The relationship with the United States has been a key aspect of Turkey’s foreign and security policy since 1945. Despite fears on both sides that this “strategic relationship” would become less strategic and less important with the end of the Cold War, the relationship has retained its significance for both countries. Indeed, the relationship has arguably acquired even greater significance in the post–Cold War strategic environment—a significance underscored by events since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the looming confrontation with Iraq. This sustained importance reflects the unsettled character of regions surrounding Turkey and the primacy of these regions in today’s security calculus. It is also a reflection of the changes in Turkish society, the influence these changes have had in the way America sees Turkey, and in Turkey’s ability to play a larger regional role. In the broadest sense, Turkey’s relationship with the United States is also linked to Turkish perceptions of globalization, a phenomenon closely associated with America’s political and economic role.

The bilateral relationship remains heavily focused on security matters, and for good reasons given the character of the environment facing Turkey and the proximity of areas where American security interest are engaged. This is particularly true in relation to places such as Afghanistan, the Caucasus, and Central Asia—areas at the nexus of American counterterrorism and regional security strategies. Nonetheless, the relationship faces pressures for diversification, and there are substantial, relatively underdeveloped opportunities to extend bilateral cooperation on investment, trade, and the nonsecurity or “soft” security aspects of regional policy. Turkey’s financial woes
make the development of this economic dimension of the relationship more urgent and place new demands on both sides.

For Ankara and Washington, the bilateral relationship is increasingly difficult to assess and conduct in isolation. Europe and European institutions are a critical backdrop. The EU is now a far more important factor in both Turkish and American policymaking, and the triangular relationship among Turkey, Europe, and the United States is in flux at many levels. Turkish-EU relations are now more ambitious but highly uncertain. At the same time, a new debate has emerged about the nature of the transatlantic relationship, with critical implications for Ankara. For many Turks, the evolution of the overall Turkish relationship with Europe will have a great influence on perceptions of the United States and Washington’s importance as a counterbalance or even a strategic alternative.

Turkey’s relationship with the United States at the start of the 21st century is more important, more complex, and less predictable than in previous decades. This chapter explores the changing contours of Turkish and American interests in the relationship, key areas of convergence and divergence, and prospects for the future.

**ORIGINS OF A STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP**

The onset of the Cold War was a transforming development in Turkish-U.S. relations, but the bilateral relationship is, of course, much older. Relations with the United States played only a peripheral part in Ottoman engagement—and conflict—with the West in the 19th century. The U.S. naval presence in the Mediterranean is some two hundred years old. But the origins of this presence were in the Western Mediterranean. By the 1820s, however, contact with the United States had increased substantially with the growth of American diplomatic and commercial involvement in the Eastern Mediterranean associated with the “Turkey trade.” In marked contrast to modern patterns of energy trade, much of this commerce in the mid-19th century consisted of American exports of petroleum products to the Ottoman empire. The relationship also had its military dimen-

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1 The first American naval visit to Turkey took place in Istanbul in 1800.
sions. Ottoman Turkey was a leading purchaser of surplus arms and ammunition from the American Civil War.2

Two factors contributed to an arm’s length relationship between Ottoman Turkey and America in the 19th century. First, the leading point of American popular and policy interest in the Eastern Mediterranean was support for Greek independence. The American foreign policy establishment, in particular, shared the Philhellenic inclinations of its counterparts in Britain and elsewhere, and American opinion mirrored Europe’s in its criticism of Ottoman “backwardness.” Second, unlike Britain and France, 19th century America did not give priority to relations with Turkey as a counterweight to Russian ambitions around the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. At a time when the “Eastern Question” preoccupied European governments, Washington remained largely aloof. Despite significant commercial interests, and a substantial presence by Protestant missionaries, the American strategic interest in Turkey was limited—a striking contrast with the contemporary situation.

Modernizing intellectuals in late Ottoman and early Republican Turkey looked largely to Europe, and above all to France, for models of reform. This inclination was reinforced by wariness of American federalism as a model for Turkish reform.3 Turkey’s strategic alignment in this period was, first and foremost, with Germany. The general thrust of Turkish interest was continental and European, and despite the rapidly growing economic power of the United States, America was only tangentially engaged in areas of Turkish interest. The limited Turkish attention to the United States was largely negative, at least in the early years of the Republic. The provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres, if implemented, would have had draconian implications for Turkish territory and sovereignty. Sèvres was regarded by Turks as Wilsonian in inspiration, and American notions of national

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3See Cengiz Candar, “Some Turkish Perspectives on the United States and American Policy Toward Turkey,” in Abramowitz, Turkey’s Transformation and American Policy, pp. 124–125.
self-determination were seen as encouraging Balkan, Kurdish, and Armenian nationalism at Turkey’s expense.4 The legacy of Sèvres—a phenomenon Turkish analysts often refer to as the “Sèvres syndrome”—continues to fuel Turkish suspicions of American strategy toward Turkey and its region. The lasting effects can be seen in the contemporary Turkish debate about American policy in Northern Iraq and the Kurdish issue.

The experience of two world wars heightened American interest in Turkey, but only within limits. In neither the First nor the Second World War was the Eastern Mediterranean a focus of American military engagement. In the Second World War, the Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Middle East, where Turkish neutrality mattered, were principally British spheres of responsibility, and Washington actively resisted British efforts to make Southeastern Europe a center of gravity in the conflict.5 Only in the latter stages of the war, with deepening concern over Soviet ambitions, did relations with Turkey (and relations with Washington for Ankara) loom larger in the strategic calculus.

Containment of Soviet power quickly became the organizing principle for U.S. involvement in and around Turkey. In a formal sense, the Cold War began in the Eastern Mediterranean with Soviet territorial demands on Ankara and the promulgation of the Truman Doctrine to bolster Greece and Turkey. The first NATO “enlargement” embraced Greece and Turkey.6 From Ankara’s perspective, the immediacy of the Soviet threat made the consolidation of Turkey’s Western links and, above all, the strengthening of the strategic alliance with Washington, a leading foreign policy priority.

Throughout the Cold War, Ankara and Washington shared a central interest in the containment of Soviet power and in the maintenance of an effective Atlantic Alliance for this purpose. More broadly, the

5That said, American intelligence services were very active in Turkey throughout the war. This story is told in a very engaging manner in Barry Rubin, Istanbul Intrigues, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989.
two countries have also shared a similar, if not entirely convergent, approach to international affairs. Turkey’s internal and geopolitical positions, and the influence of the Turkish military, have fostered a security-conscious approach to policymaking. Cold War imperatives fostered a parallel, security-oriented approach to foreign relations as seen from Washington. Thus, the dominance of security issues in the bilateral relationship has intellectual and political as well as geostrategic roots.

The two countries also share certain additional characteristics in their strategic cultures. These characteristics include a pronounced sensitivity to questions of national sovereignty (far higher than the modern norm in Europe), a low threshold of tolerance for national insecurity and threats to the “homeland,” a high threshold for international intervention—and a willingness to act massively and decisively when this threshold is crossed (e.g., for Turkey in Cyprus in 1974 or, more recently, in Northern Iraq). Foreign policy debates in Ankara and Washington are also characterized by a historic tension between a tradition of nonintervention, even isolation, and demands for more active regional engagement.

Tensions in the bilateral relationship over the past decade have encouraged comparisons with a past golden age of relative stability in Turkish-American relations. In reality, such a golden age characterized only the early years of the Cold War, perhaps until the early 1960s. Certainly from the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, in which Washington traded the withdrawal of nuclear-capable Jupiter missiles based in Turkey in symbolic exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles in Cuba, the relationship has experienced periodic and often severe reverses. The 1964 and 1974 Cyprus crises were clearly low points in the bilateral relationship. In both instances, even the defense ties central to the Cold War relationship were severely affected. Indeed, both countries have used security cooperation as a lever in bilateral relations. During the decades of American security assistance to Turkey, threats to withhold this aid, or the defense equipment associated with it, became a feature of congressional approaches toward Cyprus and the Aegean, as well as human rights issues in Turkey. The end of American security assistance, hailed as a sign of maturity in the bilateral relationship, has reduced this form of leverage, although congressional authorization of commercial arms transfers remains a neuralgic issue.
Turkey exercised its own leverage over questions of base access and support for American power projection. U.S. access to facilities other than Incirlik air base has been suspended on occasion, most notably after the imposition of the U.S. arms embargo in 1974. The Turkish parliament and public opinion have often seen access to Incirlik as a lever in bilateral disputes. For Turks, the Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA), signed in 1969 and periodically revised, established a quid pro quo between access to Turkish defense facilities and U.S. security assistance, most recently interpreted as “best efforts” with regard to the transfer of American arms. In reality, this linkage has never been easy or predictable and has given rise to considerable resentment on the Turkish side and frustration in Washington. At the start of the Gulf crisis, former President General Kenan Evren reportedly advised Özal that “unless you have it written down, you can’t trust the United States.” Earlier, in a Cold War setting, Evren also reportedly remarked to a German official that “we only take U.S. aid because we have to. The U.S. uses aid as an instrument of pressure. If we go against their wishes, they start saying they will cut it off. I sometimes ask them, ‘Does the U.S. give aid to have a strong country on the Southern flank of NATO, or as a tool to make Turkey do as it wants?’”

The apparent smoothness of relations, especially military-to-military relations during the Cold War, was also a reflection of the routine character of much bilateral interaction from the 1950s through the end of the 1980s. Turks in this period were arguably no less sensitive to the sovereignty issues surrounding base access and other questions of bilateral and NATO concern. But the controversial issues were well known and there were few surprises in the day-to-day relationship. The key contingencies were, by and large, NATO contingencies concerning the Soviet Union—in short, high consequence but low probability cases in which Alliance cohesion would be essential. For decades, there were no day-to-day stresses of the sort imposed by the American air operations from Incirlik as part of Operation Provide Comfort and its successor, Northern Watch. The periodic stresses that did occur—often quite serious—arose from major political crises in the relationship.

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During the Cold War, but with even greater conviction since the Gulf War, Turkish policymakers and analysts have observed that Washington really does not have a policy toward Turkey per se. Rather, from the Turkish perspective, the American approach to Turkey is a by-product of other more prominent concerns—policy toward Russia, Greece, the Balkans, the Caspian, and the Middle East. Leaving aside the accuracy of this observation, there can be little doubt that Turks perceive their relationship with the United States to be derivative of other American interests. Turks have been especially attentive to any signs of a “Russia first” policy in Washington, whether in relation to CFE negotiations in the 1980s or in the Caspian pipeline debate of the 1990s. Arguably, a focus on Turkey’s strategic importance—a focus most Turks wish to encourage—makes it inevitable that Washington will often see policy toward Turkey as largely a function of problems in surrounding areas. It is a dilemma Turkey will find hard to avoid. One way of resolving this dilemma would be for U.S. policymakers to view Turkey as a proxy, a regional power to be promoted with a view to more active Turkish intervention in adjacent regions (along the lines of the “Nixon Doctrine,” which had sought to cultivate a series of regional proxies, including Iran). Both Americans and Turks, not to mention Turkey’s neighbors, would be very uncomfortable with such an approach.

GULF WAR AND AFTERMATH: AN EXPANDED PARTNERSHIP?

The Gulf War was a watershed in terms of Turkish and American perceptions of the bilateral relationship. The crisis in the Gulf unfolded against a background of post–Cold War uneasiness in Turkey about the country’s strategic importance in the eyes of the West, and especially in Washington. Observers of President Özal’s policy during the crisis stress that he saw the opportunity for Turkey to play an active role in the Gulf coalition as a chance to reassert Turkey’s geopolitical significance in the broadest sense and to reinvigorate the strategic

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relationship with the United States. Many in Turkey were less enthusiastic about Turkish participation in the Gulf War, including senior elements of the Turkish military. Özal and others, however, saw a chance for Turkey to secure a seat at the table after Baghdad’s defeat. At American urging, Ankara granted access and overflight rights for American combat and supply aircraft operating from Incirlik, Batman, and elsewhere. Iraqi oil exports through Turkish pipelines were shut down as part of the economic sanctions against Baghdad. With considerable difficulty, some 100,000 Turkish troops were eventually redeployed to the border with Iraq, pinning down substantial Iraqi forces.

The Turkish contribution to the coalition effort in the Gulf was substantial and achieved at some political cost inside Turkey. But far from the new strategic relationship Özal had envisioned, the Gulf War and its aftermath have left a legacy of complexity and resentment in bilateral relations. Turks point to the tangible costs of their support for American aims in the Gulf, including refugee pressures and a deadly Kurdish insurgency, the loss of revenue from trade with Iraq, and the sovereignty compromises associated with continued American (and British) air operations over Northern Iraq conducted from Incirlik. Objectively, some of these undoubted “costs” to Turkey might not have been avoided through Turkish neutrality in the Gulf War. And without U.S. intervention and, ultimately, the security guarantee to Turkey, the costs to Turkey might have been far higher.

Nonetheless, the Gulf War episode has left many Turks with a sense of disappointment and suspicion regarding American policy. With the end of U.S. security assistance, and with economic sanctions against Iraq still in place more than a decade after the invasion of Kuwait, many Turks feel that they have little to show for their cooperation with Washington and Europe in the Gulf. Indeed, the primacy of the threat of Kurdish separatism in Ankara’s strategic perceptions has meant that U.S. policy toward the Kurdish areas of Northern Iraq is treated with exceptional suspicion—suspicion that draws on the deeply rooted “Sèvres syndrome” noted above. In this

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climate of suspicion, it is not surprising that each parliamentary extension of the Operation Northern Watch mandate is accompanied by considerable debate and uncertainty.

The Gulf crisis unfolded at a time when many of the traditional underpinnings of the bilateral relationship had disappeared or were under strain. The Cold War context for the American military presence in Turkey had evaporated. Security assistance, with the exception of arms “cascaded” to Turkey by NATO allies under CFE treaty provisions, was in sharp decline. The result was a perceived loss of leverage on both sides and a disinclination to go beyond the rhetoric of enhanced cooperation. Efforts to diversify the bilateral relationship, including a Turkish proposal for a free trade agreement with the United States, were not seriously entertained.

Issues raised during the Gulf War remain sensitive points in the bilateral relationship, with pronounced differences between Washington and Ankara on the diplomatic and economic engagement of Iraq and on the use of force against Baghdad. Ankara has a stake in the containment of Iraqi military power but has been most reluctant to support military strikes against Iraq. In 2001, and over strong American objections, Turkey reestablished full diplomatic relations with Baghdad. At a time when Turkey’s financial problems place a premium on backing from Washington, Turkey’s stance on Iraq is likely to be a key measure of the health of the bilateral relationship from the perspective of the administration in Washington.

If the Gulf experience has been difficult for both sides, other aspects of the bilateral relationship since 1991 have been more positive. Turkey has been a strong supporter of American policy in the Balkans, both in Bosnia and in Kosovo. Turkey has expressed its willingness to contribute forces to any NATO peacekeeping deployment in Macedonia and favors the presence of American forces alongside those of European allies. Ankara’s moderate and multilateral approach to the region has allayed American fears of Turkish friction with Greece over Balkan policy. In the Aegean, where the risks of Greek-Turkish brinkmanship have been a special concern for the United States (it is widely believed that only last minute intervention by Washington prevented a military clash over Imia/Kardak in 1996), the development of a new détente between Ankara and Athens has improved the climate on a key bilateral issue. This im-
Improvement has been slower to affect attitudes in the U.S. Congress, where the change in mood has lagged behind changes in the region itself. Ultimately, however, a durable improvement in Greek-Turkish relations is likely to influence the climate surrounding arms transfers and other questions where Aegean balances have been a concern. Movement on Cyprus, less likely, would be a transforming development in this regard and would defuse much of the standing criticism of Turkey in congressional circles.¹⁰

Developments within Turkey are potentially the most important determinant of how the bilateral relationship will evolve. Here, the decade of the 1990s saw considerable positive change. In the aftermath of the Gulf War, Ankara’s counterinsurgency operation in the Southeast and in Northern Iraq kept American attention focused on human rights abuses and the lack of progress on political solutions to the Kurdish problem in Turkey. Support for Turkish democratization and human rights has been a consistent theme of American policy, with successive American officials urging Ankara to “take risks for reform.”¹¹ Behind this approach has been the valid assumption that only a more fully democratic and open Turkey will be in a position to achieve a durable and enhanced strategic partnership with the United States. This is a natural reflection of the post–Cold War realities in American foreign policy. But it sits uncomfortably with the more nationalistic mood in Turkish politics since the Gulf War.

This reflexive nationalism was demonstrated very clearly in the Turkish reaction to the near passage of an Armenian genocide resolution in the U.S. Congress at the end of 2000. This nonbinding resolution was withdrawn at the last moment after intense pressure from the Clinton administration (a similar resolution was adopted by the French parliament a few months later). Armenian genocide resolutions had been introduced periodically in the past, but the impending American elections made this a special case for all sides. Ankara clearly viewed the resolution issue as a key test of the bilateral relationship, with prominent Turkish politicians threatening wide-


¹¹This theme was articulated with special vigor by Ambassador Marc Grossman in the mid-1990s.
ranging retaliation, including an end to American use of Incirlik air base for non-NATO purposes in the event of passage. The vulnerability of the bilateral relationship to such disturbances, despite its manifestly strategic importance for both sides, is an indication of the delicately poised mood in Turkey and the weight of suspicion just below the surface.

TURKISH BILATERAL INTERESTS TODAY

If the bilateral relationship is often characterized as strategic for the United States, the Turkish stake in the relationship is no less strategic, perhaps even more so. In this context, Ankara has multiple interests.

First, the need for deterrence and reassurance in relations with Russia is deeply imbedded in Turkey’s strategic culture and is an element of continuity in the country’s geostrategic perceptions and in relations with the West. Concern about Russian intentions, as well as risks flowing from chaos within or around Russia, ranks high on Turkey’s security agenda. As a longer-term worry, it is probably at the top of this agenda. In many respects, the Turkish view of Moscow is the most wary and security-oriented in NATO. Turkey no longer shares a border with Moscow, but political and security vacuums in the Caucasus and Central Asia offer new flashpoints for competition and conflict. In the event of a general deterioration in Russian-Western relations, Turkey would be on the frontline in a competition far more likely to be focused on the periphery, including Russia’s “near abroad,” the Balkans and the Middle East—that is, in Turkey’s neighborhood—than in the center of Europe. Here, Ankara views the expansion of Russian military sales to Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East with alarm. Ankara also sees Washington as having the primary responsibility and ability to constrain Moscow’s arms and technology transfers to the region.

The strategic relationship with the United States and the NATO security guarantee (the two have traditionally been closely linked in Turkish perception) remain indispensable in relation to Russian risks. The NATO nuclear guarantee is still an essential part of this equation for Ankara. Turkish attitudes toward nuclear questions are among the most conservative in NATO, because these questions are seen against a backdrop of heightened concern about Russia and
WMD and ballistic missile risks emanating from the Middle East. In each case, the United States, together with Israel, is Turkey’s key partner in the management of these problems.

Ankara seeks a more active role in emerging European defense arrangements (ESDI/ESDP), but until these arrangements solidify and until the EU accepts Turkey as a full partner in defense decisionmaking—a distant prospect at best—the defense link with the United States will remain paramount. A very troubling scenario, from the Turkish point of view, would be the rise of a more or less capable EU defense structure, outside of NATO, from which Turkey, as a non-EU member, is largely excluded. This would become a worst-case scenario for Turkey if this development were coupled with a waning of NATO’s security role and a progressive disengagement of America from European defense. At base, Turkish views on ESDP are similar to those prevailing in both the Clinton and Bush administrations. Washington has been supportive of a relatively full role for Turkey in EU defense decisionmaking, consistent with the U.S. view that EU defense efforts should not discriminate against allies that are not members of the union. That said, the tough Turkish stance on ESDP matters has tested the limits of American support.

A second Turkish stake in the bilateral relationship turns on the pivotal role of the United States as a security arbiter in adjacent regions, that is, beyond the containment of Russian power. Turks often refer to their existence in a “dangerous neighborhood,” with chronic instability on their borders. The containment of diverse security risks, from the Balkans to the Middle East, benefits considerably from cooperation with the United States, as in relations with Russia. Europe, even a Europe with growing ambitions in the foreign and security policy spheres, is unlikely to exert the same weight in regional affairs. To be sure, the American involvement in such areas as the Gulf can pose dilemmas for Ankara, and policy interests and approaches do not always coincide. On balance, however, Turkey benefits from the continued American military presence in adjacent regions.

In this context, Turkey’s foreign and security policy establishment views the evolving American debate over overseas engagement with some anxiety. Ankara is used to measuring the health of the bilateral relationship in rather narrow terms, assessing Washington’s interest
in Turkey as a strategic partner and with an eye on questions of arms sales, textile quotas, and human rights policies. There is, however, a growing sense that substantial and continued American engagement in areas of critical interest to Turkey, whether in the Balkans or the Eastern Mediterranean, cannot be taken for granted. In this sense, Ankara shares the general European concern about preventing a decoupling of American and European security, and views the prospect of a reduced American role in peacekeeping in Bosnia or Kosovo with alarm. But Turkish concerns are more complex, because Turkey’s direct security concerns go beyond the Balkans to Eurasia and the Middle East, and because Ankara sees the U.S. presence as an essential part of a credible Western security guarantee. This is particularly true of ballistic missile risks from Iran, Iraq, and Syria, where the United States (and Israel) are seen as the only security partners capable of providing Turkey with at least a minimally effective means of defense in the coming years.

Stability and reconstruction in the Balkans will, of course, be strongly affected by EU policies, but Washington still has enormous influence and has been a consistent advocate for a Turkish role in the region. In the Middle East, U.S. involvement provides a measure of reassurance against the worst outcomes in Turkey’s relations with its neighbors, even if Ankara disapproves of the economic and political aspects of containment policies in the Gulf. Turkish views on the constructive engagement of Iran are far closer to those prevailing in Europe. In the event of a future Syrian-Israeli peace settlement, the United States would almost certainly play a key role in making sure Turkey’s interests are protected, whether on water supply or in restrictions on Syrian military redeployments along the border with Turkey. Under conditions of crisis between Israel and the Palestinians, Ankara favors an active role for the United States in the Middle East peace process.

A third and long-standing Turkish interest concerns access to American military equipment, training, and defense-industrial cooperation. Turkey is in the midst of a major military modernization program—one that is likely to remain substantial even in the wake of economic difficulties. Important aspects of the modernization program anticipate the purchase of American equipment or U.S. source
Throughout the Cold War and to the present day, the United States has been the leading supplier of defense goods and services to Turkey, a relationship that has persisted despite the end of formal security assistance and periodic crises over arms transfers. Despite efforts at diversification, Turkey still conducts roughly 80 percent of its defense-industrial activity with the United States. Large numbers of Turkish officers have trained in the United States and military-to-military habits of cooperation are strong, although Turkish military contacts with other NATO allies—and Israel—are becoming more frequent and may eventually dilute an outlook that has been heavily focused on the United States.

The Turkish military has a clear preference for American systems, but is troubled by the unpredictability of American, and especially congressional, attitudes toward sales to Turkey. The experience of the 1964 “Johnson letter” linking the American security guarantee vis-à-vis the Soviet Union to Turkey’s policy on Cyprus, and the outright arms embargo following the 1974 conflict on the island, have had an enduring effect on Turkish perceptions. In recent years, disputes over the transfer of American frigates, attack helicopters, and other advanced weaponry have arisen against a background of congressional concern over Turkey’s human rights situation and fear of fueling an arms race in the Aegean. At the height of bilateral tensions over these issues in the mid-1990s, many Turks came to believe that the country faced a de facto American arms embargo, and the coexistence of supportive and punitive policies emanating from Washington raised the question of whether Ankara was regarded as an ally or a rogue state.

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13 Defense sales and credits to Turkey are now arranged on a commercial basis.


15 We are grateful to our former RAND colleague Zalmay Khalilzad for this formulation.
The waning of the battle against the PKK in Southeastern Turkey and the mood of rapprochement in Greek-Turkish relations have improved the arms transfer climate. But concerns persist on both sides. In response, Turkey has moved to diversify its sources of military goods and services. Israel has been the leading beneficiary, with important new purchases, upgrade contracts, and training arrangements. Turkey would like to purchase and participate in the production of Israel’s Arrow missile defense system, although the existence of U.S.-source technology in this program makes Turkish access subject to American approval. Other defense contracts have gone to Russia and European vendors in recent years. Realistically, however, the bulk of Turkey’s defense modernization over the next decades is likely to involve cooperation, and especially co-production arrangements, with the United States. Such arrangements, most notably the manufacture in Turkey of over 300 F-16 fighter aircraft, have contributed enormously to the country’s military capability, technical capacity, and international prestige.

Fourth, Turkey continues to look to Washington for support on key Turkish objectives outside the defense realm. The United States has, for example, been a leading proponent of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline to bring Caspian oil and gas to world markets via a terminal on Turkey’s Mediterranean coast. The pipeline scheme remains a cherished objective for Ankara. It would bolster Turkey’s regional influence and limit that of Russia and Iran, leading competitors for Caspian oil transport. It would encourage the economic and political independence of the Central Asian republics and bolster their links to Turkey. The environmental risks associated with vastly increased tanker traffic through the Bosporus would be reduced. And Turkey would stand to receive significant economic benefits from pipeline construction and transit fees.

Washington has been active at the diplomatic level in support of Baku-Ceyhan. But the official U.S. policy remains one of support for “multiple pipelines” (i.e., Turkish and Russian, but not Iranian), and financial backing and guarantees have not been forthcoming. Moreover, it is arguable that the Bush administration will be even less interested than its predecessor in providing subsidies to energy schemes that would normally rise or fall on the basis of commercial
viability. The commercial viability of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline has been an open question, with many economic and political variables, including the potential relaxation of sanctions on Iran and the opening of an Iranian route for Caspian oil. The discovery of large new reserves in the Caspian region, and the growing potential for gas exports alongside oil shipments, have improved the outlook for Baku-Ceyhan, and the scheme now stands a good chance of moving ahead to completion. Turkish officials have argued that the West as a whole—and the United States as an energy security guarantor in the Gulf—has an overriding geostrategic stake in diversifying energy routes and reducing global reliance on oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz. From Ankara’s perspective, more vigorous American support for the scheme—possibly including subsidies—will be essential. In the end, however, Turkey will probably need to make a substantial financial contribution to the project, and the prospects for this in the current economic climate are uncertain.

Another critical example of U.S. support for Turkish objectives concerns the EU and Turkey’s role in European affairs. The United States has been a consistent advocate of Turkish integration in Europe, including membership in the EU, and Ankara has looked to Washington for support at critical junctures. Washington has made the argument for closer Turkish integration on strategic grounds, arguing that anchoring Turkey ever more fully in European institutions is necessary if Turkey’s longer-term Western orientation is to be guaranteed. This view parallels that of Turkey’s foreign policy establishment. Lobbying by senior American officials played a pivotal role in the European parliament’s decision to approve the Turkish-EU Customs Union in 1996. It was almost certainly a factor in the EU’s December 1999 decision to offer Turkey candidate status at the Helsinki summit.

The Helsinki outcome changes the context for American advocacy in important ways. Europe has never been comfortable with U.S. lobbying on behalf of Turkey, and some European allies have questioned the American standing in European decisionmaking on enlargement questions. With Turkey’s candidacy, Turkish-EU relations have moved into a more highly structured and legalistic pattern, with fixed criteria and fewer opportunities for arguments on strategic grounds. Moreover, the prospects for Turkey in the EU will now depend far more heavily on reform decisions taken inside Turkey.
Effective American lobbying in this area is now more likely to take place in Ankara than in Brussels, and Turks may be less comfortable with this. If Turkey’s candidacy fails to progress favorably—and there is every indication that it will be a slow and uncertain process at best—Ankara may look to Washington to help. There may be fewer opportunities to do so with effect.

On the specific issue of Turkey’s place in EU defense arrangements, Washington has been supportive of the Turkish position—to a point. The two countries are similarly NATO-centric and share a strong interest in seeing European defense arrangements develop, to the extent possible, within a NATO framework. Turkey has looked to the United States for support in its argument that non-EU NATO members should be fully integrated in EU defense decisionmaking, especially where their interests are directly involved (and since many of the likely contingencies for a European rapid reaction force are in Turkey’s neighborhood, Ankara’s takes this question very seriously). American officials have been strong advocates for the Turkish view in NATO and other settings. At the same time, this issue has also been a point of friction in the bilateral relationship. Ankara’s hard-line stance on ESDP, amid threats of a Turkish veto on NATO enlargement and other matters, has on several occasions threatened to drive the EU to develop its defense plans outside NATO—a development that complicates Washington’s European and NATO policies.

The burgeoning Turkish-Israeli relationship has developed without active or direct U.S. support, but the American element is nonetheless present in the Turkish calculus. Ankara favors the emergence of more extensive trilateral cooperation, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean, and sees its already well-developed relationship with Israel as a basis for more ambitious political, defense, and investment initiatives. More important, many Turks have seen their relationship with Israel as a vehicle for improving Turkey’s image and political position in Washington and, in particular, in Congress. To be sure, there has been some benefit along these lines, although in a less-direct fashion than many Turks might have wished. Supporters of Israel in Washington have been cautious in taking up the Turkish case, but cooperation among Turkish and Israeli advocacy groups in
the United States has expanded.\textsuperscript{16} The relationship with Israel has broadened interest in Turkey among those foreign policy experts whose principal frame of reference has been Middle Eastern affairs. It has also given government and nongovernment analysts a new frame for considering the Turkish role and Turkey’s contribution to Western strategic objectives.

The Turkish private sector has been especially articulate in describing the opportunities for Turkish-American cooperation in support of Turkey’s economic development and the country’s role in regional commerce beyond pipeline issues. The opening of the Turkish economy under Özal, and the waning of the statist model that had shaped the Turkish economy for decades, created the basic conditions for increased bilateral trade and investment. Both expanded in the 1990s, although not at the pace seen in Turkish relations with other partners such as Russia, Israel, or even the EU.\textsuperscript{17} Given Turkey’s looming energy deficit, it is noteworthy that some of the most significant new American ventures in Turkey have been in the power generation field. Notwithstanding Turkey’s designation as a “big emerging market” by the Department of Commerce, the economic dimension of the relationship has developed more slowly than many had anticipated. Weak intellectual property protection, the lack of acceptable arbitration procedures (now remedied), the slow pace of privatization, chronic high inflation and financial instability, and the perception of political risk have inhibited investment. Ankara, for its part, remains focused on raising American quotas for the import of Turkish textiles—a traditional mainstay of Turkish

\textsuperscript{16}A good example is provided by the study visit to Israel and Turkey for American foreign policy experts organized jointly by the Assembly of Turkish-American Associations and the American Jewish Committee in January 2001.

\textsuperscript{17}Between 1991 and 1999, for example, American exports to Turkey increased from roughly $2.5 billion to $3.2 billion per year (actually slightly higher in 1997). Turkish exports to the United States increased from roughly $1 billion to $2.6 billion in the same period. U.S. investments in Turkey have varied widely from year to year, a reflection of economic and political instability in Turkey, showing only modest increases over the decade. Figures cited in Abdullah Akyuz, “U.S.-Turkish Economic Relations at the Outset of the 21st Century,” \textit{Insight Turkey}, Vol. 2, No. 4, October–December 2000, p. 74.
trade with the United States, and reducing nontariff barriers to Turkish agricultural exports.\textsuperscript{18}

The 2000–2002 financial crisis in Turkey is a reflection of fundamental economic and political problems evident for many years. But it has had a disastrous effect on foreign investment and will doubtless shape the perceptions of American investors and trading partners for some time to come. Such perceptions are not insurmountable given the appropriate remedies, as the Mexican case illustrates. Yet the current economic crisis calls into question the near-term prospects for bolstering economic ties between Turkey and the United States. It also makes the issue of American support for Turkey in international financial institutions even more critical and raises the question of the U.S. role in possible future bailouts of the Turkish economy.

After an initial period of hesitation in the early spring of 2001, the Bush administration threw its support behind a package of IMF and World Bank support for Turkey totaling some $17 billion. At the same time, as a condition for its support, Washington insisted on the implementation of a sweeping set of economic reforms and austerity measures. Having come to power with an avowed distaste for international economic “bailouts,” and against the background of another financial crisis in Argentina, the administration’s decision to support the financial rescue package was greeted with relief in Turkey. Nonetheless, many Turkish commentators have complained about the grudging nature of American support as well as accompanying pressure from Washington over issues as diverse as Cyprus, Iraq, the handling of Chechen sympathizers in Turkish custody, and constitutional reform. Critics in Turkey’s nationalist circles and on the left have portrayed the financial package as a compromise of Turkish sovereignty engineered by the IMF under American direction, a suspicion encouraged by Kemal Dervish’s long residence in Washington. These perceptions reflect the close linkage between Turkey’s economic fate and U.S. policy preferences that exists in the eyes of many Turks.

\textsuperscript{18}For a good discussion of these trade and investment concerns see Akyuz, “U.S.-Turkish Economic Relations at the Outset of the 21st Century,” pp. 71–81.
CHANGING BILATERAL IMAGES

Beyond questions of national interest and strategic concerns, the bilateral relationship is also shaped by questions of affinity and familiarity. In contrast to other transatlantic relationships, this dimension of Turkish-U.S. relations is not well developed. The Turkish-American community is relatively successful and affluent, and increasingly organized and active, but it is modest in size at perhaps 300,000–350,000. The community lacks the weight of its counterparts from Greece and Armenia in the American foreign policy debate. This fact figures heavily in Turkish interpretations of American policy and goes some way to explain the Turkish focus on lobbies as a feature of American policymaking. Turks often assert that their country has no effective lobby in Washington. Others assert that Turkey has historically had a very effective lobby in the form of successive administrations with a strategic interest in Turkey. American specialists on Turkey, defense analysts, and defense industries have also been strong advocates for Turkish interests over the past decades. It is perhaps more accurate to describe the Turkish position vis-à-vis its traditional lobbying opponents in Congress and elsewhere as asymmetrical rather than unfavorable per se.

Among those who follow Turkish affairs closely, the debate is often polarized between those focused on Turkey’s geostrategic importance and those concerned with Turkey’s problems of democratization and human rights. Given Turkey’s position as a long-standing ally and member of NATO, it is remarkable that American specialists, and officials charged with the management of the bilateral relationship, often find Turkish society, and especially civil-military relations, perplexing. It is not unusual to hear senior officials describe their frustration in trying to understand how Turkey “really works.” Others have described the process of making sense of Turkish policymaking as an exercise in “Kremlinology.”

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19 The “familiarity” issue is discussed in Alan Makovsky, “Marching in Step, Mostly!” p. 37.
20 Interview with Orhan Kaymakcalan, President of the Assembly of Turkish-American Associations, “Challenges to Turkish Identity in the U.S.: An Interview with the ATAA,” Insight Turkey, Vol. 2, No. 4, October–December 2000, p. 81.
Few Americans are familiar with Turkey, and even well-informed Americans tend to share a perception of Turkey as culturally and politically exotic. Outside foreign policy circles, where Turkey is often seen through a NATO lens, the image of the country is Middle Eastern rather than European. Ironically, Turkey’s active role in the Gulf coalition reinforced the perception of Turkey as a valuable Middle Eastern ally. At the popular level, Turkey’s image has never fully recovered from the popularity of Midnight Express, a film that many Turks believe set back the development of American tourism in Turkey for decades. The number of American visitors to Turkey has increased substantially in recent years, reaching some 500,000 in 2000, but it lags far behind tourism from Europe, which is a major revenue earner for the Turkish economy.22 Tourism to Turkey is also highly dependent on a perception of regional stability, and crises in the Balkans or the Middle East, as well as international terrorist incidents, can have a highly damaging effect on American tourism, however unjustified. This effect was made clear by the drop in American tourism following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the subsequent intervention in Afghanistan.

Overall, the lack of accurate knowledge about Turkey and the relative paucity of “people-to-people” contacts mean that bilateral affinity is underdeveloped and is not commensurate with Turkey’s importance in foreign policy terms. This reality also contrasts with the increasingly active specialist debate about Turkish affairs in the United States, and a marked increase in the coverage of Turkish topics in leading American newspapers in the second half of the 1990s.

Turkish images of the United States are also distinctive—and changing. Turkish analyses of this question normally point, quite correctly, to the anti-American instincts of both the nationalist right and the Turkish left. The former have tended to see ties to the United States as a threat to Turkish sovereignty. The latter have shared the Cold War tradition of concern about the American model of capitalism, American “imperialism,” coupled with nationalist instincts of their own. These intellectual strains, common across Europe and the Middle East during the Cold War, still weigh heavily in the contem-

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22 In 1991, in a period of regional tension, only 79,000 American tourists visited Turkey. The figure was 182,000 in 1992, and reached 290,000 by 1995. Some 500,000 Americans visited Turkey in 2000.
porary Turkish debate. Even among elites, there is often a marked suspicion of American aims. Turkey’s diplomats chafe at the need to adjust the country’s foreign policy to meet American expectations. The military establishment values its strategic and technical collaboration with the United States, and has been a (perhaps the) leading interlocutor in bilateral relations, but it is especially sensitive to sovereignty questions, and these are often at the forefront of discussions with Washington on Incirlik and other matters.

Broadly speaking, the Turkish private sector—a relative newcomer to foreign policy debates in Turkey—is less suspicious and more positively inclined. Leading Turkish business groups have devoted considerable energy to promoting trade and investment ties to the United States, with the goal of augmenting and diversifying Turkey’s Euro-centric economic relations. TUSIAD has opened a representative office in Washington with a public policy as well as a trade promotion mandate. The phenomenon of globalization—as fashionable a topic in Turkey as elsewhere—is often closely associated with the United States in Turkish perceptions. Here, too, the business community tends to be more comfortable with the notion of globalization than those in political circles, on the right and the left, and more favorably disposed toward the American role. It is notable that in Turkey’s economic crisis of 2001, lobbying for support in Washington has been a priority for Turkish business groups. Overall, the private sector has emerged as a far more prominent interlocutor in bilateral relations and now plays a large role in shaping American attitudes toward the country. Turkey’s economic troubles, and the focus on corruption and mismanagement in public-private sector relations in Turkey, have caused special dismay in Washington, where the “dynamism” of Turkey’s private sector has been a feature of most discussions about the Turkish scene in recent years.

The emergence of a more diverse foreign policy debate in Turkey, with new elites participating, has contributed to a more positive perception of the United States. Despite some important policy differences, the general tone of the relationship has arguably never been better. In the view of many Turkish observers, President Clinton’s

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23See Lesser, Strong States, Difficult Choices: Mediterranean Perspectives on Integration and Globalization.
November 1999 visit to Turkey in the context of the OSCE summit marked a high point in the relationship. Turks were impressed by the substance and tone of key speeches, including a speech to the “not-so-pro-American” Turkish parliament that was greeted with great enthusiasm by Islamist deputies, among others.24 Turkey’s Islamists have, as a rule, been more concerned with domestic than foreign policy, and their perspectives on the United States and the bilateral relationship are far from uniform. Although sharing some of the nationalist concerns of the secular right (e.g., about Cyprus) that encourage a wary view of the United States, many Islamists also see themselves as potential beneficiaries of American pressure over human rights and democratization. Turkey’s mainstream Islamists, including leading members of the now banned Virtue Party, have generally been eager to engage American policymakers and observers. Turkey’s Islamist parties have generally expressed shock over the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, although they have been less supportive of the idea of Turkish military contributions to operations in Afghanistan or Iraq.

There can be little doubt that most Turks know more about the United States than their American counterparts know about Turkey. The pervasiveness of American culture, business, and media and the prominence of American actions worldwide assure that this is so. Nonetheless, even well-informed Turks are often puzzled by the workings of the policy process in Washington. Decades of battles with Greek, Armenian, human rights and other groups in Washington have encouraged the view that Turkish-American relations are influenced, above all, by the clash of lobbies. The engagement of American policymakers on substantive issues and the enhancement of programs to address the “affinity deficit” at the public level appear to receive less attention. This reality is particularly meaningful at a time of strategic flux in which key international relationships are being redefined and Turkey, even as an important regional ally, must compete for the attention of American policymakers.

24Candar, “Some Turkish Perspectives on the United States and American Policy Toward Turkey,” in Abramowitz, Turkey’s Transformation and American Policy, p. 147.
LOOKING AHEAD

After decades in which the contours of Turkey’s relations with the United States were well established, the bilateral relationship at the start of the 21st century faces many sources of change. The progressive transformation and modernization of Turkish society, with all the associated stresses and strains, may be the most significant element in this equation. Changes on the domestic scene have brought new issues to the fore and could ultimately reduce or eliminate many long-standing obstacles to an even closer relationship, including shortcomings on human rights and political and economic reform.

The political and social dimensions of Turkey’s economic travails will also be meaningful to Washington. A chaotic and less-prosperous Turkey will have little energy to play a positive regional role and little ability to fulfill its promise as a “big emerging market”—themes that have been central to official visions for the bilateral relationship. The pace and character of change on the domestic scene will be a determinant of Turkey’s progress in relations with the EU—an essential backdrop for the future of Turkey’s relations with the United States. Domestic developments will also shape the way Turks view broader questions of globalization in which the United States looms large. Turkey’s internal transformation is likely to be a key, enabling factor setting the tone and limits of the bilateral relationship as seen from Washington. Similarly, for Turks, the American response to Turkey’s internal challenges, including the country’s economic crisis, will be a key test of the health of the relationship and the atmosphere for cooperation on other issues.

At a fundamental level, Turkish and American interests are broadly convergent. Both states are inherently status quo powers with respect to the regional and international environment. Despite increasing activism in key areas such as the Middle East, Turkish foreign policy can still be characterized as cautious and conservative in overall terms. Both countries are, for different reasons, relatively security conscious, and the bilateral relationship retains immense value as seen from Ankara. This shared security consciousness is likely to be strongly reinforced by the new primacy of counterterrorism in U.S. strategy. Nonetheless, at the level of policy approaches, there are some important areas of ongoing and potential divergence.
Looking ahead, several issues stand out as sources of change—both challenges and opportunities—for the bilateral relationship. 25

First, regardless of the outcome of Turkey’s EU candidacy, the European factor is likely to be a leading influence on the bilateral relationship in the 21st century. The longer-term implications of a more European Turkey in policy terms may be significant. The net result is likely to be greater normalization and maturity in relations between Washington and Ankara, as has been the pattern elsewhere across Southern Europe. If, by contrast, the Turkish-EU relationship stalls or deteriorates (e.g., over the question of Cypriot accession, lack of reform in Turkey, or ESDP), there will be greater reliance—and pressure—on Turkey’s relationship with Washington. This could prove an uncomfortable reality for both sides, particularly against a backdrop of tension in transatlantic relations.

Second, the advent of the Bush administration in Washington places the question of regional policies in sharper relief. Turkey and the United States may seek peace and stability in areas of shared concern, but policies differ. Iran, and above all Iraq, will be key questions in this regard. A tougher American stance in the Gulf, and especially a renewed military confrontation with Iraq or an effort to tighten sanctions, would be met with dismay in Ankara. It could also prove a test of Turkish solidarity in Washington. Against this background, both countries face decisions about tangible matters such as the use of Incirlik air base after the eventual end of Operation Northern Watch and the conduct of Turkish-Iraqi trade within and outside the UN sanctions regime. From a Turkish perspective, the best outcome might well be continued military containment of Iraq, accompanied by a loosening of the sanctions regime—and no support for opposition movements in Iraq that might spur chaos and Kurdish separatism in the region. American policy preferences make this unlikely. In other areas such as Central Asia, the Balkans, and the Aegean, bilateral perspective are more congruent. Washington has been a strong supporter of Turkey’s prospective leadership of peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan (ISAF) and has agreed to help defray the costs of Turkish participation. In the Middle East

peace process, Ankara will likely support an engaged rather than an arm’s length approach from Washington. The strong Turkish-Israeli relationship only increases Ankara’s stake in this area.

Third, a decade after the end of the Cold War, policy toward Russia is again at the forefront. A deterioration of U.S.-Russian relations will increase risks for Turkey in the Caucasus and Black Sea, as well as in the Middle East and the Balkans where Russian policies are meaningful. At the same time, Turkish concerns about Russia mirror those in the United States, and the American connection will remain the cornerstone of Turkey’s deterrent posture vis-à-vis Russia. For these reasons, dialogue on the management of relations with Moscow should be a prominent item on the bilateral agenda for the future.

Fourth, energy policy is likely to become an even more important part of the relationship. The elements here include Turkey’s own energy needs, America’s growing interest in energy security issues, and Turkey’s role as a conduit for Middle Eastern and Caspian oil and gas. Much attention has been focused on the prospects for the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. Many Turks see continued, even enhanced, American support as critical to the outcome. But the American enthusiasm for subsidizing the project is very limited. Even apart from Baku-Ceyhan, the restoration of full Iraqi oil exports via Turkish pipelines (the capacity of these existing lines is roughly twice that of the proposed Baku-Ceyhan route) would strongly reinforce Turkey’s role in the world energy picture.

Fifth, the rationale for a “strategic” relationship will go beyond Turkey’s geographic position in relation to regions of shared concern. Many of the most prominent foreign and security policy problems in the new environment are transregional. A prominent example is the challenge of missile proliferation. Ankara’s perspective on this issue is perhaps closest to that of the United States, and Turkey’s interest in missile defenses is correspondingly strong. Turkish-U.S. dialogue and cooperation on missile defense could emerge as an important subset of the increasingly energetic transatlantic debate on this topic. If a regionally based or “boost-phase” missile defense architecture is pursued, parts of this system might well be based in Turkey, at which point this will move from a conceptual to a practical issue in the bilateral relationship.
Finally, policymakers in Ankara and Washington will continue to seek, with some success, a more diverse relationship featuring increased economic and other forms of cooperation outside the security realm. But the primacy of security issues in Turkish-U.S. relations is likely to endure for structural reasons. These reasons include the flavor of Turkish and American policy concerns, persistent instability in adjacent regions, the impetus of decades of security cooperation, uncertainties regarding Russia, and, not least, the existence of other more natural economic partners for Turkish business. It is notable that in the midst of Turkey’s economic crisis, Turkey’s advocates—including the Turkish private sector—have made the case for support in strategic rather than economic terms.

The future bilateral relationship will need to reflect a changing Turkey, a changing strategic environment, and an evolving foreign policy debate in the United States. It must also accommodate the more rigorous measurement of Turkish national interests that has accompanied the country’s more active external policy and growing regional power. In all likelihood, the relationship will be more diverse, within limits, and involve a wider range of interlocutors. More than ever before, the character of Turkish-U.S. relations will depend on external variables, such as Turkey’s relationship with Europe and the evolution of Russia, outside the bilateral agenda narrowly defined.