

**FOUNDATION FOR MIDDLE EAST  
AND BALKAN STUDIES  
(OBİV)**

**TURKISH REVIEW  
OF  
MIDDLE EAST STUDIES**

**ANNUAL  
2006  
17**

**BIGART  
ISTANBUL**

## PARTNERS IN CONFLICT: THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

**Helin SARI ERTEM\***

On 26 September 2006, Turkish newspapers wrote that security forces patrolling in the Sunatkap? region of Mardin, Dargecit were attacked by a group of PKK [Kurdistan Workers' Party] militants and that Lieutenant Cengiz Evranos had lost his life after being seriously wounded in this attack. Thinking about Turkey's long fight with the PKK, what made this news stand out was actually hidden in the reaction of Lieutenant Evranos' father. His way of showing his grief has actually been the voice of a certain majority of the ordinary Turkish people, who have link most of Turkey's problems to only one center: The US. "The one who is responsible of these events is only the US!" said father Evranos and added: "The PKK is just a pawn. That's why, I say 'God damn the US'."¹

Like many other Turkish people, father Evranos was also probably thinking that, as the only "Super Power" of the world and the so-called "strategic partner" of

---

\*Helin SARI ERTEM is a Ph.D. Candidate at Marmara University, Department of Political Science and International Relations and a Research Assistant at Yildiz Technical University, Department of Political Science and International Relations.

¹ "Şehit Babası: Vatan Sağolsun Diyemiyorum," Radikal, 26 September 2006.

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

Turkey, the US actually had the "strength" but not the "will" to stop the PKK terrorism. According to this view, the only reason for this was the desire "to weaken Turkey and force it to accept the demands of the US on various other issues." Although this way of thinking generally arises from the strong "anti-Americanism" (or more accurately saying, the strong disagreement with current "American" (US) policies) in Turkey,<sup>2</sup> one must bear in mind that interpreting the problems in international relations, such as the one caused by the PKK between Turkey and the US, is not so simple as there are many factors to take into consideration before achieving a certain conclusion.

Reviewing the general approaches assumed by both countries since the founding of the terrorist organization, the aim of this article is to try to explain why the PKK issue, which is recently been considered as "the most important problem of the Turkish-American relations,"<sup>3</sup> has not been able to be overcome by Ankara and Washington, despite the fact that there has been certain consensus on identifying the PKK as "a terrorist organization."<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the article takes the position that the difference between both sides' "threat and interest" perceptions and their preferences of different "means" to tackle with these threats play a very important role in this predicament. It is a well-known fact that all states try to achieve their goals and max-

---

<sup>2</sup> In a BBC World Service Poll in January 2005, Turkey topped the anti-Bush list, with 82% believing his re-election would be negative for global security. This caused comments that Turkey has the highest level of anti-Americanism (or actually anti-Bushism). "Global Poll Slams Bush leadership," BBC World Service, 19 January 2005 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4185205.stm>).

<sup>3</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "Türkiye ile ABD arasındaki Sorunların Düzeltilmesi Kolay Değil," *Radikal*, 2 October 2006. Also see the results of "Middle East Perceptions" Poll of the "International Strategic Research Organization" (USK), which was made public on 25 March 2006. One of the questions in this poll was: "What is the most important reason that harms the Turkish-US relations in the Middle East?" The percentages of the responses given were: The PKK policy of the US: 42 %, the US's Iraq policy: 26 %, the US's Israel policy: 9 %, Turkey's Iraq policy: 8 % and others: 15 %, "Türk Halkı ABD'nin Irak'tan Hemen Çekilmesini İstiyor," *Vatan*, 25 March 2006.

<sup>4</sup> The organization's terrorist nature has been emphasized by the annual report of the US Department of State, "Patterns of Global Terrorism," for over a decade. In the "Patterns of Global Terrorism Report for 1992," published in April 1993, the PKK was described as a "Marxist Leninist terrorist group, composed of Turkish Kurds seeking to set up a Marxist state in south eastern Turkey," p. 40. (Find "Patterns of Global Terrorism Reports" through: <http://www.mipt.org/Patterns-of-Global-Terrorism.asp>).

---

imize their benefits. However, the key question here is to what extent both Turkey and the US can venture risking the future of their long-time alliance by not fully succeeding in understanding each other's sensitivities on national security matters.

The author of this article claims that despite the recent US steps, such as creating a common mechanism to fight against the PKK terrorism, the basic parameters, preventing Washington from acting in tandem with the Turkish view, have not actually changed at all. That's to say that on the issue of ending the PKK, the US will continue to differ from Ankara's tougher suggestions, such as organizing a military operation against the PKK presence in northern Iraq. As a result of its different "threat and interest" perceptions, which are not very easy to change because of being strictly related to each state's unique characteristics as well, the PKK issue has always been considered by the US as an internal problem of Turkey that can only be solved through democratic means. Contrary to the tolerance it showed in the 1990s due to that period's unique circumstances, Washington does not want to give Turkey a blank check to operate in northern Iraq again in order not to discomfort its Kurdish allies there. Even a groundbreaking event like September 11, which directly brought "terrorism" to the top of the world agenda, did not cause Turkey to gain the sufficient support it expected from Washington in its fight against terrorism.

In this respect, the article will first of all try to give an overview of the current Turkish-American relations and the impact of the PKK problem on them. Here it will also aim to mention about the difficulty of having a common international move on terrorism and its influences on Turkish-American relations in the post-Cold War era. Hence, the article will try to outline main approaches of the US towards the PKK issue in the 1990s, especially in terms of Turkey's cross-border operations through Iraq and the discussions on its human rights violations. Later in this article, Turkish and US areas of cooperation and conflict in terms of forming a common policy towards the PKK terrorism will be put forward, especially in the wake of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's capture and the September 11 events. This will be the part where we will try to focus more on different threat and inter-

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

est perceptions of Ankara and Washington. Giving the recent developments between Turkey and the US on solving of the PKK problem, this part of the article will focus on how these different threat and interest perceptions of Turkey and the US are influential on their preferences of different means to tackle with the issue. Summing up the discussion, the conclusion of the article will also try to bring some future prospects.

*An Overview of Turkish-American Relations and the Impact of the PKK Issue*

Turkish-American relations date back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, their gradual evolution into an important alliance is a result of the Cold War US-Soviet tension and Turkey's preference of siding itself with the West, especially by becoming a NATO member in 1952. Subsequent to the Cold War years, during which Turkish-US relations were mostly based on military cooperation, the 1990s reflected a completely different atmosphere where the US had to deal with various complex issues as the only remaining super power with global strategic interests. This new environment of course gave a new shape to Turkish-US relations. A new concept called "enhanced partnership" was introduced in 1991. "This new concept aimed at diversifying and deepening the Turkish-American relationship as well as developing it on a more substantial basis."<sup>5</sup> In 1997, Turkey and the US formulated their mutual cooperation in five main areas: "Energy," "economy and trade," "regional cooperation," "Cyprus," and "defense and security cooperation." In 1999, the relation moved to a further degree. After the mutual visits of the then-Turkish Premier Bülent Ecevit and the then US President Bill Clinton, by the end of that year, the Turkish-US relations began being called a "strategic partnership," meaning a more multi-dimensional and multi-faceted cooperation, involving a wide range of overlapping interests in Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. However, as it would often be experienced in the future, this did not mean that Turkey and the US would always share the same views on various subjects.

---

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Regions/NorthAmerica/US/US\\_Political.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Regions/NorthAmerica/US/US_Political.htm)

Bearing in mind that some of their interests differ from each other, it was always clear that the Turkish-American relations have never been devoid of problems.<sup>6</sup> However, only a small number of experts could foresee that Turkey's autonomous policies might one day end up clashing with fundamental US interests. In the article he wrote in 1996, Mahmut Bali Aykan pointed out this possible outcome.<sup>7</sup> The tension created by the "competing priorities" and the "different approaches" of the two countries, which developed the definition of their cooperation and began talking about a "Strategic Partnership," reached its highest level by the so-called "motion crisis" on the edge of the Iraq War. On 1 March 2003, after six months of contentious military, political, and financial negotiations between Ankara and Washington,<sup>8</sup> Turkish Parliament refused opening of a northern front through Turkey, that is to say it said "No" to U.S. troops' access to Iraq via the southeast of Turkey.<sup>9</sup> Unsurprisingly, this created a big shock and disbelief in the US administration; forced Pentagon to change its war plans and complicated the post-war situation.<sup>10</sup> Although Turkey still calls its relationship with the US a "strategic partnership," neither country has been able to overcome the negative impacts of this crisis. A couple of wrong steps of the US, such as the ill-treatment of the Turkish officers in Sulaymaniyah - widely known in Turkey as "the sacking incident" - were considered by the Turkish people as US efforts to take revenge, thus contributing to ris-

---

<sup>6</sup> Ekavi Athanassopoulou, "American-Turkish Relations since the End of the Cold War," Middle East Policy, Vol.8, Iss.3, Sep. 2001, p.144.

<sup>7</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "Turkish Perspectives on Turkish-US Relations Concerning Persian Gulf Security in the Post-Cold War Era:1989-1995," The Middle East Journal, 50:3, 1996, p.357.

<sup>8</sup> For details of these negotiations see: Fikret Bila, Sivil Darbe Girişimi ve Ankara'da Irak Savaşları, Ankara: Ümit yay., 2003.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed analysis of 1 March motion crisis, see Bill Park, "Strategic Location, Political Dislocation: Turkey, the United States and Northern Iraq," MERIA Journal, Vol.7, No. 2, June 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "The Anatomy of Anti-Americanism in Turkey," article prepared for the Brookings Institution, 16 November 2005 (<http://www.brookings.edu/views/articles/fellows/taspinar20051116.htm>). Also on 20 February 2006, Hurriyet's New York correspondent Doğan Uluç wrote that the US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld told him that "If a northern front was opened through Turkey, they would have faced less resistors in Iraq." Doğan Uluç, "Rumsfeld Kuzey Cephesini Unutamıyor," HürriyetUS, 20 February 2006 (<http://www.hurriyetUS.com/haber/haberdetay.asp?id=7736>).

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

ing anti-Americanism in Turkey.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, as Ömer Taşpınar of the Brookings Institute states, a growing number of Turks began perceiving their NATO ally, the US, more as a “national security threat,” rather than a “strategic partner.”<sup>12</sup> This lack of trust in the public opinion towards the US forced Ankara to increase its pressure over Washington to make it fulfill its previous promises to help Turkey end PKK terrorism.<sup>13</sup> As it was mentioned before, the PKK maintained its leading position on the Turkish agenda as a serious security matter. Moreover, in an atmosphere very much hostile to the policies of the Bush administration, it became more difficult for Ankara to make Turkish people believe in the good will of their “strategic partner” without seeing any concrete steps.

That might well be the real reason behind Turkey’s signaling the US of a possible military interference in northern Iraq in August 2006, giving the example of the last Israeli move into Lebanon in pursuit of the Hezbollah militants. Turkey’s threat of entering northern Iraq to neutralize the PKK militants there,<sup>14</sup> something that is not desired by Washington at all, is said to be taken very seriously by the US.<sup>15</sup> This concern led them to respond quickly to Ankara by appointing one of its top retired generals, Joseph Ralston, as the “US Special Envoy for Countering the PKK” and

---

<sup>11</sup> Nüzhet Kandemir, "Turkish-American Relations - Past and Future," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No.1, Spring 2005 (<http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=124>).

<sup>12</sup> Taşpınar, "The Anatomy of Anti-Americanism in Turkey."

<sup>13</sup> In her visit to Ankara on 7 February 2005, US Secretary of State Rice told Foreign Minister Gül her worries about the rising anti-Americanism in Turkey and as a response to that, Gül said they were talking about the people who lost their 30-40 thousand people in fighting against the PKK, so Turkish people thinking like that was quite natural if the US continues to ignore Turkey's sensitivities on the PKK and Kirkuk issues. "PKK İçin Adım Atarsanız Anti-Amerikanizm Azalır," *Sabah*, 7 February 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Semih İdiz, "Erdogan'dan Myers'a Yanıt: K. Irak'a Gerekirse Sormadan Gireriz," *Milliyet*, 20 July 2006.

<sup>15</sup> On 23 July 2006, Turkish daily *Sabah* wrote that after Turkey's scold about getting into northern Iraq [to neutralize the PKK bases there], both the US President Bush and the US Secretary of State Rice called the Turkish government to give a message that they understood the seriousness of the PKK issue and asked Turkey not to interfere in northern Iraq underlining that they would do whatever was necessary. "ABD Yönetimi Telefonda," *Sabah*, 23 July 2006.

---

encouraging Turkey (and also Iraq) to similarly take part in this new process.<sup>16</sup> This was a step worth mentioning because for a long time, the US was insisting that the issue of the PKK presence in northern Iraq was a matter that Turkey and Iraq should discuss together. Willy-nilly, the US had to settle itself into a triple mechanism this time.

As Atatürk pointed out in the 1920s to a visiting American delegation in Ankara, "the US is an old democracy in a new continent, and Turkey is a new democracy in an old continent;"<sup>17</sup> it is true that the identities of both countries came closer to each other on a democracy platform by the founding of the Turkish republic. Both countries committed themselves to the preservation of international peace and order. Turkey's place in the Middle East always had a very important role in terms of the US application of the so called "democratic peace theory." For Washington, it was necessary to see Turkey as "a factor of stability" in the region as this would have an indirect contribution to long-term US interests in the Middle East. However, when the Cold War ended and the USSR collapsed, it became difficult to define a "common threat"<sup>18</sup> and this made both countries more open to each other's critics, especially in terms of issues of "human rights and democratization." In the lack of a common international threat like the Soviets, Turkey could more strongly bring forward its own agenda, mainly the rising PKK terrorism that has targeted its national security. PKK terrorism has always been declared by both Turkey and the US as a "destabilizing factor" for the region and Turkey's fight against it has generally been considered by the US administrations as a "self-defense." But not all of the

---

<sup>16</sup> Press Statement by the US Department of State on 28 August 2006 says that "General Ralston will have responsibility for coordinating U.S. engagement with the Government of Turkey and the Government of Iraq to eliminate the terrorist threat of the PKK and other terrorist groups operating in northern Iraq and across the Turkey-Iraq border." (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/71563.htm>)

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Regions/NorthAmerica/US/US\\_Political.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Regions/NorthAmerica/US/US_Political.htm)

<sup>18</sup> John Roper points out that "when there is a clear external threat, national interests are subordinated to common alliance interests; once that disappears, national or possibly regional interests may resume a central place." John Roper, "Shaping Strategy without the Threat," Adelphi Paper 257, (London: Brassey's, for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Winter 1990/91, part 2, p.76.

---



**PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS**

---

American assumptions concerning the problem and the solutions it proposed have been approved by Turkey. The US has always been in favor of a "political, non-military solution," but this has been perceived by the Turkish authorities as an attitude of undermining the seriousness of the threat and in the end, a way of pushing Turkey to a federation for example, which could lead to the destruction of the Turkish Republic.<sup>19</sup>

During the 1990s, US administrations had to be divided between their "terrorism policies" and "human rights and democracy policies" and thus sent mixed signals to Turkey, while having to deal with Turkey's PKK problem.<sup>20</sup> Bearing in mind Turkey's strategic and economic value, the administrations in Washington could always find a way of softening the US Congress' reactions against Turkey's human right practices. This made Turkey generally believe that contrary to its other allies, the US has always favored Ankara's fighting against the PKK terrorism.<sup>21</sup> After the September 11 attacks, Washington's "human rights and democracy policies" have sometimes been shadowed by its "anti-terrorism policy." This came at a time when Turkey began taking important democratization steps towards strengthening Kurds' and other ethnicities' social and political rights, basically in accordance with the EU harmonization process. As an addition to these, rising anti-Americanism and the loss of faith among the Turkish public towards the US have pushed the Bush administration to take more concrete decisions on supporting Turkey's fight against the PKK terrorism. However, the US is still far from satisfying the Turkish authorities. It has neither begun a total war against the PKK nor let Turkey to interfere in northern Iraq. While signaling that it is not leaving its ally alone in its fight against terrorism, the US will still continue to push for other means rather than the military

---

<sup>19</sup> Aykan, *ibid.*, p.350.

<sup>20</sup> Carol Migdalowitz, "Turkey's Kurdish Imbroglia and US Policy," CRS Report for Congress 94-267, 18 March 1994, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> In an interview with CNNTürk Channel on 21 September 2001, the then Prime Minister Ecevit told that the US administration has strongly supported Turkey's attitude towards terrorism and it has been a state that understands Turkey's trouble very well. *Dışişleri Güncesi* (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Publication), 21 September 2001, ([www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr)).

option, although this is not what the Turkish government is actually looking for to end the PKK existence in northern Iraq and to comfort the Turkish society.

### *Terrorism as a Complex Phenomenon*

In terms of its conceptual meaning, "terrorism" is not something that separates Turkey and the US. In official pronouncement, both countries have the same understanding of what "terrorism" is. However, how its outcomes are perceived as a "threat" by the two countries and which "means" are found appropriate by both to react against it have been a very difficult test for the Turkish-American partnership. Turkey's long fight against the PKK has formed a very good example of this. For Turkey, PKK terrorism is a "direct threat" against its national unity and territorial integrity, and has caused the loss of more than 30 thousand lives and billions of dollars in the last twenty years; but more importantly it has created a state of permanent tension and insecurity within society. In addition to that, experts have recently begun pointing out the escalation of a social turmoil between Turks and Kurds just because of their ethnic identities. In the last couple of years, lynching attempts in Western Turkey against people from the Southeast, initiated because of the belief that anyone who speaks Kurdish must be a supporter of the PKK,<sup>22</sup> validate this claim and show that after more than 20 years, the PKK issue is actually now forcing the limits of social peace in Turkey.

During the last 30 years, terrorism has continued to be a problem of the whole international community; but the incident that hurled it to the top of the world's agenda was the September 11 attacks against the US. Since then, the US has concentrated its foreign policy on fighting the threat of terrorism. States have always had the difficulty of making a common definition of terrorism.<sup>23</sup> According to İbrahim Ahmed, "officials do not define terrorism, because definitions involve a commit-

---

<sup>22</sup> "Tehlikeli Tırmanış," Radikal, 9 September 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Louise B. Keltz (Exec.Edi.), Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy, 2nd Edition, Vol. 3, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002, p.563.

---

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

ment to analysis, comprehension and adherence to some norms of consistency.”<sup>24</sup> Academicians, politicians, security experts, journalists, all have different definitions of terrorism. Despite the difficulty of making a common definition of terrorism, it is worth to give place to at least some definitions of terrorism. Terrorism is generally defined as “a way of war, which is used to achieve political goals; or the acts of violence aiming to affect the political process.” In another definition, terrorism is explained as “the systematic use of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular political objective.”<sup>25</sup>

Actually the only problem about terrorism is not about putting forward a definition, because even though there might be a consensus between two countries on what terrorism is, having a common fight against it is as difficult as putting forward a common definition. Moreover, even if there might be a common definition, different interpretations of this definition can still lead to different answers to the questions of “what is terrorism” and “who is a terrorist.” The cliché, of course is that the “terrorist” of one is the “freedom fighter” of another. Former President of Syria, Hafez al-Assad, whom Turkey has accused of supporting the PKK for many years, said that terrorism was something different than national struggle against occupation and what they were supporting was the latter.<sup>26</sup> Of course Turkey and the US’ perceptions of terrorism do not differ from each other so much. In Title 22 of the US Code, Section 2656f (d), terrorism is defined as: “Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.”<sup>27</sup> The Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy states, “the US has tried to define terrorism objectively on the basis of ‘the quality of the act,’ not ‘the identity of the per-

---

<sup>24</sup> İkbâl Ahmed, "Terörizm: Onları ve Bizimki," *Birikim*, October 2001, p. 51.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9071797/terrorism>

<sup>26</sup> Boaz Ganor, "Is One Man's Terrorist another Man's Freedom Fighter?,"

(<http://www.ict.org.il/articles/define.htm>).

<sup>27</sup> *Patters of Global Terrorism Report 2001*, published in May 2002, p.xvi,

(<http://www.mipt.org/pdf/2001pogt.pdf>).

petrators' or 'the nature of their political cause'."<sup>28</sup> There is a similar definition of terrorism for Turkey as well. In a speech in 1999, former President of the State Süleyman Demirel mentioned that terrorism could not be justified by any reason; therefore for Turkey, terrorism would be defined on the basis of the act, not on its cause.<sup>29</sup> In its web-page, the Foreign Affairs Ministry, too, defined terrorism as "the use or the threat of the use of violence; a method of combat or a strategy to achieve certain targets, that it aims to induce a state of fear in the victim, that it is ruthless and does not conform with humanitarian rules, and publicity is an essential factor in the terrorist strategy."<sup>30</sup> Apparently, Turkey and the US are not too concerned about the definition of the term. Here, the important thing is the extent to which the steps practically taken by these two countries to combat terrorism suit each other; that is to say, the extent to which their theory fits the practice. The 20-year history of PKK terrorism could be a good case study for this issue.

### *PKK Terrorism or Kurdish Problem? Areas of Cooperation and Conflict*

The end of the Cold War and the rising of only one country as the 'victor' caused serious changes in the international system. There was no bipolar system; thus, no longer any international state of balance. The Western system was thought to have no rivals.<sup>31</sup> According to columnist Charles Krauthammer, "if it wanted, the US was the only country that was militarily, diplomatically and economically capable of taking part in any conflict on the world as the "decision maker" and that's why it appeared to be the dominant power."<sup>32</sup> However, this dominant power could not keep the world from falling into a state of chaos after the relatively stable Cold-War

<sup>28</sup> Keltz, *ibid*, p.565.

<sup>29</sup> Dışişleri Güncesi, (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Publication), 22 February 1999 ([www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr)).

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MainIssues/Terrorism/Whatisterrorism.htm>

<sup>31</sup> According to Francis Fukuyama, the author of the well-known article "The End of the History," the reform movements seen in the USSR and Eastern Europe and the expansion of consuming culture to the whole world were actually announcing the victory of the West and what ended was not the Cold War but the history itself. See Francis Fukuyama, "The End of the History?," *The National Interest*, Summer 1989.

<sup>32</sup> Steven Hook and John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since WW II*, Fifteenth Ed., CQ Press, August 2000, p.262.

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

years. In this new period of instability, states found themselves in a more complex decision-making process, in which the question was no longer, "To which bloc are you closest?" Although the US administration could not estimate this complexity from the very early years of the 1990s, and called this 'actually unstable' new system the 'New World Order,'<sup>33</sup> the Gulf War against Saddam Hussein of Iraq right at the beginning of this era showed that basic principles of the post-Cold War American foreign policy would be "the protection of the market economy and the human rights" and the method chosen for this was "military interventions."<sup>34</sup>

In contrast to first years in power, by the mid-1990s, President Bill Clinton preferred to focus mostly on strategic policies, rather than on economic ones. Clinton administration's "National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement"<sup>35</sup> summed up this approach, which gave priority to the expansion of democracy and human rights while focusing on economic measures like free trade and investment facilities. That is to say, the target of the US was to establish 'free markets and free societies' all around the world. Accordingly, Washington chose to have a foreign policy based on superiority, collective security and selective engagement. Therefore, the superiority of the US must have continued; the responsibility must have been shared; and more importantly, Washington must have been interested only in regions that might create a direct or indirect threat against it. However, the escalation of regional clashes that had been suppressed under Cold War conditions, created such an atmosphere in the mid-1990s that the US was forced to play the role of "World Cop," which it was actually trying to abstain from. Regional hegemonies, which could be controlled by the previous status quo, felt free to apply force. The "threat" perception of the US was not the same anymore. Like the first Chief of the CIA during Clinton's term of presidency said, although the Soviet

---

<sup>33</sup> This term was first used by the US President George Bush in a speech he made to the Congress on 11 September 1990 in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990.

<sup>34</sup> Baskın Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, (Cilt II: 1980-2001), İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2001, p.210.

<sup>35</sup> For full text see: <http://www.fas.org/spp/military/docops/national/1996stra.htm>

---

dragon not longer existed, this time the US was in a jungle full of poisonous snakes.<sup>36</sup>

Post-Cold War Turkish-American relations began to assume new shape in such an atmosphere. After the collapse of the old bi-polar world, Turkey feared a loss of importance in the eyes of the US and the other Western countries. However, with the Gulf Crisis in 1990 and the war against Iraq afterwards, Ankara felt that it was regaining its strategic importance in the eyes of the West. In this regard, "in a region, which was gradually having more upsides and downs, Turkey has begun to be seen as a strong 'anchor' and it was expected to establish stability,"<sup>37</sup> of which the US was in need. As a matter of fact, change in the international conjuncture enforced Turkey to pursue a more active policy in its relations with the neighboring countries and in regional developments. As a result of the democratization policies of the US, Turkey was accepted as a "model" for the former socialist countries. This was soon to have negative consequences. The Washington administration, which did not say too much about Turkey's human rights violations during the 1980s, chose to be more demanding about Turkey's democratization in the 1990s as a requirement of its new strategy.

It would not be wrong to say that given the different threat and interest perceptions of the two countries, one as a regional and the other as a global power, this US approach, which gives priority to democratization and the improvement of human rights, have been very influential on disagreements concerning the PKK terrorism and the Kurdish problem. Against Turkey's national unity and integrity, the PKK has created a threat that is more direct and dangerous than the Soviets during the Cold War.<sup>38</sup> Since the very beginning, Turkey and the US have agreed that the PKK, which was founded in 1978 and began its armed struggle against Turkey in

---

<sup>36</sup> Hook and Spanier, *ibid.*, p.293.

<sup>37</sup> Heinz Kramer, *Avrupa ve Amerika Karşısında Değişen Türkiye*, İstanbul: Timaş Yay.,2001, p.329.

<sup>38</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkish-Syrian Crisis of October 1998:A Turkish View," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. VI, No.4, June 1999, p.175.

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

1984,<sup>39</sup> is a terrorist formation. The US was the first state to call the PKK a terrorist organization.<sup>40</sup> So it was clear that both Turkey and the US agreed on the existence of the PKK terrorism, but as Turkey continued to argue that it was PKK terrorism and not Kurds that was the problem in Turkey, it had certain disagreements with Washington.

Mostly by the influence of the Congress, which traditionally has the claim of being the voice of the "Free World," the PKK issue has been considered by Washington in frame of a larger Kurdish problem. This of course has led to the two capitals sometimes diverging from each other on which measures to take against the PKK. Turkey's priorities as a regional power and the impact of the threats made to its entity, unity and integrity have not always coincided with the US's priorities as a global power, which is not directly affected by any PKK activity. This has created a difficult situation both for Turkey and the US as it was very much important for them to continue their alliance concerning many other aspects. That's why, although the PKK issue continues to be a bleeding wound, both countries have always tried to minimize their areas of conflict and have found a common way of getting rid of the other problems between them. This situation has not only influenced Turkey's domestic policies but also its policies towards Northern Iraq. The 1990s have special importance to understanding this dilemma.

*1) The 1990s and the Cross Border Operations*

In the 1990s, fighting against the PKK has been Ankara's most important struggle, as the organization formed the most serious threat against the survival of the Republic of Turkey. PKK terrorism, which could not achieve a very important level until then, escalated in the 1990s, mostly having benefited from the refugee crisis and the lack of authority in northern Iraq that came as a result of the Gulf War

---

<sup>39</sup> For a detailed analysis of the roots, objectives and methods of the PKK, see: Nur Bilge Criss, "The Nature of PKK Terrorism in Turkey," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 18, 1995.

<sup>40</sup> Oran, *ibid.*, p.295.

against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. In this period, with the role it took in favor of the Iraqi Kurds, the US, too, has become an indirect part of the Kurdish issue. During those years, Turkey's basic anxiety related to northern Iraqi Kurds was the possibility of these groups giving support to the PKK. The factor that motivated Turkish President Turgut Özal to establish relations with northern Iraqi Kurdish leaders in 1991 were directly related to this possibility. Turkey did not want to stay outside of the regional developments that could have a direct influence on Turkey's national interests. Moreover, the "Operation Provide Comfort,"<sup>41</sup> formed by a US initiative, and the de-facto Kurdish state, which was founded under the umbrella of the "Poised Hammer Force,"<sup>42</sup> dragged Turkey into a more detailed relation with northern Iraq. The Turkish administration, too, had to back the founding of a Kurdish entity that is totally beyond Iraqi control. Actually, by doing that, Ankara was looking for international support to fight against its "number one threat," the PKK. The Turkish government's gaining a relative freedom for its cross-border operations in pursuit of the PKK militants was a practical result of this cooperation between Ankara and Washington.<sup>43</sup>

During the 1990s, Turkey conducted several cross-border operations in northern Iraqi territories. Turkey's ground operation against the PKK bases in northern Iraq in autumn 1992 was one of these cross-border operations. It was well known that the northern Iraqi Kurdish leaders, especially the KDP [Kurdistan Democratic Party] leader Mas'ud Barzani gave strong support to Turkey in that operation.<sup>44</sup> Soon before Turkey began its operation, in a statement in the Kurdish Parliament in northern Iraq, Barzani claimed that the PKK cooperated with the Iraqi administration and spied against northern Iraq, Syria and Iran.<sup>45</sup> Despite such activities, the

---

<sup>41</sup> The no-fly zone, which was enforced in northern Iraq after the Gulf War in 1991 by US, British and French aircraft operating from bases in Turkey to protect Iraqi Kurds from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

<sup>42</sup> The military means of enforcing Operation Provide Comfort.

<sup>43</sup> Athanassopoulou, *ibid.*, p.144.

<sup>44</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Huzur mu, Huzursuzluk mu: Çekiç Güç ve Türk Dış Politikası," Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 1994, p.280.

<sup>45</sup> *Aynı Tarihi*, 1 October 1992.



PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

relations of the northern Iraqi Kurds with the PKK have always changed according to the conjuncture. Especially after the death of President Özal in 1993, it was claimed that particularly the PUK [Patriotic Union of Kurdistan] leader Jalal Talabani tolerated the PKK activities in northern Iraq.<sup>46</sup> Similar to the US, the PKK has never created a direct danger in the threat perceptions of these groups. So, there have been as many time of dispute as there have been long periods of compromise between these groups and the PKK<sup>47</sup> as a result of their common Kurdish ethnicity, but more importantly, of their common "threat perception" towards Turkey.

However for Turkey, the most important thing has always been cutting of the life vessels of PKK terrorism, no matter what the cost. That's why it has strictly insisted in regional and international arenas on its right to do so. In this respect, persuading Europe has always been particularly difficult for Turkey when performing cross-border operations. In 1992, seeing that Turkey's operation inside northern Iraq took more than a month, the European Parliament called Ankara to end its operations and pull out its troops from the area.<sup>48</sup> Turkey had to make a special effort to persuade both Europe and the other neighbors of Iraq, such as Iran and Syria, that it would protect the territorial integrity of Iraq and that the operations were only against the PKK.<sup>49</sup> Among external reactions, Washington's has always been more flexible. In a statement the US administration prepared to be broadcasted on 13 November 1993, there was a reminder that the respect for Turkey's right of self-defense against the terrorist attacks targeting its territorial integrity had been an American policy for a long time and all of the other countries were invited to support Turkey's fight against international terrorism as a common enemy.<sup>50</sup> During these years, although the PKK did not form a direct threat against the US, it was certainly an element of instability for the de facto Kurdish entity that was estab-

---

<sup>46</sup> Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth Winrow, *Kürt Sorunu Kökeni ve Gelişimi*, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1997, p. 164.

<sup>47</sup> Keesing's 1992, (39163).

<sup>48</sup> *Ayın Tarihi*, 19 November 1992.

<sup>49</sup> Keesing's 1992, (39213).

<sup>50</sup> US Congress Records, 13 November 1993, Congressional Record Online via GPO Access, (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/index.html>)

---

lished against the Saddam Hussein administration and US existence in Turkey. In the 1992 Patterns of Global Terrorism Report, it was mentioned that although it did not directly target the Americans, the PKK was forming an increasing threat against the American [military] personnel in Turkey.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, the 1993 Patterns of Global Terrorism Report showed the PKK as one of the leading reasons of the escalation of terrorism on the world.<sup>52</sup>

## *2) Poised Hammer Force and the Discussions on Economic and Military Aid to Turkey*

The maintenance of relative silence by the US with respect to the Turkish cross-border operations was not only because the PKK formed an indirect threat to the US interests in northern Iraq and the American military existence in Turkey. Turkey's support of the Operation Provide Comfort and the Poised Hammer Force was also influential in this outcome. Turkey, which became aware of the "bargaining power" it gained by the Operation Provide Comfort, gave permission to the deployment of the Poised Hammer Force in Turkey in July 1991.<sup>53</sup> In return, the US did not oppose Turkey's cross-border operations and once more underlined that the PKK was a terrorist organization and that Turkey was using its right of self-defense. Moreover, it has even helped Turkey through suspending the flights of the Poised Hammer Force during Turkey's operations.<sup>54</sup>

Despite this cooperation, neither Turkish public opinion nor the American Congress was fully comfortable about the situation. The escalation of the PKK activities especially after the Poised Hammer Force taking the charge caused claims in the Turkish press that the helicopters of this force were throwing aid materials to the PKK and even carrying wounded militants. Of course, such news created a lack

---

<sup>51</sup> Migdolowitz, *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> *Ayin tarihi*, 10 May 1994.

<sup>53</sup> *Keesing's*, July 91, (38357).

<sup>54</sup> Oran, *ibid.*, p.269.

**PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS**

---

of trust about the real intentions of the US.<sup>55</sup> The death of General Eşref Bitlis, the then Commander of Gendarme Forces, in a plane crash in 17 February 1992, was one of the incidents which was directly bound to so-called "hidden" US intentions in the region. It was claimed that Bitlis, who refused to give up his stance against the US's Kurdish plans, died in a mysterious accident two months after his helicopter had been harassed by US war planes while he was going to meet northern Iraqi Kurdish groups.<sup>56</sup> Despite this lack of trust, which was not only among the Turkish people but also among the parliamentarians as well, Turkey preferred not to stay out of the developments in northern Iraq and did not harm its relations with the US. As a matter of fact, permission for the practices of Poised Hammer Force had been prolonged for many years.

During those years, the job of the US administration was not so easy, either. Ankara's southeast and terrorism policies were harshly criticized in the US Congress in a way that would justify the claims of those who were against the Poised Hammer Force in Turkey. The Washington administration was accused of closing its eyes to Turkey's operations against the PKK. In the discussion in Congress in March 1994, Senator Deconcini insisted that Turkish government's military measures against the Kurdish issue did not have any other effect but increase tension even more.<sup>57</sup> In contrast to the White House, the US Congress saw the Kurdish and the human rights issues as a whole and considered PKK terrorism in this respect. Similarly, it had difficulty in understanding how the US administration could be in a position of trying to protect the northern Iraqi Kurds from the Saddam Hussein regime, while at the same time closing its eyes to Turkey's operations against the PKK in southeast Turkey.<sup>58</sup> According to Carol Migdolowitz, one

---

<sup>55</sup> In his book named ABD'nin Kürt Kartı (İstanbul: Otopsi yay., 1993, p.301), Turan Yavuz claims that in February 1992, it was revealed by journalist Muammer Yaşar Bostancı that under the name of humanitarian aid, the US transferred through Turkey military munitions, mainly heavy arms, to the Kurds in the region. However the US soon denied this claim.

<sup>56</sup> Adnan Akfırat, Eşref Bitlis Suikasti, İstanbul: Kaynak Yay., November 1997, p.79.

<sup>57</sup> "Turkish Democracy Imperilled," Congressional Records: March 2, 1994, (Congressional Record Online via GPO Access , (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/index.html>))

<sup>58</sup> Oran, *ibid.*, p.269.

---

of the US administration's Middle East experts at that time, this was because Washington was sending different signals to the Turkish state. Migdolowitz claimed that the US did not have any policy directly towards Turkey's southeast. On the contrary, it had separate policies of "terrorism," "human rights," "democracy" and "supporting Turkey as an ally." And "these different policies were sending mixed signals to Turkey."<sup>59</sup> As a matter of fact, while on the one hand Turkey's operations against the PKK were being supported, on the other hand, Turkish security forces were being very much criticized because of their violations of human rights, which were a by-product of their fight against terrorism.

In June 1994, the US Congress decided to add the decision of making military aid to Turkey the condition of "not to be used against the international law." The Senate was against cutting of the whole aid to Turkey; instead of this, it found it sufficient to put the condition of 'US military munitions not to be used against the civilians.'<sup>60</sup> However the Congress bound the 10 percent of the aid to Turkey's improvement on the human rights and Cyprus issues and President Clinton approved that in August 1994. After these decisions, the Turkish Parliament engaged in extensive debate, once coming to the point of refusing the entire aid that would come from the US. However, strategic calculations worked well; "the damage control" policy of Turkish Foreign Affairs was once more put into practice, with the government choosing "mutual proportionality." It thereby refused only that 10 percent of the aid, which was tied to a condition.<sup>61</sup> Like Turkey, the US too was in favor of moderation and pragmatism in its relations with Turkey. Placing a condition on only 10 percent of the aid reflected that despite the efforts being made by lobby groups. The Washington administration was trying to form a proportional but not an excessive enforcement for Turkey.

---

<sup>59</sup> Migdalowitz, *ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>60</sup> Migdalowitz, "Turkey's Military Offensive in Northern Iraq," CRS Report for Congress, 95-487, April 13, 1995, p.6.

<sup>61</sup> Aykan, Turkish Perspectives on Turkish-US Relations Concerning Persian Gulf Security in the Post-Cold War Era:1989-1995, *The Middle East Journal*, 50:3, 1996, p.355.

---

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

Despite continuing outside reactions, on 20 March 1995, Turkey once more ventured to make a broad cross-border operation, in which 35 thousand Turkish troops were used. This was soon after the breakdown of the power-sharing agreement between the KDP and PUK of northern Iraq and the emergence of cooperation between the PKK and the PUK leaders.<sup>62</sup> Although Turkey had previously informed the US, France and Britain about its operation and these countries halted the Provide Comfort flights during its first days, they were taken aback by the magnitude of the operation. As operation proceeded, international condemnation grew. However, the US's reaction was again relatively softer than the other Western countries. President Clinton expressed the view that the PKK threat against Turkey's security necessitated the operation but asked for utmost attention to protect the civilians. The US generally did react harshly against such operations as long as they were for short periods.<sup>63</sup> That's why, when the operation was prolonged, the US Secretary of State Warren Christopher asked the Turkish officials to keep their promise on the scope and the duration of the operation and keep it from causing more problems.<sup>64</sup>

However, this did not mean that behind the scenes everything was peaceful in Washington. Congress was again strongly criticizing the administration's lack of a strong reaction against the Turkish operation, or in their words "the Turkish invasion of northern Iraq." Regarding that, the most important trump held by the US Congress had to do with arms sales," a subject that was very important for the Turkish Armed Forces in its fight against the PKK, and also the issues of military and economic aid. In the 1990s, 80 percent of the Turkey's arms inventory was US made.<sup>65</sup> Although the US administration tried to keep the tensions with Turkey to a minimum, the US Congress engaged in intense debate that tied Turkey's human rights records to US arms sales. Similar to the European, especially the German, reactions, the US Congress, too, claimed that Turkey was using the arms given to it

---

<sup>62</sup> Migdalowitz, "Turkey's Military Offensive in Northern Iraq," p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> Kirişçi, Winrow, *ibid.*, p.181.

<sup>64</sup> Migdalowitz, "Turkey's Military Offensive in Northern Iraq," p.6.

<sup>65</sup> Oran, *ibid.*, p.318

for purposes beyond intended aims; in other words, against Kurdish civilians. In a discussion on 22 September 1995, Senator Leahy claimed that American military munitions were routinely being used to destroy Kurdish villages and underlined his expectation of an improvement in Turkey's southeast in terms of human rights.<sup>66</sup> The so-called "invasion" of northern Iraq by the Turkish troops in March 1995 made the US congressmen believe that Turkey was still insisting on a military solution to the Kurdish problem rather than on developing a peaceful one. In this respect, "village evacuations and burnings, disappearances, mystery murders and tortures were often given as Turkey's routine practices of human rights abuse."<sup>67</sup>

As a matter of fact, in a report prepared on 1 June 1995, although it was said that "In its fight against the PKK, Turkey has been acting according to a military strategy, mainly based on emptying or the destruction of villages and ... this resulted by human rights violations," it was also added that Turkey had the right of self-defense to establish its domestic security and for that it could use the US weapons in its fight against the PKK. The report was also expressed that the US Department of State did not have evidence proving that American weapons were being used in tortures and executions without any trial.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, there was another point to underline. Turkey was very much determined to be successful in its struggle with the PKK. Being strongly tied to the US technology in military means, it was trying to look for a way to overcome any possible arms embargo from Washington. While a serious war was being experienced in the southeast, the Turkish media was announcing that the Turkish General Staff was bargaining to buy weapons from the countries like Russia, China, South Korea and Chili. Such activities were in a way a message of Turkey to tell its determination to fight against terrorism. This of course helped the US administration resist the pressures coming from inside and outside and continue its support for Turkey. On 28 November 1995, when the Human Rights Watch protested the US's sale of 120 tactical missiles to Turkey, US Department of

---

<sup>66</sup> Congress Reports, Vol.141, No. 149, 14128, ([www.lexis.com](http://www.lexis.com)).

<sup>67</sup> For US Country Reports on Human Rights, see: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/>

<sup>68</sup> Oran, *ibid.*, p. 286.

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

Defense, Pentagon rejected the claim that this system could be used against Kurds in the Southeast and defended the idea that Turkey actually needed these weapons, especially because of its "evil neighbors," Iran and Iraq.

Despite anti-Turkish attitudes in the Congress, those who came to power in the US have always acted with a belief that Turkey is not a country that can easily be sacrificed. It was Turkey's geopolitical position which gave shape to the active policies of the US. The region where Turkey is located is very important for the macro-policies of the US. War in Chechnya, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, perceptions of threat from Iran and Syria, the Middle East Peace Process and the Cyprus issue are subjects that the US dwells upon out of necessity.<sup>69</sup> In a region where all these issues coincide with each other, being able to have sound relations with Turkey is beneficial to the US. That's why the US has always tried to escape from the dilemma between its administration and Congress in order not to affect its relations with Turkey negatively.

Certainly, Turkey, too, has had valid reasons to have balanced relations with this superpower. As much as having political and strategic reasons, Turkish-American relations have also had a strong economic dimension and it is this multi-dimensional character that demands refraining from sudden and severe reactions. With regard to that, the US administration has always found a way of softening Congress' reactions against Turkey. In the words of the then-Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, John Shattuck, "[in the second half of the 1990s, Turkey presented a 'bad news-good news scenario.' The bad news was that significant human rights abuses were taking place in Turkey, while the good news was that thanks to the vibrancy of Turkey's civil society and through its basic commitment to democratic processes, these issues [of human rights abuses] had begun to be debated and there seemed to be a possibility of meaningful change."<sup>70</sup> With this hope for change, the US, which considered the PKK terrorism as a part of Turkey's Kurdish problem,

---

<sup>69</sup> Migdolovitz, "Turkey's Military Offensive in Northern Iraq," p.5.

<sup>70</sup> "Shattuck Warns Turks Force Alone will Not Beat Terrorists," USIA Wireless File, 20 September 1995.

encouraged Ankara to solve its Kurdish problem through democratic means. What has been the key to persuade Turkey to make a fresh start on solving its PKK issue, thus the Kurdish problem, was the capture of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan.

### *3) The Capture of Abdullah Öcalan*

Today, it is widely known that the US had a very important role in Turkey's capture of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, who had given terrorist orders against Turkey from the safe heaven he found in Syria since 1989.<sup>71</sup> It is believed that in September 1998, Washington was behind Turkey's threatening the use of force against Syria in order to persuade Damascus to deport Öcalan. The US President Bill Clinton had sent a harsh message to President Hafez al-Assad of Syria during the crisis between Ankara and Damascus, saying "cut all your relations with separatist terrorist PKK."<sup>72</sup> According to Baskin Oran, the PKK had began to weaken by the mid-1990s; this made the US increase its support to Turkey. By helping Turkey capture Öcalan, it also gained leverage against Germany and France, which were believed to have the intention of using the PKK against Washington in the Middle East. Oran also claims that the PKK was in a state of breaking the order that the US had been trying to establish in northern Iraq since 1997, and for that reason, it was receiving support from the Saddam Hussein regime.<sup>73</sup> These factors were all influential in the US decision to eliminate Öcalan. At that time, the Clinton administration being in favor of undertaking a more efficient initiative in the Middle East Peace Process also eased Turkey's job to demoralize the PKK by capturing its leader.

In his statement when Öcalan was captured in Italy in November 1998, US State Department Spokesman James Rubin noted that they welcomed the capture of Öcalan as an important step in the struggle against global terrorism. "We want

---

<sup>71</sup> "Turkey's Kurds - Down But Far from Out," *The Economist*, 30 July 1998.

<sup>72</sup> Anadolu Agency, News in English, 18 Nov. 1998 (<http://www.hri.org/news/turkey/anadolu/1998/98-11-18.anadolu.html>)

<sup>73</sup> Oran, *ibid.*, p. 297.

---



**PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS**

---

Öcalan to be extradited and brought to justice," he said. Although it was not officially declared, news of those days was claiming that the US was very influential on increasing the pressure on international community not to shelter the PKK leader.<sup>74</sup> One of these pieces of news claimed that the CIA supported the operation in Kenya on 17 February 1999 after recommending Turkey that Öcalan must have a fair trial and not get capital punishment.<sup>75</sup> Similarly when Öcalan was brought to Turkey, Milliyet newspaper pointed out that the Clinton Administration had evaluated Abdullah Öcalan's enforced return as an important diplomatic success and an opportunity to begin diplomatic reforms in Turkey. Claiming that Washington had requested Turkey to bring Öcalan to trial and called PKK terrorists to abandon their terrorist activities, Milliyet also wrote that the US administration wanted Turkey to take advantage of her diplomatic success in solving the Kurdish issue and begin economic and social reforms in the southeastern region.<sup>76</sup>

This once more put forward the US expectation of Turkey to solve the Kurdish problem through democratic measures. By handing over Öcalan, the US actually wanted to push Turkey for reforms to neutralize the PKK and make it gain a more political aspect that would finally end Turkey's Kurdish problem. Thus, it increased its pressure on Turkey to expand the cultural and political rights of the Kurds in Turkey. While it was asking for ending of the state of emergency, it gave priority to the suggestions on the economic development of the southeast. The real intention of the US was actually to keep Turkey nearby as one of its most important allies in the region and to be able to take Turkey's possible military practices, which may negatively affect the regional stability, under control.

This policy, which is valid even today, necessitated Turkey's being kept away

---

<sup>74</sup> Tim Weiner, "U.S. Played Key Role in Capture of Kurd Rebel, Officials Say," New York Times, 20 February 1999. Also see: İsmet Berkan, "Apo Nasıl Yakalandı?," Radikal, 17 February 1999.

<sup>75</sup> Murat Yetkin, "137 Fırtınalı Gün...(15)," Radikal, 23 August.2004.

<sup>76</sup> "US Welcomes Ocalan Detention," Directorate General of Press and Information Office of the Prime Minister, Turkish Press Review, 17 February 1999

(<http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/CHR/ING99/02/99X02X17.HTM#%203>).

---

from northern Iraq. Seeing Turkey as an element of threat or instability against some of its interests in the region, the US, in a way, wanted to wipe the PKK off the region and thus eliminated any more interference of Turkey in northern Iraq. As it was expected, after the arrest of Öcalan in Kenya, the PKK really went into a state of chaos and lost strength; thus, for a while it stopped being a very intense element of threat against Turkey's interests. In August 1999, Öcalan launched a "peace offensive," requesting a dialogue with Ankara and calling on PKK militants to end the armed struggle against Turkey and withdraw from Turkish territory. The PKK's political wing quickly expressed support for the move, and press reports indicated that several hundred militants had left Turkey by October.<sup>77</sup> However, this moderate atmosphere did not continue for a long time. Despite the leadership disputes and breaking into a couple of pieces<sup>78</sup>, the PKK has continued its attacks against Turkey and managed to stay at the top of Ankara's threat perceptions. What Ankara used as an important opportunity to bring this danger in front of the eyes of the world public opinion was the biggest terrorist attack the history has ever witnessed.

#### *4) September 11 Events and the US War against Terrorism*

On 11 September 2001, the US had been the subject of the most comprehensive and organized attack of international terrorism.<sup>79</sup> Saying "This is not the war of the US only," US President George W. Bush called all the other nations, which believe in democracy, to be with the US in its war against terrorism.<sup>80</sup> And for the first time in its history and less than 24 hours after the attacks, NATO invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty - its collective defense clause - declaring the attack against

<sup>77</sup> Patterns of Global Terrorism Report 1999.

<sup>78</sup> "PKK'da Liderlik Savaşları," Radikal, 17 February 1999.

<sup>79</sup> In his article "September 11: A New Type of Terrorism," Murat Karagöz writes: "September 11 was in many ways unique. It encompasses particular elements from all types of terrorism. Classical terrorism might fall short of describing September 11." Therefore Karagoz considers September 11 a new type of terrorism that is with radical religious motivations, aims to produce casualties on massive scale and is indiscriminate in selecting targets. Murat Karagöz, "September 11: A New type of Terrorism," Perceptions, Vol. VII, No.3, September- November 2002, p.164.

<sup>80</sup> "Terrorism: Threat Assessment, Countermeasures and Policy," Electronic Journal of the U.S. Department of State, Preface, Volume 6, Number 3, November 2001.

**PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS**

---

the US to be an attack against all NATO members.<sup>81</sup> Turkey was one of the first countries which joined the global coalition formed to fight against terrorism. In the post-September 11 atmosphere, Turkey, which has a long history of fighting against terrorism, has actually thought that it could find an opportunity to once more tell the world its rightfulness in fighting against the PKK terrorism. After the September 11 events, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer said: "We have always considered terrorism as a crime committed against the humanity. That's why, in our fight against terrorism, on every platform, we have mentioned the necessity of strengthening the international cooperation. The [September 11] incident that was experienced yesterday, once more showed how true our opinion is. I guess, since yesterday, the approach of the Western countries, too, has changed against terrorism." Like Sezer, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, too, was reproaching the European countries, while underlining the support that the US had given Turkey for many years. "The US has always approached our fight against terrorism with understanding," said Ecevit and added: "But some of our allies did not show the necessary understanding on this issue. I hope they will be acting more understandingly after now."<sup>82</sup>

Turkey, which has made an important effort to strengthen the international support on fighting against terrorism for years, preferred to give a positive response to the US related to its demands on Afghanistan. As much as fulfilling the requirements of an alliance, while calling this a "moral debt,"<sup>83</sup> Turkey also aimed to contribute to the establishment of a common approach on "terrorism," which has been one of its most important problems. In this respect, Ankara has first of all gave per-

---

<sup>81</sup> "NATO'dan Tam Destek," *Hürriyet*, 12 September 2001. Also see:

<http://www.nato.int/issues/terrorism/index.html>

<sup>82</sup> "Müttefiklerimiz terörizm konusunda anlayışsız," *Hürriyet*, 12 Eylül 2001.

<sup>83</sup> In a speech he made to the Turkish Parliament, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit said that right after the September 11 attacks, they have told the US that they are with them and this was first of all Turkey's moral debt to the US as it had always supported Turkey in its fight against terrorism while most of the other Western allies left Turkey alone. However, Ecevit also said that this was not only about paying a debt, but also using of a big opportunity to rescue Turkey from the trouble of terrorism. *Dışişleri Güncesi* (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Publication), 10 October 2001. ([www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr))

---

mission to all American and coalition member countries' planes to use the Turkish air space in frame of the Operation "Enduring Freedom" against the Taliban forces in Afghanistan. In addition, to have a more concrete contribution to the international fight against terrorism, it has sent military personnel to the CENTCOM [United States Central Command] headquarters, where this operation was directed, provided troops to Afghanistan<sup>84</sup> and later took the commandership of ISAF [International Security Assistance Force], which is the first NATO mission outside the Euro-Atlantic area. Benefiting from the atmosphere of international solidarity against terrorism, Turkey continued to look for extra support on its fight against the PKK. In a positive atmosphere created by the UN Security Council resolution 1373 on fighting against international terrorism, by May 2002, the EU decided to include the PKK to its list of terrorist organizations. This step became more meaningful on 2 April 2004, when the EU added in its terrorist organizations list the new names of the PKK, which was first changed to KADEK [Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress] in April 2002 and then to Kongra-Gel [Kurdistan People's Congress] in October 2003.<sup>85</sup>

However, what Turkey expected from Europe against the PKK has never been equal to what it expected from the US. For Turkey, the European countries, especially those, where the PKK members are mainly settled, accepting the PKK as a terrorist organization, thus banning its activities and controlling its monetary resources would be sufficient steps to show their respect for Turkey's fight against terrorism. But this was not the case for the US. Especially after the US declaration of war against Iraq and toppling of Saddam Hussein, Turkey automatically considered Washington as an authority that had the control of the country and thus the power to neutralize the PKK entity in northern Iraq. Worrying that the chaotic atmosphere in Iraq might strengthen the PKK and let it wage new attacks against Turkey, Ankara has begun asking Washington to take more concrete steps to help Turkey to end this problem. Turkey's prior demand from the US was the dissolving

<sup>84</sup> "Asker Gndermeye Jet Onay," Radikal, 2 November 2001.

<sup>85</sup> [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA\\_tr/DisPolitika/AnaKonular/Terrorizm/UluslararasiDayanismaninSaglanmasi.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA_tr/DisPolitika/AnaKonular/Terrorizm/UluslararasiDayanismaninSaglanmasi.htm)

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

of the PKK camps in northern Iraq, especially on Kandil Mountain, and extradition of the PKK leaders settled there to Turkey. Of course a Turkish military operation against northern Iraq would be the other alternative that Ankara has ventured. However, once again both countries priorities appeared to be different. The Bush administration could not be able to achieve "a quick victory" in Iraq, but on the contrary, found itself almost in a quagmire. This complex situation easily made the US officials refuse Turkey's demands related to the PKK, saying they did not have enough power to focus on the PKK while their troops were already in a difficult position.<sup>86</sup> Although they were sharing the same definition of "terrorism," even after the September 11 events, this did not create a common act between Turkey and the US against the PKK. The Turkish public was once more questioning the real intentions of the US towards Turkey.

In an article he wrote on 23 January 2003, journalist Can Dündar of *Milliyet* claimed that the US officers were regularly meeting with the PKK members in northern Iraq. Quoting from *Milliyet* correspondent Namık Durukan, Dündar also wrote about a letter, in which the PKK Presidential Council member Mustafa Karasu offered Washington the PKK support in its attack against Iraq.<sup>87</sup> The US officials have denied this news, but news claiming that the US was cooperating with the PKK and thus trying to keep Turkey out of northern Iraq has continued to be on the agenda for a long time.

The situation with the northern Iraqi Kurds was not comfortable either. On the one hand, the US was in need of Turkey's military support in its war against Iraq; but on the other hand, it did not want to upset its northern Iraqi Kurdish allies who do not want to see any Turkish troops in the region, even with peaceful aims. In October 2003, whether Turkey would take part in a stability force for Iraq appeared to be strictly tied to the PKK issue. It was as if Ankara was trying to underline that the stability of Iraq was the US's and the neutralization of the PKK was Turkey's

---

<sup>86</sup> Mehmet Ali Birand, "Kuzey Irak'taki PKK Artık Gündemde Değil," *Posta*, 5 May 2003.

<sup>87</sup> Can Dündar, "Bağdaş Kuramayan Bu Adam Kim?," *Milliyet*, 23 January 2003.

number one priority; thus, Turkey was ready to provide troops while waiting to receive concrete support in return to end the rising PKK terrorism inside its borders. On 2 October 2003, the US and Turkish delegations declared that they agreed on the discharging of the PKK from northern Iraq. For a long time, Turkey was expecting such a serious step from the US on the PKK issue and it seemed that an agreement was finally achieved. This of course caused claims that the US was using the PKK card to see Turkey in the Iraq stability force.<sup>88</sup> However, although the government could get a parliamentary approval on 7 October 2003 to send Turkish troops to Iraq, the temporary Iraqi Administration Council, where the Kurds were forming the majority, announced that they did not want any Turkish troops in Iraq. KDP leader Barzani, who talked to the Arab League, said they were against the deployment of any Turkish or other regional powers' troops in Iraq. The Arab League supported Barzani's views.<sup>89</sup> The US, which thought that the possibility of a clash between Turks and Kurds is not so far away, found a polite way of refusing the deployment of Turkish troops in Iraq. By the end of the first week of November 2003, after a phone call between US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, the AKP [Justice and Development Party] government announced that it decided not to use the authority it got from the parliament on providing troops for Iraq.<sup>90</sup>

It was very much obvious that Washington did not want a new instability in the already chaotic atmosphere of Iraq. For Washington, the PKK threat was not as vital as it was for Ankara. Or, more truly, it was not a threat at all for Washington under these circumstances. Despite Turkish pressures, the only reason for it to take measures against the PKK could be its possibility of creating more chaos for northern Iraq and thus for Iraq as a whole. The US aimed to get rid of the PKK by finding a suitable solution. So, for this, instead of neutralizing the PKK with an urgent mili-

---

<sup>88</sup> "Eğrisi Doğrusu," CNN Türk, 29 August 2003.

<sup>89</sup> "Barzani'den Türk Askeri Karşısı Kampanya," Hürriyet, 12 October 2003.

<sup>90</sup> "Hükümet Irak'a Asker Göndermeyecek," Hürriyet, 7 November 2003. Also see: "Washington'a Sitem," Radikal, 09 November 2003.

**PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS**

---

tary operation that Turkey asked for, Washington was in favor of a diplomatic way in which it could persuade both Turkey and the PKK to reach a peaceful solution. That is why the US gave priority to the "Reinstatement into Society Law," which had already been put into force in Turkey on 6 August 2003. It said that it would first of all wait for the deadline which was given to the PKK [and also other terrorist organizations'] militants to benefit from this new law. It then put forward the difficulty of the winter conditions in the region and finally used "changing of the threat structure of the organization" as its excuses not to act severely against the PKK.<sup>91</sup> This way of behavior, in which the US was clearly gaining time to decide what else could be done on the PKK issue, made Foreign Minister Gül say: "We cannot trust anyone 100 % on this issue. We will not give up this fight by relying on others."<sup>92</sup> News in the first months of 2004 revealed that the US was closely observing the period in which the PKK leadership cadre was breaking into pieces. It was claimed that a group of PKK's well-known names, such as Osman Öcalan and Nizamettin Taş, had accepted an American offer to dissolve the organization and continue their cause through political means instead of using weapons.<sup>93</sup> However, receiving the support of Abdullah Öcalan in prison, another group under the leadership of Murat Karayılan and Cemil Bayık preferred to keep the organization together and continue to apply violence. It was claimed that the decision of the PKK to continue via armed or a political struggle would determine the style of the US policy towards the PKK.<sup>94</sup> In June 2004, PKK [or with its new name Kongra-Gel] announced the ending of its 5 years-old unilateral ceasefire with Turkey.

Re-escalation of terrorist activities have again forced Turkey to look for a way to end this problem and have automatically increased pressure on Washington to fulfill its old promises. Considering the the increased level of the PKK activity as a threat to its national unity and territorial integrity, by the beginning of 2006, Turkey

---

<sup>91</sup> "Washington'dan PKK Çarkı," Cumhuriyet, 10 March 2004.

<sup>92</sup> "Kimseye Yüzde Yüz Güvenilmez," Cumhuriyet 10 March 2004.

<sup>93</sup> Ümit Sezgin, "ABD PKK'nin Dağılmasını Bekliyor," NTVMSNBC, 10 March 2004, ([www.ntvmsnbc.com](http://www.ntvmsnbc.com)).

<sup>94</sup> "ABD PKK'yı izliyor," Yeni Safak, 10 March 2004.

---

began deploying thousands of its troops at its border region with Iraq. Northern Iraqi Kurdish leader Barzani claimed that Turkish troops were again violating the Iraqi border. Washington administration saw how serious Turkey was, especially after Israel's military operation in Lebanon in pursuit of Hezbollah militants. Israel was openly violating the international law and the Bush administration was closing its eyes to that. This, and, of course, the rising number of terrorist attacks inside Turkey, provoked Turkey into signaling a possible cross-border operation against the PKK bases in northern Iraq.

Although Turkey signed a new "shared vision and structured dialogue" document with the US on 5 July 2005 to advance the Turkish-American strategic partnership, the relations of the two allies were again being tensed because of conflicting priorities. It was an important warning for the US when it learned that Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan gave a written order to the Turkish General Staff to do whatever is needed to end the PKK existence in Iraq, including a military operation.<sup>95</sup> The US seemed to realize that Turkey's continuing dissatisfaction on the PKK issue was turning into a security problem for Washington as well as long as nothing is done. That's why President Bush and Secretary of State Rice called the Turkish premier and foreign minister and said that the US understood the importance of the subject and offered cooperation.<sup>96</sup> On 15 August 2006, marking the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the commencing of the PKK violence, Washington called the PKK to stop its terrorist acts and lay down its arms.<sup>97</sup> And on 28 August 2006, the US administration came with a new opening and appointed retired General Joseph Ralston as the "US Special Envoy for Countering the PKK." With reasonable suspicion on what might be the real US intention behind this move, Turkey had to back the process by appointing retired General Edip Başer for the same post. However, the majority of the Turkish public still sees this US initiative as a new way of mak-

---

<sup>95</sup> Murat Yetkin, "PKK Kıskaca Nasıl Alındı? (1)," *Radikal*, 13 November 2006.

<sup>96</sup> "ABD Yönetimi Telefonda," *Sabah*, 23 July 2006.

<sup>97</sup> Vince Crawley, "U.S. Calls on Kurdish Group To Stop Terrorist Acts, Lay Down Arms," 15 August 2006, (<http://usinfo.state.gov>)



PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

ing Turkey wait. Although it seems that Washington has increased its pressure on the Iraqi administration to apply severer measures against the PKK<sup>98</sup>, as long as Turkey does not see a very concrete action either from Washington or from Baghdad administrations, the PKK problem will continue to have negative impacts on the Turkish-American partnership, whose being "strategic" is already a matter of discussion.<sup>99</sup>

*Conclusion and Future Prospects*

After September 11 events, which struck an unexpected blow at the American people's perception of security, President Bush told that their enemy was a radical network of terrorists and every government that supported them. With these words Bush established a direct connection between the terrorists and their supporters at the international level. As well-known American neo-conservative Norman Podhoretz underlined, "terrorists are now regarded as the irregular troops of the nation states that harbors and supports them."<sup>100</sup> With such an understanding, it becomes quite natural for Turkey to ask the US whether the current Iraqi administration too is considered among these states, as it takes no step to prevent harboring of the PKK militants on its territory.

Having different perceptions of threat and conflicting priorities in terms of its national interests, Turkey has a difficulty of persuading the US to take common measures against its number one threat, the PKK. One must not forget that the US is a global and Turkey is a regional power. Thus, in the words of Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, "the PKK is only one of thousands of problems of the US. But it is

---

<sup>98</sup> On 2 August 2006, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani announced that he order the closure of the PKK bureaus in Baghdad. Also Prime Minister of the Kurdish region Neçirvan Barzani asked PKK director Murat Karayılan not to organize any attacks against Turkey from northern Iraq. It was claimed that these moves were influential on PKK announcement of a new unilateral ceasefire. Murat Yetkin, "PKK Kıskaca Nasıl Alındı? (3)," *Radikal*, 15 November, 2006.

<sup>99</sup> In his statements, President Bush either does not mention the term of "strategic" or he prefers to use "strategic relations" or "strategic cooperation" while talking about Turkey.

<sup>100</sup> Norman Podhoretz, "Is the Bush Doctrine Dead?," *Commentary*, September 2006, p.18.

---

the number one threat of Turkey.”<sup>101</sup> Even though the PKK has once more announced a unilateral ceasefire by the end of September 2006 and seems to be in search for a democratic solution and dialogue, Turkey never forgets that it once aimed to found a separate Kurdish state and it can easily restart its armed attacks in pursuit of this aim. That’s why, for the Republic of Turkey, whose main aim is to protect its territorial integrity and national unity, no matter what its cost is, it is very important to make the US understand the necessity of the issue. However, as a global power, the US interest necessitates the continuation of its influence on as much wider area as possible by giving most of its attention to materializing its own interests. For it, rather than forming a direct threat, the PKK terrorist organization is necessary concerning to what extent it affects the materialization of these global US targets in the strategically important Gulf region. From that point of view, the PKK can take a place among the US’s prior threats if for example it threatens the stability of the de facto Kurdish entity in northern Iraq. From the very beginning, Turkey has considered all of the attempts leading to form a Kurdish state in northern Iraq as a threat against its national unity and territorial integrity. This has, of course, created suspicion in Turkey about the real intentions of the US. When these two threats, that is to say, the PKK and the supporters of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq come together, Turkey feels itself ready to take the most extreme measures to remove these threats which it perceives as a direct danger in front of its survival. Turkish government does not hesitate to signal even a military intervention to northern Iraq as long as it feels that its long-term ally, Washington, has left it alone with its own threat perceptions.

Bearing in mind Turkish reactions, after the bitter experience it had with Saddam Hussein in the past, what is still most important for the Bush administration is to form a stable Iraqi administration that it can have better relations with in the future. This will of course require, as well, the support of the northern Iraqi groups, which strictly want to keep Turkey out of the regional equation in order not to create any more tension in the region. The last thing the Bush administration

<sup>101</sup> Metehan Demir, "İşte Devletin 2. Gizli Planı: Teröristi İzole Et, Halkı Kazan" Sabah, 6 November 2006.

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

would want is to see Turkey interfering to northern Iraq in a way that would destabilize this land, which seems to be the only part the US could 'rescue' from the chaotic atmosphere of the war-torn country. However, as the PKK problem is quite often mixed with the Kurdish problem and as the Kurdish problem is very much internationalized, neither for Turkey nor for the US, it is possible to preserve the issue inside national borders.

Apparently, this did not mean that the US would totally ignore Turkey's problem of PKK terrorism. Turkey's stability is also very important for strategic interests of the US. Seeing this a part of the Kurdish question, Washington still looks for a democratic way out and wants to neutralize the PKK organization by trying to persuade them to leave arms and become politicized. In the past, the US Congress discussed for many times the possibility of making Turkish officials sit at the table with the PKK<sup>102</sup> and the US administration continued to underline the importance of non-military solutions.<sup>103</sup> US efforts to encourage the dissolution of the PKK organization and strengthen the democratic rights of various ethnic groups in Turkey are also part of this policy. Having abolished the death penalty and granted freedom of education and broadcast for the Kurds and other non-Turkic ethnicities, Turkey continued to take important steps in terms of turning itself into a Western democracy in frame of the EU harmonization process.<sup>104</sup> In the last couple of years, reforms have eased restrictions on freedom of speech and decreased torture and deaths in detention. However, although human rights activists accept that these are all good, they still believe that there is a long way to go to satisfy all the cultural and political aspirations of the Kurds. The implementation of the legal changes requires more than just making laws. Believing that it has done a lot to improve the

---

<sup>102</sup> "Turkey Must Accept Kurdish Peace Offer," Congress Records, Vol.145, No.80.

<sup>103</sup> For the US, instead of organizing a military operation against the PKK presence in northern Iraq, for example, cutting of the financial and moral support of the PKK in Europe or an amnesty for the PKK militants always come first. However this is far from satisfying Turkey. In 2004, after the US mentioning of 'non-military means' once more, Prime Minister strictly refused the idea and said this was totally away from persuading Turkey as it was not the way which the US used to fight against its own threat of terrorism. Aslı Aral, "Erdoğan'dan ABD'ye PKK Eleştirisi," VOAnews, 3 September, 2004.

<sup>104</sup> Karl Vick, "Turkey, Wooing EU, Passes Reforms," Washington Post, 20 June 2003.

---

Kurdish rights, Ankara, especially the military officials, find no other option to end the PKK issue other than applying severer military measures. Here they again separate the PKK issue from the Kurdish problem. At this point, Ankara and Washington continue to disagree on which "means" to use to end the PKK terrorism.<sup>105</sup> On the one hand, there is Turkey, which is in a hurry to stop the bloodshed and social tension inside its borders and that's why finds military means more helpful. On the other hand, there is the US which wants to use the time much more comfortably by applying non-military solutions, as there is no direct and urgent PKK threat against its interests. This outcome is mainly because both sides usually fail to understand each other's sensitivities and domestic constraints and as a result, begin viewing each other with suspicion.<sup>106</sup>

In such a fragile atmosphere, it is necessary for the politicians of both countries to pay extra attention not to allow their different foreign policy priorities to break the long-time Turkish-American alliance. Like different priorities, there will also be common interests. Here, the bottom line will be succeeding in minimizing the mutual dissatisfaction that is created by unsatisfied expectations. Turkey's PKK problem will continue to be an important matter of not only the Turkish-US relations but also the American domestic politics. Bush's possible failure in Iraq will automatically begin bringing the discussion of a possible division of this country into mind and it is for sure that such an outcome will have important effects on Turkey and its solution of the PKK problem.<sup>107</sup> While even some US politicians too are signaling that

---

<sup>105</sup> As Mehmet Dülger has pointed out "Turkey and the US do not have a difference of opinion that is based on essential principles related to the problematic issues but Turkey has a significant disagreement on the methods used by the US on some issues regarding Turkey." Mehmet Dülger, "Taking a closer look at Turkish-American relations," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol.4, No.1, Spring 2005, page 20.

<sup>106</sup> Henri J. Barkey, "Turkey's Kurdish Dilemma," *Survival*, vol. 35, no.4, Winter 1993, p.60.

<sup>107</sup> After gaining the majority in the last Congress elections, in an interview at Fox News television, Democrat's National Committee Chair Dean Howard surprisingly tied the increased PKK threat from northern Iraq to Republican President Bush's decision to invade Iraq. He also added: "The worst thing that can happen -- and this may well be the outcome -- is that Turkish troops end up in northern Iraq because the Kurds are fomenting terrorist violence in south eastern Turkey." Ümit Enginsoy, "Top Democrat Blames Bush for PKK Problem," *Turkish Daily News* online, 14 November 2006, (<http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?newsid=59066>).

---

**PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS**

---

Turkey may end up intervening northern Iraq because of its unmet security expectations, it is an urgent need for the US to apply concrete confidence building measures to improve its relations with Turkey. With regard to that, it is the time, which will really show if the latest US initiative of appointing special envoys to counter the PKK will work successfully. But as long as the Turkish politicians and public opinion continue to perceive this as another time-consuming tactic of Washington, the Turkish-American relations will at the end find itself into a deeper crisis that will have negative impacts on various other areas of Turkish-American cooperation.

## Bibliography

Ahmed, İ., "Terörizm: Onları ve Bizimki," Birikim,  
October 2001.

Akfırat, A., Eşref Bitlis Suikasti, İstanbul: Kaynak Yay.,  
November 1997.

Aral, A., "Erdoğan'dan ABD'ye PKK Eleştirisi," VOANews,  
3 September, 2004.

Athanassopoulou, E., "American-Turkish Relations since the End of the Cold War," Middle East Policy,  
Vol.8, Iss.3, Sep. 2001.

Aykan, M. B., "Turkish Perspectives on Turkish-US Relations Concerning Persian Gulf Security in the Post-Cold War Era:1989-1995," The Middle East Journal, 50:3, 1996.

Aykan, M. B., "The Turkish-Syrian Crisis of October 1998:A Turkish View," Middle East Policy, Vol. VI,  
No.4, June 1999.

Ayın Tarihi, 1 October 1992

Ayın Tarihi, 19 November 1992.

Ayın Tarihi, 10 May 1994.

Barkey, H. J., "Turkey's Kurdish Dilemma," Survival, vol. 35, no.4,  
Winter 1993.

Berkan, İ., "Apo Nasıl Yakalandı?," Radikal, 17 February 1999.

Bila, F., Sivil Darbe Girişimi ve Ankara'da Irak Savaşları,  
Ankara: Ümit yay., 2003.

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

Bilge Criss, N., "The Nature of PKK Terrorism in Turkey," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 18, 1995.

Birand, M. A., "Kuzey Irak'taki PKK Artık Gündemde Değil,"  
Posta, 5 May 2003.

Crawley, V., "U.S. Calls on Kurdish Group To Stop Terrorist Acts, Lay Down Arms," 15 August 2006,  
<http://usinfo.state.gov>

Demir, M., "İşte Devletin 2. Gizli Planı: Teröristi İzole Et, Halkı Kazan," *Sabah*, 6 Nov. 2006.

Dışişleri Güncesi, 22 February 1999 ([www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr))

Dışişleri Güncesi, 21 September 2001.

Dışişleri Güncesi , 10 October 2001.

Dülger, M., "Taking a closer look at Turkish-American relations" , *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol.4, No.1, Spring 2005.

Dündar, C., "Bağdaş Kuramayan Bu Adam Kim?,"  
*Milliyet*, 23 January 2003.

Directorate General of Press and Information Office of the Prime Minister, "US Welcomes Ocalan Detention," *Turkish Press Review*, 17 February 1999 (<http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/CHR/ING99/02/99X02X17.HTM#%203>).

Electronic Journal of the U.S. Department of State, "Terrorism: Threat Assessment, Countermeasures and Policy," Preface, Volume 6, Number 3, November 2001.

Enginsoy, Ü., "Top Democrat Blames Bush for PKK Problem," *Turkish Daily News online*, 14 Nov.2006.

Fukuyama, F., "The End of the History?," The National Interest, Summer 1989.

Ganor, B., "Is One Man's Terrorist another Man's Freedom Fighter?," (<http://www.ict.org.il/articles/define.htm>).

Hook, S., and John Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since WW II, Fifteenth Ed., CQ Press, August 2000,

İdiz, S., "Erdogan'dan Myers'a Yanıt: K. Irak'a Gerekirse Sormadan Gireriz," Milliyet, 20 July 2006.

Kandemir, N., "Turkish-American Relations - Past and Future," Turkish Policy Quarterly, Vol. 4, No.1, Spring 2005.

Karagöz, M., "September 11: A New Type of Terrorism Perceptions, Vol VII, No.3, Sept- Nov. 2002

Keesing's 1992, (39163).

Keesing's, July 91, (38357).

Keesing's 1992, (39213).

Keltz, L. B., (Exec.Edi.), Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy, 2nd Edition, Vol. 3, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002.

Kirişçi, K., "Huzur mu, Huzursuzluk mu: Çekiç Güç ve Türk Dış Politikası," Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.),

Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi, İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 1994.

Kirişçi, K., and Gareth Winrow, Kürt Sorunu Kökeni ve Gelişimi, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1997.

Kramer, H., Avrupa ve Amerika Karşısında Değişen Türkiye, İstanbul: Timaş Yay.,2001.

---



**PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS**

---

Migdalowitz, C., "Turkey's Kurdish Imbroglia and US Policy," CRS Report for Congress, 18 March 1994.

Migdalowitz, C., "Turkey's Military Offensive in Northern Iraq," CRS Report for Congress, 95-487, April 13, 1995.

Oran, B., Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, (Cilt II: 1980-2001) İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2001.

Park, B., "Strategic Location, Political Dislocation: Turkey, the United States and Northern Iraq," MERIA Journal, Vol.7, No. 2, June 2003.

Patterns of Global Terrorism Report for 1992 , " April 1993,  
(<http://www.mipt.org/Patterns-of-Global-Terrorism.asp>)

Patterns of Global Terrorism Report for 1999.

Patterns of Global Terrorism Report for 2001.

Press Statement by the US Department of State on 28 August 2006  
(<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/71563.htm>)

Podhoretz, N., "Is the Bush Doctrine Dead?," Commentary,  
September 2006, p.18.

Roper, J., "Shaping Strategy Without the Threat," Adelphi Paper 257, (London: Brassey's, for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Winter 1990/91, part 2.

Sezgin, Ü., "ABD PKK'nin Dağılmasını Bekliyor," NTVMSNBC,  
10 March 2004.

Taşpınar, Ö., "The Anatomy of Anti-Americanism in Turkey," article prepared for the Brookings Institution, 16 November 2005  
<http://www.brookings.edu/views/articles/fellows/taspinar20051116.htm>

Taşpınar, Ö. "Türkiye ile ABD arasındaki Sorunların Düzeltilmesi Kolay Değil," Radikal, 2 October 2006.

Uluç, D., "Rumsfeld Kuzey Cephesini Unutamıyor,"  
HürriyetUS, 20 February 2006

US Congress Records, 13 November 1993, Congressional Record Online via  
GPO Access,  
(<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/index.html>)

US Congress Records, "Turkey Must Accept Kurdish Peace Offer,"  
Vol.145, No.80.

US Congress Records, Vol.141, No. 149, 14128

US Congress Records: March 2, 1994

Vick, K., "Turkey, Wooing EU, Passes Reforms," Washington Post,  
20 June 2003.

Weiner, T., "U.S. Played Key Role in Capture of Kurd Rebel, Officials Say,"  
New York Times, 20 February 1999

Yavuz, T., ABD'nin Kürt Kartı, İstanbul: Otopsi yay., 1993.

Yetkin, M., "137 Fırtınalı Gün...(15)," Radikal, 23 August.2004.

Yetkin, M., "PKK Kıskaca Nasıl Alındı? (1)," Radikal, 13 November 2006

Yetkin, M., "PKK Kıskaca Nasıl Alındı? (3)," Radikal, 15 November, 2006.

USIA Wireless File, 20 September 1995

BBC World Service, 19 January 2005

CNN Türk, "Eğrisi Doğrusu," 29 August 2003

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT:  
THE PKK ISSUE IN TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

---

The Economist, 30 July 1998.

Cumhuriyet, 10 March 2004

Hürriyet, 12 Eylül 2001

Hürriyet, 12 October 2003.

Hürriyet, 7 November 2003

Radikal, 17 February 1999

Radikal, 2 November 2001

Radikal, 26 September 2006

Radikal, 09 November 2003

Radikal, 9 September 2006.

Sabah, 7 February 2005

Sabah, 23 July 2006

Vatan, 25 March 2006

Yeni Safak, 10 March 2004

\*  
\* \*