pointing to an anti-American climate among the Turkish polity: According to a detailed survey conducted by TESEV (2002), 27 percent of Turkish voters stated that the US is Turkey's closest friend in terms of international relations. According to one third of respondents, Turkey has no friend. Another finding of the same survey shows that 31 percent of respondents believe that the US is the biggest enemy of our country (Greece was given the title of Turkey's principal enemy with a percentage of 34 percent.)¹⁶

The most recent survey conducted by TÜSES (2004)¹⁷ presents similar findings: 11 percent of respondents believe that Turkey has to stand close to the US (this ratio is 35 percent for the EU) and 7 percent of them state that the US is the closest friend of Turkey (similar to the findings of TESEV, 47 percent of respondents do not give the name of any country.) Moreover, 53 percent of voters state that the US threatens world peace.

¹⁴ Pollmark Research Institute; *The Agenda of Turkey*, February 2005, manuscript, p.70. These results need to be analyzed carefully, since the degree to which these finding are representative is questionable. Demographic figures of respondents show that the survey was conducted among much more educated segments of the society.

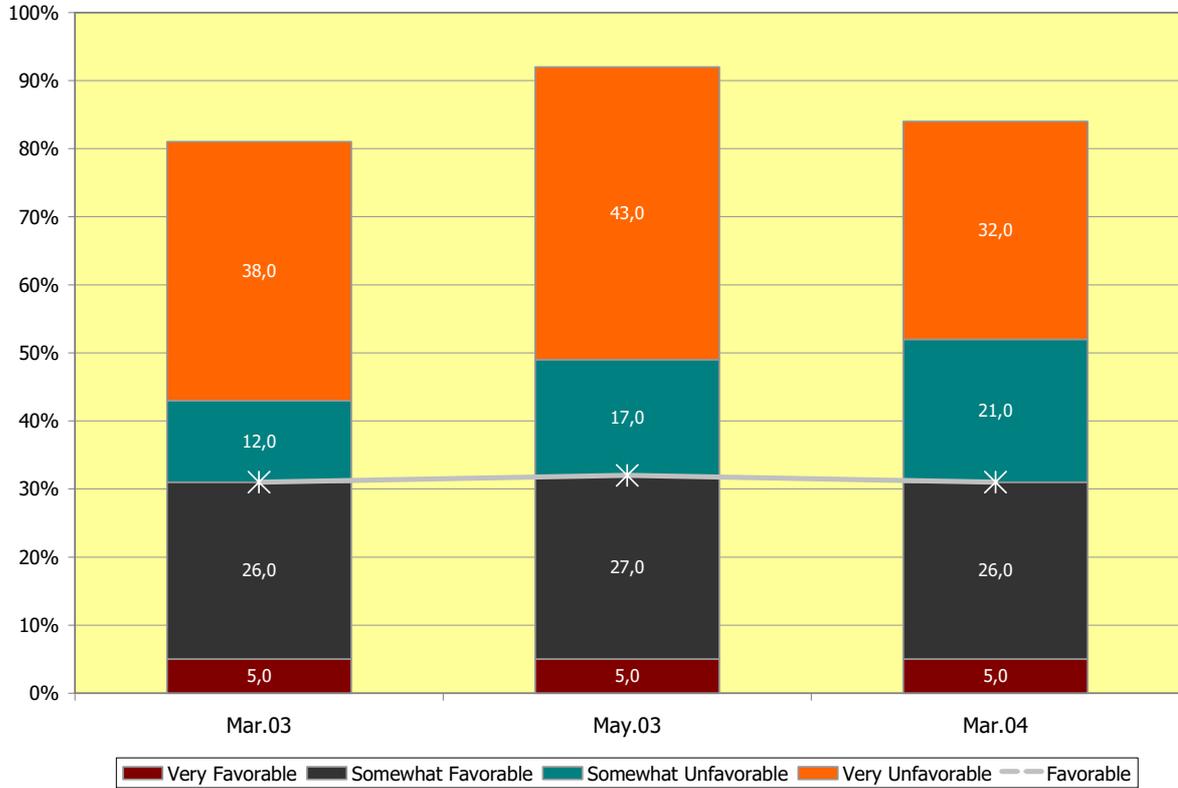
¹⁵ Pollmark, 2005, p.70.

¹⁶ TESEV, 2002; “Türk Dış Politikası Araştırması,” (Turkish Foreign Policy Research).

¹⁷ TÜSES, 2004; *Türkiye’de Siyasi Parti Yandaş ve Seçmenlerinin Nitelikleri, Etnik/Dinsel Kimlikleri ve Siyasal Yönelişleri Araştırma Dizisi 1994–2004* (Political Party Supporters and Voters Profile, Ethnical/Religious Identities and Political Orientations Field Research 1994-2004), presentation.

Another survey conducted by Pollmark prior to the NATO Summit of 2004 presents similar findings. 6 percent of voters believe that the future of Turkey requires close cooperation with the US, while this ratio is 51 percent for the EU. According to the research team, there is a negative relationship between positive attitudes towards the US and the level of education.¹⁸

Figure 2. Attitudes Towards Americans¹⁹



Despite the tendency to equate governments and citizens in the study of international relations, the above figure shows that the Turkish public maintains a distinction between the US and Americans. Almost independent of attitudes towards the US, the percentage of pro-Americans remained the same between March 2003 and March 2004, about 30 percent. Changes in the non-response rate (“don’t know” and no answers), from 20 percent in March 2003 to 10 percent in May 2003 and finally to 18 percent in March 2004, require significant attention. If methodological problems are set aside, non-response rates may be attributed to two different phenomena: lack of an opinion or hesitation on the part of the respondents to answer this question. When an issue is politicized it is possible to observe both phenomena simultaneously: people may have much clearer attitudes as a result of the increased volume of information available and people may hesitate to state their position to an unknown interviewer on a much politicized issue. In the case of the above situation, we do not have any information about which of these factors dominated, but it is clear that the sudden change in non-response rates requires a detailed analysis.

¹⁸ Pollmark “Türk Dış Politikası Araştırması” (Turkish Foreign Policy Research,) *Görüş*, June 2004, p.58.

¹⁹ The PEW, 2004; the question was “Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of Americans?”

Table 1. Dimensions of American Way of Life

| | Like | Dislike | DK/NA |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| American Popular Culture | 44 % | 46 % | 10 % |
| American Business Practices | 27 % | 59 % | 14 % |
| American Ideas About Democracy | 33 % | 50 % | 17 % |
| Spread of American Ideas and Culture | 11 % | 78 % | 11 % |
| | | | |
| | Worse | Better | Neither |
| The Lives of Immigrants in America | 19 % | 50 % | 14 % |

Source: The PEW (2002)

Evidence for the hypothesis that the Turkish public opinion does not equate Americans and the US is presented in table 1, which was produced by another survey conducted by PEW (2002).²⁰ According to these figures, almost half of the Turkish voters state that they like American popular culture and the rest state they do not. When the issue is “American business practices,” the percentage of “like” answers drops to 27 percent and the issue of “American ideas about democracy” receives positive answers from one third of respondents. Despite these more than moderately positive attitudes to these three dimensions of the American “way of life,” respondents state that they dislike the spread of American ideas and culture. This picture becomes more complex when it is asked “whether people from Turkey who move to the US have a better life:” Half of the respondents argue that these immigrants have better lives in America. From a comparative perspective this score is higher than the replies to the same question from all except those from the Russian public.

The figures discussed above, which were collected from different surveys, indicate a complicated situation regarding the relationship between the US and Turkey. The overall favorability of the US is low among the Turkish public and this ratio declined after 2003. However, independent of the international climate, Turkish public opinion distinguishes between the US government and Americans: Favorability towards Americans remained stable at around 30 percent. Finally, the Turkish polity presented a positive approach towards American popular culture, American business practices and American ideas about democracy. However, almost 80 percent of them stated that they dislike the spread of American ideas and culture.

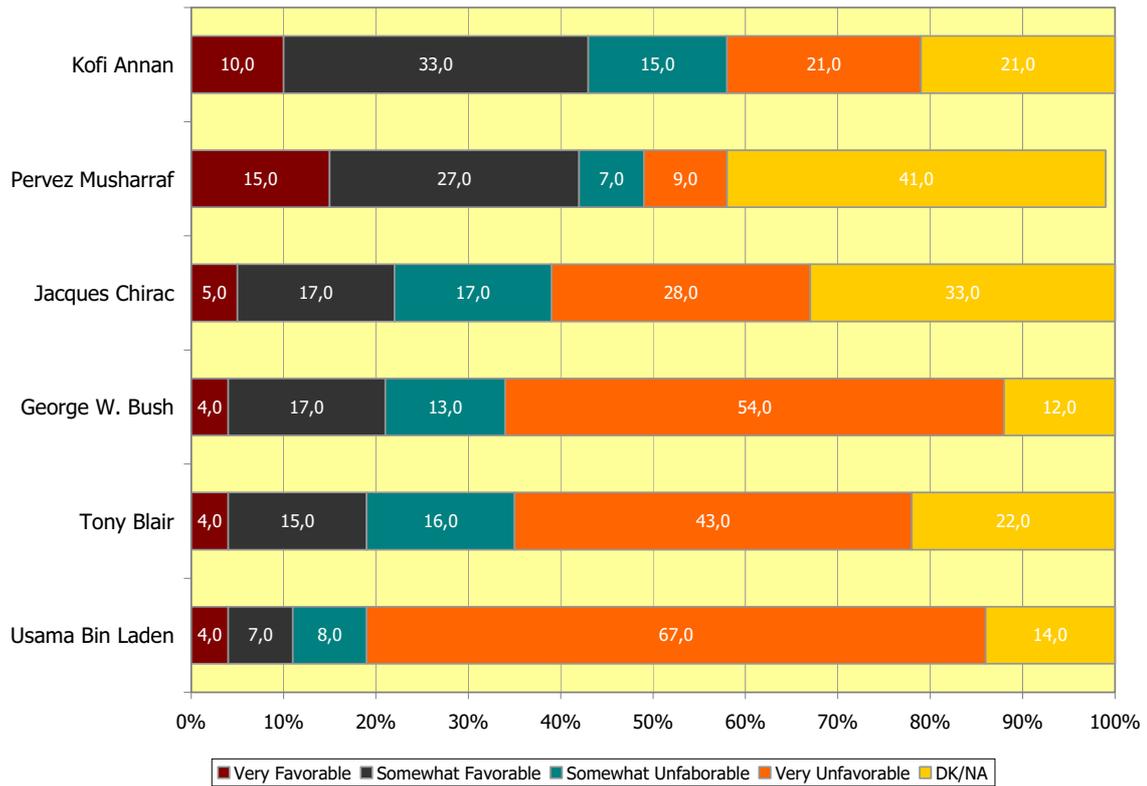
The remaining parts of the paper will focus on the political components of this equation: The Bush Administration, the Iraqi Crisis and the war against terrorism.

²⁰ The PEW, 2002; *How Global Publics View, Their Lives, Their Countries, The World, America*, pp.62-68, available at <http://people-press.org/pgap/>

Attitudes Towards the Bush Administration

It is not necessary to do detailed field research to say President George W. Bush is not among the most popular American presidents in the eyes of the Turkish public. The reasons for this are dealt with more extensively by other contributors to this issue. Now, we will provide some statistics as evidence to President Bush's negative image.

Figure 3. Image of George W. Bush²¹



The above figure shows how the Turkish public perceives President George W. Bush. Only about 21 percent of respondents state that they have a favorable opinion of President Bush. With this score of favorability, President Bush has a more positive image only than Tony Blair and Osama Bin Laden. In fact, it is especially significant that, President Bush’s image is very close to the image of Jacques Chirac who is not perceived as a pro-Turkish politician.²² From a comparative perspective, the above stated ratio is very close to favorability scores obtained from the French and German populace: 15 percent in France and 14 percent in Germany.²³

When respondents with an unfavorable opinion towards the US are asked for the reason behind their attitudes, 52 percent of them state that the main reason is Bush. The percentage

²¹ The PEW, 2004; the question was “Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of (name).”

²² The PEW, 2004, p.30.

²³ Ibid.

of “America in general” answers is 33 percent and 12 percent of them select both reasons.²⁴ Another survey conducted by the German Marshall Fund (2004) finds that 73 percent of the Turkish voters disapprove of the way President Bush is handling international issues. The percentage of approving respondents is only 13 percent.²⁵

The reelection of George W. Bush in the November 2004 elections was not welcomed by the Turkish polity. Research conducted by Yöntem Research as a part of GlobeScan project (2005) shows that only 6 percent of the Turkish voters think that the reelection of George W. Bush will have a positive impact on world peace. According to 82 percent of respondents, the impact will be negative. This score is the highest among 22 countries from China to Chile. When respondents are asked to evaluate the impact of the US on world problems, the percentage of respondents expecting a positive impact drops to 18 percent with 62 percent expecting a negative impact.²⁶

The Iraq Issue

It is not surprising that the Iraq issue was an important milestone in US-Turkey relations. As a result of enduring Turkish concerns about the territorial unity of the country and threats stemming of PKK-led terrorist activities in the Southeastern regions of the country, Turkish public opinion regarding the Middle East is very sensitive. According to early public opinion research, 61 percent of respondents advocated taking a position independent of the US in the first Gulf Crisis while only 20 percent of them supported active foreign policy conducted by the president of the time, Turgut Özal.²⁷

Another survey conducted in 1997 showed that the majority of the Turkish public believed that having good relations with Middle Eastern countries was important (69 percent). The same percentage of respondents argued that good relations with these countries would be economically beneficial for Turkey. The percentage of those who stated that these relations would be culturally and politically beneficial was 45 percent, and 36 percent for religious issues.²⁸

Based on this extraordinary sensitivity of Turkish public opinion towards the Middle East, the Iraqi crisis and the war played an important role in determining Turkish public opinion towards the US.

Research conducted by PEW (2002) shows how cautious Turkish public opinion is regarding the Iraqi problem. According to this survey, only 48 percent of Turkish voters stated that Iraq was a moderate or great danger. This split in public opinion was also present regarding Saddam Hussein, with 42 percent arguing that he must be removed and 32 percent of the opinion that he could be disarmed. However, when question was framed as allowing the US and its allies to use bases in Turkey for military action, 83 percent of them opposed this decision.

²⁴ The PEW, 2003; p.22.

²⁵ The German Marshall Fund, 2004; *Transatlantic Trends*, p.24, available at <http://www.transatlantictrends.org/>

²⁶ Yöntem Research, 2005; *Global Monitor*, presentation.

²⁷ Emre Kongar, *21. Yüzyılda Dünya, Türkiye ve Kamuoyu* (World, Turkey and Public Opinion in the 21st Century), (İstanbul: Simavi Yayınları, 1992), p.117.

²⁸ Çarkoğlu et al. (1998), pp.227-229.

Table 2. Attitudes Towards the Iraq Crisis

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
| How much of a danger is Iraq? | Great/moderate | Small/none | Don't Know |
| | 48 % | 40 % | 12 % |
| Saddam Hussein | Must be removed | Can be disarmed | Don't Know |
| | 42 % | 32 % | 26 % |
| Allowing the US and its allies to use bases in Turkey for military action | Favor | Oppose | Don't Know |
| | 13 % | 83 % | 14 % |

Source: The PEW (2002)

This conservative approach of the Turkish public was also visible in the earlier days of the Iraqi War. “The Pulse of Turkey Bulletin,” prepared by Strateji|GfK, claimed that 80 percent of the Turkish public believed the government should behave independently from the US in the case of a conflict of interests. When respondents were asked to evaluate the positions of various political parties of the time, the party most opposing the US was observed to be the Genç Party (40 percent of respondents identified it as “the opposition to the US”). The positions of the two leading parties were mixed and the percentage of respondents perceiving AKP as “the opposition to the US” was higher than the percentage for CHP (28 percent and 21 percent respectively.)²⁹

The PEW survey conducted in June 2003 exhibits interesting findings about the attitudes of the Turkish public towards the Iraqi War:

- Eighty-two percent of respondents stated that they were disappointed by the lack of Iraqi military resistance while the percentage of those who stated they were happy with this situation was only 13 percent.
- Thirty-two percent of survey participants stated that they had stopped buying American goods and 43 percent of them had considered doing so. Only the scores of Palestine and Jordan were higher.
- According to the survey, 88 percent of the Turkish public opinion stated that US authorities didn't try hard enough to stop civilian casualties.
- When respondents were asked whether the situation in Iraq will be better off without Saddam only 37 percent of them replied positively. Forty-five percent of participants stated that the situation would be worse.³⁰

The Transatlantic Trends report of the German Marshall Fund presents similar findings (2004). According to this report:

- Eighty-eight percent of respondents believe that the war in Iraq wasn't worth the loss of lives and other costs.

²⁹ Strateji|GfK, April 2003; The Pulse of Turkey, manuscript.

³⁰ The PEW, 2003; pp. 4, 23, 24, 25.

- Ninety-one percent of respondents believe that the war in Iraq *to liberate the Iraqi people* wasn't worth the loss of lives and the other costs.
- Seventy-one percent of respondents stated that they approve of the decision of the government not to send troops to Iraq. The percentage of those who stated they disapprove is 23 percent.
- Sixty-seven percent of Turkish voters stated that they would disapprove of sending troops to Iraq if the United Nations approves a multinational force to assist with security and reconstruction. This score is 69 percent if this multinational force would be under American command.
- Sixty-eight percent of respondents stated that the military action in Iraq increased the threat of terrorism.³¹

³¹ The German Marshall Fund, 2004; pp.41-54.

Another report of PEW (2004) shows that Turkish public opinion holds a critical attitude towards the War in Iraq:

- Fifty-five percent of respondents stated that the US is overreacting to terrorism.
- Sixty-four percent stated that the US led war was a not sincere effort to reduce international terrorism.
- When respondents who felt that the main reasons given by the US for this war were insincere are queried about the real reasons, 64 percent of them stated that the main motivation was to control Middle East oil. Sixty-one percent believe it was “to dominate the world”, 47 percent “to target Muslim governments” and 45 percent “to protect Israel.”
- Seventy-two percent of Turkish voters argued that Turkey made the right decision not to use military force against Iraq.
- The percentage of respondents who expressed that the situation after Saddam will be better off increased to 41 percent.
- Only 12 percent of respondents believe that a stable government will be established in Iraq within the next 12 months.
- Fifty-nine percent of them believe that the United Nations could do the best job at helping the Iraqi people form a stable government. This ratio is only 11 percent for the US.
- When respondents are asked to evaluate why the US and Britain claimed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction which have yet to be found, 66 percent of respondents said that leaders lied; 14 percent said that they were misinformed. Only 6 percent said that weapons of mass destruction might still be found.
- Two thirds of those who claimed that leaders lied stated that leaders knew Iraq had no weapons and lied. Only one third of them said that leaders chose to believe intelligence.
- The percentage of those believing that the Middle East will be more democratic after the removal of Saddam declined to 42 percent from 49 percent in March 2003.³²

The survey conducted by the TÜSES (2004) does not include much detailed information about the attitudes of the Turkish public; however, it does present similar findings. Eighty-six percent of voters believe that US intervention in Iraq was wrong. According to this survey, there is no difference between party supporters on this issue. Eighty percent of participants stated that sending troops to Iraq would be a bad decision for Turkey.³³

³² The PEW, 2004; pp.31-40.

³³ TÜSES, 2004.

The latest poll conducted by Pollmark Research (2005), cited above, shows that the Turkish public is still cautious about the US. Forty-seven percent of respondents believe that the US will conduct military operations against Syria in the near future and 55 percent of them stated that military intervention against Iran is possible.³⁴

The Turkish World Vision

Restricting Turkish public opinion to simple anti-Americanism may make discussions simpler but such a picture is not a comprehensive reflection of reality. Although the amount of available field research is limited and the available research does not include detailed statistical analysis to probe the determining factors of the Turkish anti-Americanism, some descriptive figures may give us hints. It is likely that Turkish public opinion is shaped by both nostalgia for the pre-1990 bipolar world, in which life was much more secure and understandable, as well as a deep security concern about the territorial unity of the country.

According to the Transatlantic Trends Report of the German Marshall Fund (2004), 75 percent of the Turkish public believes that Turkey has to take an active part in world affairs. When the strong leadership of the US in world affairs is queried, only 16 percent of respondents found it desirable. The sum of negative answers was 69 percent. This score is the highest among 16 countries and only lower than the French public opinion's score of 73. Same survey shows that only 2 percent of the Turkish public believes that the US should remain the sole superpower. The percentage of those arguing that the EU should become a superpower like the US is 40 percent. A noteworthy point here is that 40 percent of respondents spontaneously said that no country should be a superpower.³⁵ This is a clear indication of the expectations of the Turkish public.

The last survey of the PEW (2004) presents similar findings: 79 percent of the Turkish public believes that the US does not take into account the interests of Turkey in dealing with international issues. This number was 74 percent in the summer 2002. Sixty-seven percent of participants believe that it would be a good thing if the EU becomes as powerful as the US. Public opinion is divided on the issue of "bipolarism": 41 percent of participants believed that the world would be a safer place if there were another country that was equal in power to the US, while 46 percent of respondents rejected this claim. Fifty-six percent of the voters stated that the US military appeared weaker than expected. Seventy-four percent said that they have less confidence that the US is trustworthy.³⁶

It is argued that the study of public opinion is a relatively new field in the Turkish tradition of international relations. Moreover, academic and non-academic effort is largely allocated to the study of the role of Turkish public opinion regarding relations with the European Union. Information about the attitudes of the Turkish public about the US is generally produced by US-based agencies and by private institutions depending on the international climate.

³⁴ Pollmark, 2005; p.71.

³⁵ The German Marshall Fund, 2004; pp.7-9.

³⁶ The PEW, 2004; pp.26-37.

As a result of souring relations between the US and Turkey following the rejection of the proposal of March 1, 2003³⁷ attention turned again to the image of the US in the eyes of the Turkish voter. The reasons for the breakdown in relations between these two countries are largely discussed by other contributors of this volume. As a result of the changing international climate, it is possible that we might see newly conducted public opinion polls about the Turkish-American relations. However, the existing data provide us significant information about attitudes of the Turkish public opinion about the US.

Several field research projects revealed that there is strong tendency towards anti-US positioning in the Turkish public opinion. Favorability towards the US declined following the Iraqi War, and despite a relative increase during 2004, this score is far from the highs of 1999. One third of the electorate identifies the US as the biggest enemy of the country. A significant portion of them prefer the EU as the closest ally instead of the US.

Despite these anti-US attitudes, Turkish public opinion has an interesting sympathy towards American culture, ideas about democracy and business practices. At least one third of respondents stated that they like these dimensions of the American way of life. However, about 80 percent of respondents stated that they dislike the spread of American ideas and culture.

Field research showed that the anti-US attitude of the Turkish public is largely due to its feelings towards the Bush administration. President George W. Bush's popularity with the Turkish electorate is very low. The majority of Turks disapprove of the way of President Bush is handling international issues. About 80 percent of the electorate thinks that the reelection of the president will have a negative impact on world peace.

Another important reason for the anti-US attitude of the Turkish public is the Iraqi War. It is well known that the public is quite sensitive to Middle Eastern problems. Even one year before the war, field surveys showed that public opinion was divided, almost half of the citizens believed that Iraq was not a danger and it was possible to disarm Saddam. In spite of this difference, 80 percent of voters stated that they would oppose allowing allied forces to use bases in Turkey for military action.

This picture did not change after the war. About 80 percent of the electorate favored the Iraqi resistance. Almost two thirds of the Turkish voters approved the government decision not to send troops to Iraq. 70 percent of them still oppose sending troops to Iraq. The majority of respondents criticize the sincerity of the US war against terrorism and almost half of the Turkish public believes that the goal was controlling Middle East oil. Similarly there is a significant majority claiming that the US and Britain lied about the weapons of mass destruction owned by Iraq.

Conclusion

The reaction of the Turkish public is not only a function of recent international developments. Turkish public opinion is shaped by both nostalgia regarding the pre-1990 bipolar world and a deep security concern as a result of the enduring Kurdish problem. The results of public

37 This memorandum was proposed by the government to allow the deployment of the US troops in Turkish territories and it was rejected by the parliament with the cooperation of some members of the AKP and the CHP.

opinion polls show that there is significant confusion about the new world order, including seemingly opposing elements.

Attitudes of the Turkish public opinion require much more detailed discussion and further research. Available data are restricted to descriptive statistics which prevent the establishment of causal relationships between attitudes and facts. Moreover, information is generally produced by US-based institutions limiting us to the Americancentric point of view. The availability of European funds to finance costly field research contributed to a volume of information produced about the EU and Turkey. In such a critical situation, Turkey cannot await such benevolent behavior from the US. Consequently, we have to find funds to establish our knowledge base so that we can produce realistic policy propositions in the international relations arena, considering a previously ignored factor - the public opinion.