



TURKISH- AMERICAN RELATIONS

*Past, Present
and Future*

Editors

MUSTAFA AYDIN and ÇAĞRI ERHAN

Foreword by **Norman Stone**

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Foreword

This collection of essays, elegantly introduced by Mustafa Aydın, bears upon an important subject. For over fifty years, the Turkish-American alliance has been an element of great strength in a part of the world notorious for trouble-making. For all the troubles that occupy headlines – earthquakes, military coups, financial crises – Turkey can count as a considerable success-story. The proper comparison is with Russia, also a one-time great empire on the marches of the West. In 1923, after both the USSR and the Turkish Republic were established, Russia was far ahead of Turkey – she counted as the fourth-largest economy in the world. The Ottoman Empire had become a by-word for backwardness, over which, in chanceries, grave heads shook. Now, just to take what must be the most serious statistic of all, the average life-span in Turkey is, at nearly seventy for men, ten years ahead of Russia's, and Turkey's foreign trade, without raw materials to speak of, is two-thirds of the Russian figure. Something has worked, and the American connection is an important part of that story.

One reason has been the effects of the returning Turkish students from studies in the West. Upon their return, they take their part in the various institutions, with ripple-effect, to develop a respected existence no longer dependent upon their foreign mentors. In this volume, we have the product of some of them, graduates for the greater part of senior places in Britain or the United States. The papers were originally presented at a conference in Ankara, attended by one of the American doyens of the subject, George Harris, who has been studying modern Turkey since the late 1950s (when, as he has told the writer, he used to go and visit Kurdish tribal chiefs and have to be very careful because, sometimes, scorpions dropped off the roof). The focus is on political science, as applied to Turkish-American relations, and of course the

scope has to be very wide indeed. An interesting curio begins the collection, the early American discovery of the Ottoman Empire, via attempts to control North African pirates' raids upon American shipping. In the late nineteenth century, as another remarkable historical essay explains, the Turkish image in America began to darken. Liberal, Protestant Europe began to suppose that God has put an ace up its sleeve. 'The Turk' had the rag cards. Gladstone famously ranted in the late 1878s on 'the Bulgarian Horrors', and gave liberal northern Europe a *frisson* of self-righteous fist-clenching. As it happens, more 'Turks' were killed than Bulgarians, and, as Justin McCarthy, another American doyen, has famously noted (*Death and Exile*, 1999), much of the population of modern Anatolia – in the 1930s, half of the town population – descends from the millions of innocents who fled from the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Crimea, Crete. Each had its memory of atrocities, but they had the dignity not to carry their grievances before western parliamentary assemblies or, as in France, to muzzle historians by law, although the horrors inflicted upon the Turkish (more accurately, Moslem) populations at that time were at least as severe as anything suffered by Christians.

Still, as another essayist here explains, modern Turkey is at a disadvantage when it comes to lobbying in the United States and public relations generally. The Greek lobby has been vastly more effective. Take, for instance, Cyprus. The facts of the matter are not really in dispute. In 1960, the Turkish minority (one-fifth) had built-in constitutional safeguards. By 1963, nationalist Greeks were trying to dismantle these, and used physical force rather nastily – a process documented, with contempt, by any journalist who saw it. In 1974, Turkey intervened, as, through international treaty, it had every right to do. The local Turks were saved, and set up their own state in the northern third of the island. Henry Kissinger, at the time US Secretary of State, begged the Greeks to be accommodating, to play a long game. They did not. The lobby went to work, and condemned the Turks. The United Nations in its dismal Waldheim era went on to rule against Turkey. Northern Cyprus went embargoed, unrecognized; 'Europe' was wheeled on to grant the government of southern Cyprus legitimacy. One day there will be a good examination question: if East Timor, why not North Cyprus? It is a very good instance of public relations being properly handled by the side with the weak case. This often happens. We shall see what the outcome is: a united Cyprus, as in the official Europeans' 'current line' in which Turks and Greeks, who have grown entirely apart over the past generation, compose their differences to the sound of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* or, more likely, 'inter-communal strife' at the first rock concert or football match.

But Turkey is not North Cyprus: she matters. The other essays here discuss aspects of this. There is Central Asia, now, once again, object of 'the Great Game', and with unknown resources of energy, in which China also takes an interest. Here, Turkey, with a cultural and now, increasingly, an economic presence, has part to play. There is the Caucasus, Russia's very tender spot. There is the Middle East. There is the possibility of Turkey in Europe – a cause that the Americans have backed, in the teeth of resistance from Europeans, particularly Germans, who fear the competition and who may also see the Turks as hopelessly alien. All of these subjects are of great importance to the modern world, and the authors of the essays on them can be recommended, as can the book as a whole. Turkish-American relations have in the main been a happy story, though there have been unhappy moments. One such is with us. In March 2003, just before the American invasion of Iraq, the Turkish parliament failed to grant American troops the right to cross Turkish territory and set up a northern front. This surprised the world. Maybe it should not have been so surprised. Turkey, partly because of her link with the West, now has a functioning parliament that does not necessarily do what it is told. It may also have misunderstood its own interests: friends were alienated, with consequences not yet foreseen. But, a working parliament, standing up for itself in defiance of its major ally; is there any greater tribute to the beneficial impact of the United States, in the end, than that?

Professor Norman Stone
September 2003

'This is a most welcome volume covering diachronically and from a variety of perspectives the long-lasting strategic relationship between America and Turkey. The contributors form a cluster of able young scholars and more seasoned analysts who review comprehensively the undulating phases of Turkish-American relations. One constant theme is that the Turkish-American relationship challenges the Huntingtonian thesis positing the incompatibility and clash of civilizations.'

*Theodore A. Couloubis, Professor Emeritus,
University of Athens*

'Curiously, relations with the United States is an aspect of Turkish foreign policy that has tended to be under-studied. The shortfall in considered analysis has been no more greatly felt than of late, a time of greater turbulence in bilateral relations. This book, edited by two of Turkey's most promising international relations experts, sets out to redress this imbalance. Through a combination of historical depth, sound research and the enlisting of experienced contributors, the book provides valuable insights for policy makers and scholars alike.'

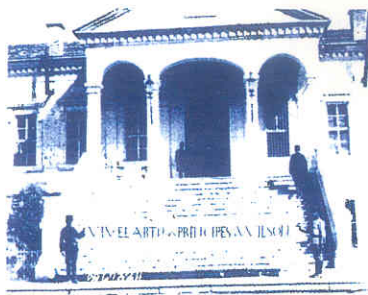
Dr Philip Robins, St Antony's College, Oxford

'The publication of this comprehensive and highly readable volume coincides with new debates in both the United States and Turkey regarding the underlying principles, and the future of US-Turkish relations. Written by an eclectic group of experts consisting of historians, political scientists and former officials, it promises to be the standard volume on the subject for many years to come.'

Professor Tozun Bahcheli, King's College, Canada

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Turkish Soldiers carrying a banner of Woodrow Wilson's famous principle of self-determination, 1919.



Turkish demonstrators, 2001.



Former Turkish Foreign Minister Cem with Colin Powell, 2001.

Cover photograph: US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld addresses American soldiers at Incirlik Airbase, Turkey, 2002.

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