

The U.S.-Turkey relations under the presidency of Obama

The impact of the Middle East

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Statement of originality

I declare on my honour that this dissertation is my own work, completed without unauthorised external assistance, that it has been submitted to no another institution for assessment, and that it has never been published, either in whole or in part. All the information (ideas, sentences, graphs, maps, tables, etc.) taken from or referring to primary or secondary sources are properly referenced using the current university method.

I declare that I have taken note of and adhere to the Code of Ethics for students with regard to borrowing, quoting from and using various sources, and am aware that plagiarism is a serious offence.

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A Note on Spelling

Often confronted with the use of Turkish words and names in recordings or in videos, we were saddened by the far too frequent errors made by journalists or politicians. Therefore, it seemed important to explain some of the subtleties of the Turkish alphabet. It is written in a Roman script in an A to Z alphabet, only missing the letters “q” and “x”. Most of the Turkish words can be pronounced *à la française* but there are a few exceptions as well as some additional letters in the modern Turkish alphabet:

c – Pronounced like the English letter “j” or the French sound “dj”

ç – Pronounced like the English “ch” sound or the French sound “tch”

ğ – Silent but elongates the following vowel

ı – Pronounced like the French “è”

ö – Pronounced like the French sound “eu”

ş – Pronounced like the English sound “sh” or the French sound “ch”

ü – Pronounced like the French “u”

u – Pronounced like the English “u” or the French sound “ou”

Introduction

During the academic year 2015-2016, we had the opportunity to participate in an Erasmus exchange at the Galatasaray University in Istanbul, Turkey. This exchange has developed a keen interest in our host country and this interest has evolved into a desire to write a *mémoire* on its foreign policy. The decision to choose the United States for the analyzed partner in Foreign Policy was natural due to the delicate balance between the fascination for the U.S. and the anti-Americanism that was perceptible in Turkey.

The starting point for our research was that it is the Middle East that paces the relations between Turkey and the U.S. The Middle East has traditionally been important in the relations between Turkey and the United States of America and during both of Obama's terms, it has been the most important factor affecting the relations. With the relative failure of its zero problems foreign policy, Turkey is refocusing itself on the West but the Syrian crisis creates disturbances. Ankara is trying to please the United States while, at the same time, pursuing its own interests and trying to find regional support points and avoiding isolation, especially in regards to Russia and Iran¹.

In the first two chapters, we are going to analyze the respective foreign policies of the United States and Turkey regarding the Middle East. The focus will be on four themes. First, the images and foreign policies of the governments of Obama and Erdoğan. Then, the Syrian crisis and the Kurdish question, in Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Finally, the foreign policy of Turkey and the U.S. towards Israel, the "western" country of the Middle East.

In the third and last chapter, we will establish a historical background on the relations between Turkey and the U.S. before discussing the other relevant factors that have been discovered during the process of writing this *mémoire*. Among those factors that shape the relations between Turkey and the U.S., the first that will be analyzed is the geopolitical interest of Turkey for the U.S.. Historically, Turkey was mostly important because of its position in regards to Russia. This interest still exists today, although in a lesser margin, but Turkey has also developed other attractive

¹ MARCOU Jean, "La Turquie en quête d'un nouveau positionnement au Moyen-Orient", *Politique étrangère*, 2016, Vol. 2, été, p. 72.

aspects for the U.S. in terms of geopolitics. The second factor analyzed will be the personal relationship between the two leaders of the countries. The third factor will be the question of the accession of Turkey to the European Union. Although this question is no longer at the heart of current affairs, it is of interest when dealing with the relations between Turkey and the U.S. which have been heavily involved in the negotiation process. The fourth factor analyzed will be the anti-Americanism in Turkey. This factor was originally intended to be part of the chapter discussing the image of the U.S. in the world but the question specific to Turkey deserves a more personalized interest. The fifth factor is the role of ethnic lobbies in the United States which serves to introduce the sixth and last factor: the coup attempt of July 15, 2016. The coup has enormous implications for the relations between Turkey and the U.S. because Ankara considers that the responsible person is Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish preacher living in Pennsylvania.

In the conclusion, we will try to imagine what awaits the new President of the U.S. since 2017, Donald Trump, concerning the relations with Turkey.

Chapter 1. The U.S. Foreign Policy towards the Middle East

1. Image and Foreign Policy of the United States of America under Obama

1.1. The image of the United States

The United States is a democracy, which means that the government comes to power with a public vote. “Hence, public opinion is expected to be important in domestic as well as international policymaking in democracies”².

The image of the United States around the World is partly defined by the idea of a manifest destiny that influenced the U.S. foreign policy since the 19th century. The manifest destiny is a belief that Americans are part of an exceptional nation, they are chosen and they have the duty to transmit their values of democracy and peace to the other nations³.

1.2. Obama’s Foreign Policy

In *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*, Walter Russell Mead identifies four schools of American Foreign Policy based on four important figures of the political history of the U.S. “*Hamiltonians* share the first Treasury secretary’s belief that a strong national government can and should promote economic development and the interests of American business at home and abroad. *Wilsonians* agree with Hamiltonians on the need for a global foreign policy, but see the promotion of democracy and human rights as the core elements of American grand strategy. *Jeffersonians* dissent from this globalist consensus; they want the United States to minimize its commitments and, as much as possible, dismantle the nation-security state. *Jacksonians* are today’s Fox News watchers. They are populists suspicious of Hamiltonian business links, Wilsonian do-gooding, and Jeffersonian weakness”⁴.

During his presidential campaign, Obama wanted to distance his future foreign policy from that of George W. Bush. Bush has had a Hamiltonian campaign but the attacks of September 11, 2001, created a neoconservative reaction. Later on,

² SADIK Giray, *American Image In Turkey*, Plymouth, Lexington Books, 2009, p. 75.

³ STRUYE DE SWIELANDE Tanguy, “Grandes stratégies américaine et chinoise: vers une confrontation inévitable ?”, *Monde chinois*, 2014/4, No. 40, p. 34.

⁴ MEAD Walter, “The Carter Syndrome”, *Foreign Policy*, January 4, 2010, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/01/04/the-carter-syndrome/>

though, Bush tried to wed the Hamiltonian approach with a Wilsonian one to develop a democracy in Iraq⁵. The failure of this impossible wedding led to the election of Obama, whose campaign was based on the Jeffersonian school⁶. He would base it on realism, pragmatism and restraint and move away from the unilateralism that tired both the Americans and the rest of the world, to return to the multilateralism in international affairs that was the apanage of the U.S. after the end of the Cold War⁷.

Obama presented his foreign policy, emphasizing on the will to reduce the risks and the costs by limiting the interventions abroad. Jeffersonians and Hamiltonians believe that interventions have a bad impact on the U.S. image and are an obstacle to democracy both at home – because in times of war, the government cannot tell the whole truth to its population – and abroad, since it is a democracy that is “attacking”.

Another difference with Bush is that Obama did not want to draw a line such as the axis of evil that would prevent him from meeting and negotiating with foes. He took the words of Kennedy in saying that “we should never negotiate out of fear, but we should never fear to negotiate⁸”.

President Obama was a realist more than an idealist and he did not believe in imposing abstract moral values and using brute military strength to achieve goals. Rather he thought that international relations are a matter of relationships and pursuit of common interests with the other nations. “Common security interests, partnerships, and multilateralism in international relations became the principles of his foreign policy⁹”.

Although the rhetoric worked in presenting a new foreign policy, distanced from Bush’s, Obama’s actions were not up to the words. His policies were reactive instead of imposing his own foreign policy vision and the results of his first term were not particularly brilliants: he reduced the number of inmates in Guantanamo

⁵ MEAD Walter, interview realized by Charles Kesler, “American Foreign Policy in the Middle East”, The Claremont Institute, September 26, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKqwcziF4VI>

⁶ MEAD Walter, “The Carter Syndrome”, Foreign Policy, January 4, 2010, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/01/04/the-carter-syndrome/>

⁷ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America’s Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 89.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Bay but did not close it and he reduced the presence in Afghanistan but did not end the war in Iraq¹⁰.

He claimed that his foreign policy was going to be a mixture of George Bush's father's, Kennedy's and Reagan's but in many ways, his attitude was similar to President Clinton's and he even chose former Clinton appointees, such as Dennis Ross, Richard Holbrooke and Hillary Clinton, to work in his administration. As a senator, he was not much concerned by the foreign policy and, like Bill Clinton; it was felt during his first term during which many mistakes were made¹¹.

Obama's National Security Strategy of 2010 and 2014 focused more on realpolitik, emphasizing more on "power politics and national interests and less on human rights and the rule of law"¹².

1.3. Smart Power

Under the presidency of Obama, the term *smart power* was put forward as part of his foreign policy. According to Joseph Nye, "Power is the ability to alter the behavior of others to get what you want. There are basically three ways to do that: coercion (sticks), payments (carrots), and attraction (*soft power*)"¹³. Power can therefore be divided in two components. The first component is the most important for the Realists, it is the *power input*, the power as an ability – the ultimate ability for the Realists is the ability to survive and prevail in war – or as a potential, emphasizing on the material factors of power (*hard power*): economic and military resources. The second component is the power output, focused on the outcome and taking into account non-material aspects such as leadership, will, skill, and so on.¹⁴. Kenneth Waltz stated that "the rank of a state in the system depends on how it scores on the size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, as well as political stability and competence"¹⁵.

¹⁰ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 91.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-95.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹³ NYE Joseph, "Think again: Soft Power", *Foreign Policy*, February 23, 2006, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2006/02/23/think-again-soft-power/>

¹⁴ BAGDONAS Azuolas, "Turkey as a Great Power? Back to Reality", *Turkish Studies*, 2015, Vol. 16, No. 3, p. 312.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

Klaus Knorr had a definition similar to Nye's of the power influence in the context of international relations by stating that it is "the ability of one state, acting through its government, to affect the behavior of another either by coercive threat or by the unilateral creation of a *fait accompli*"¹⁶. Klaus Knorr already differentiated the notions of *power influence* and *nonpower influence* using the game theory: "when power is inserted in conflict situations, there is a zero sum game or – more likely – a negative nonzero sum game; when nonpower influence prevails, there is a positive nonzero sum game"¹⁷. Knorr differentiated the friendly relations between states based on both types of power. Firstly, the relations based on power influence: when the relations between states rest on mutual exchanges of favors and when states offer favors expecting a future concession in exchange. Secondly, the relations based on nonpower influence in which "one actor gives something of value to another without condition, without any stipulated payment now or later"¹⁸.

Joseph Nye has established that there exist three main sources of soft power for a country: its culture, its political values and its foreign policies. And these sources have conditions to be relevant on the international scene. Firstly, the culture needs to be attractive in a place to become a mean of soft power in that specific place. Secondly, the political values cannot exist without intern foundations, they have to be defended by the country both at home and abroad. Thirdly, the foreign policies can only be a mechanism of soft power if they are perceived by the others as legitimate and having moral authority¹⁹.

Soft power complements hard power and it is preponderant in the world we live in but, according to Nye, a State should aspire to the combination of the two powers because "effective strategies in the real world are a mix of hard and soft power, and that combination of hard and soft power in effective ways is what [he] calls "smart power"²⁰. Nye explained that the use of hard and soft power depends on the situation. He first gave the example of the Taliban government providing help to Al Qaeda, this issue could not be handled in any other way than by hard power: the

¹⁶ KNORR Klaus, *The POWER of NATIONS*, New York, Basic Books, 1975, p. 311.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

¹⁹ NYE Joseph, *The Future of Power*, New York, Public Affairs, 2011, p. 84.

²⁰ NYE Joseph, interview realized by GAVEL Doug, "Joseph Nye on Smart Power", *Harvard Kennedy School Insight Interview*, July 3, 2008, <http://www.belfercenter.org/publication/joseph-nye-smart-power>

use of force. On the other hand, he explained that the soft power can be very helpful in “winning over the hearts and minds of the main stream Muslims so that the hardliners cannot recruit them”²¹. Both these examples are about the fight against terrorism with two different approaches which together form the *smart power*.

During her audition with the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Hillary Clinton – the soon to be Secretary of State at the time – used the expression “smart power” 13 times²². “She sought to transcend the simple-minded distinction between “hard” and “soft” power by adopting the term “smart power,” to describe a form of statecraft that combined development, diplomacy, public-private partnerships and, yes, military power”²³.

In 2011, Obama was forced to revisit American foreign policy in the region and the result was a mixture between pragmatism and idealism. Certainly, he had tough words against Syria or Bahrain but, as the US Fifth Fleet was based there, the only answer was words and he did not even mention Saudi Arabia in those. The example of Libya was one of the few moments when Obama decided to use military forces while the national security of the United States was not directly affected. Going even further, one could claim that keeping Qaddafi in power would have better served the U.S. national security. Obama decided to intervene at the last minute, preventing a massacre in Benghazi. Obviously, the intervention took place under the aegis of the UN, with the cooperation of France, Britain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the opposition in Libya²⁴.

2. Syrian crisis

2.1. Bashar al-Assad

Since the beginning of the uprising in Syria, the Obama administration encouraged Turkey’s opposition to the Assad regime and coordinated its strategy

²¹ NYE Joseph, interview realized by GAVEL Doug, “Joseph Nye on Smart Power”, *Harvard Kennedy School Insight Interview*, July 3, 2008, <http://www.belfercenter.org/publication/joseph-nye-smart-power>

²² CHARMELOT Jacques, *Le « smart power » américain, un défi pour l’Europe*, Fondation Robert Schuman, Questions d’Europe No. 127, 2009, p. 1.

²³ TRAUB James, “The Hillary Clinton Doctrine”, *Foreign Policy*, November 6, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/06/hillary-clinton-doctrine-obama-interventionist-tough-minded-president/>

²⁴ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America’s Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 109-112.

against him with Ankara²⁵. If there are two things that both the U.S. and Turkey agree on, it is the need for Assad to leave the power and the need for an end to the civil war. The will for Obama to see Bashar al-Assad gone is interesting because it goes against his positioning at the beginning of his first term as a Jeffersonian. Jeffersonians believe that “bad regimes” are not too bad for the stability of the world, and that mutually beneficial and long term agreements can be found with dictatorships²⁶. Washington and Ankara have drafted common resolutions in the United Nations to condemn the exactions of the regime on its population but the propositions failed in the Security Council because of Russian and Chinese vetoes. After the UN Security Council resolution of February 4, 2012 was vetoed, French President Nicolas Sarkozy initiated an international diplomatic collective called the Group of Friends of the Syrian People inside which Turkey and the U.S. cooperated in trying to find a solution for the Syrian crisis, outside of the UN’s framework²⁷.

The United States and Turkey thought that they could evict Bashar al-Assad rapidly but, as he clings to power, the battle against Daesh in Syria became the United States’ top priority during the last years of Obama’s presidency the eviction of Assad is no longer the first priority. With the emergence of Russia as a major actor in defining Syria’s future and the long-lasting support of Iran towards the Syrian regime, Turkey also had to change its strategic approach and deal with the fact that Assad’s removal is “no longer a feasible near-term objective”²⁸. By putting the Assad issue in parenthesis, Turkey offered itself the opportunity to concentrate its efforts on the Kurdish question²⁹.

2.2. Daesh/ISIL

When the civil war broke out in 2012, radical Islamists proved to be the main fighters against the regime in place. The U.S. then wondered if it was necessary to continue the blind support to the opposition but Turkey was not so glamorous. Jihadists even showed potential in preventing an autonomous region for the Kurds in

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

²⁶ MEAD Walter, “The Carter Syndrome”, *Foreign Policy*, January 4, 2010, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/01/04/the-carter-syndrome/>

²⁷ RYTZ Henriette and JOYAUX Dominique, “Atout turc ?”, *Outre-Terre*, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 38, p. 311.

²⁸ LOGAN David, “Turkey and the West: Whatever went wrong?”, *British Academy*, January 2017, p. 38.

²⁹ *Cf. Infra*, PYD

Syria, a great side effect³⁰. Both Turkey and the U.S. are disappointed by the results of the moderate Syrian opposition whose influence in the conflict goes diminishing.

Obama wanted to end wars, not start them³¹ and Daesh's quick progresses, taking Falouja and Mosul in 2014, were not enough to motivate an American intervention in Syria. At the time, the Islamic state was considered a second-class actor and two events will motivate American operations: the assassination of journalist James Foley in August 2014 and the dangerous advance of Daesh towards Erbil³², the capital of the Syrian Kurdistan³³. After these events, Obama's reaction could be placed under the Jacksonian school of Walter Mead. Indeed, the school is isolationist but does not hesitate to *rally 'round the flag* if the nation is under attack and to retaliate until victory is achieved³⁴. Despite the situation, the American strategy is rather that of containment than of eradication and the operations are only air strikes³⁵.

3. Kurdish issue

3.1. KRG

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, the Kurdish cause won international publicity when Saddam Hussein brutally repressed the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq, leading to half a million of Kurdish refugees at the border with Turkey. The operation *Provide Comfort* was initiated by the United States in April 1991, in order to protect the Kurdish populations. It solved the refugee issue but "exacerbated Turkey's internal Kurdish problem³⁶". An international force established a safe zone in the North of Iraq. This operation allowed the dominant Iraqi Kurdish party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), to create an autonomous region in the Iraqi Kurdistan, ruled by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)³⁷.

³⁰ MARCOU Jean, "La Turquie et l'Etat islamique : d'un mariage de raison à un divorce à l'amiable", *Outre-Terre*, 2015, Vol. 3, No. 44, p. 355.

³¹ STRUYE DE SWIELANDE Tanguy and DAELMAN Chloé, "Etats-Unis-Daesh : politique cohérente? Plus qu'on ne le supposerait...", *Outre-Terre*, 2015, Vol. 3, No. 44, p. 72.

³² *Cf. Infra*, PYD

³³ STRUYE DE SWIELANDE Tanguy and DAELMAN Chloé, *Op. Cit.*, p. 73.

³⁴ MUELLER John, "Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson", *The American Political Science Review*, 1970, Vol. 64, No. 1, pp. 20-22.

³⁵ STRUYE DE SWIELANDE Tanguy and DAELMAN Chloé, *Op. Cit.*, p. 74.

³⁶ HALE William, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 144.

³⁷ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Que veut la Turquie? Ambitions et stratégies internationales*, Paris, Autrement, 2009, p. 67.

Additionally to the support from the international community, the Iraqi Kurdistan has factors that allow it to develop rapidly. One of the main reasons for that is the oil heritage of Iraq. In 2014, the oil production in Iraq reached 3.6 million barrels per day catching up with the 1970 levels. The increase rate is so fast that the estimations from the International Energy Agency (IEA) for 2020 are of 6.1 million barrels per day³⁸. While the Southern part of Iraq owns the largest reserves, the Iraqi Kurdistan is very active in the exploitation and the IEA estimates that the production will reach 500 to 800 thousand barrels per day in 2020³⁹. The total reserves of oil in Iraq are about 143 billion barrels, the third largest reserve in the world after Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. In terms of gas, Iraq is the second largest reserve⁴⁰. In addition to its natural resources, the Iraqi Kurdistan has other advantages making it an important player in the region: its territory is relatively homogeneous, occupying a bit less than 20% of Iraq with 5.5 million inhabitants (about a fifth of the total population of Iraq), with a strong economy and an army of 250 thousand soldiers⁴¹.

The United States is one of the most important contacts for the Iraqi Kurdistan, being the mediator between the Federal government of Iraq and the Kurdistan, both disagreeing on the sharing of oil resources⁴². The American company ExxonMobil was one of the first to sign a deal with the Iraqi Kurdistan in 2011⁴³.

There is an ambiguity in the US foreign policy vis-à-vis Bagdad and Erbil. Unofficially, Washington sees the Iraqi Kurdistan as a stable actor in the Middle East but officially, there is a complete support for the Federal government of Iraq and for the maintenance of its territorial integrity. The United States even pressures Turkey in avoiding to conduct policies risking the territorial disintegration of Iraq⁴⁴.

³⁸ SIMONET Loïc, "Les hydrocarbures du Kurdistan irakien, au Cœur de l'imbroglie régional", *Géoéconomie*, 2015, Vol. 2, No. 74, p. 151.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁴⁰ JABBOUR Jana and REBIERE Noémie, "La Turquie au cœur des enjeux géopolitiques et énergétiques régionaux", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2014, Vol. 4, No. 91, p. 41.

⁴¹ SIMONET Loïc, *Op. Cit.*, p. 153.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-158.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

3.2. PKK

Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK) – the Kurdistan Workers’ Party – is a Kurdish armed group, created in 1978 and considered as terrorist by many countries and organizations, including Turkey, the United States and the European Union⁴⁵.

3.3. PYD

The *Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat* (PYD) – the Democratic Union Party – is an important actor of the Syrian crisis that emerged during the summer 2012 with the forced evacuation of Assad’s forces from the Syrian Kurdistan. The organization is tied with the PKK⁴⁶. The PYD managed to create “Rojava”, a Syrian Kurdistan almost independent and one of the major issues of the Syrian crisis for Ankara⁴⁷.

Thanks to the successes of the Kurds in Syria, especially against Daesh, Washington considers the PYD to be a “reliable partner”⁴⁸ since 2015.

4. Israel

Israel is the United States’ most powerful ally in the Middle East and from the American point of view, it has two important common points with Turkey: they have the two biggest army forces of the region and are strong democracies⁴⁹.

Since their inauguration in 2009, President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu were in a disagreement regarding several issues, most particularly those concerning the Palestinians and Iran’s nuclear program. This conflict has led to some instances in which the officials from the two countries have denounced their bilateral counterparts for their policies while at the same time the bilateral cooperation, in a larger scale, has continued and even augmented on a number of issues including defense, trade, and energy⁵⁰.

The public opinion about United States being less involved in addressing the problems in the region may grow apprehension among Israelis as to whether they

⁴⁵ HALE William, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 144.

⁴⁶ MARCOU Jean, "La Turquie en quête d'un nouveau positionnement au Moyen-Orient", *Politique étrangère*, 2016, Vol. 2, été, p.65.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.66.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p 71.

⁴⁹ RYTZ Henriette and JOYAUX Dominique, "Atout turc ?", *Outre-Terre*, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 38, p. 306.

⁵⁰ ZANOTTI Jim, "Israel: background and U.S. Relations", *CRS*, October 28, 2016, p. 18.

should rely on the U.S. for averting the threats. Even though some Israelis have affirmed that the impact of the United States in the Middle East has been minimized, U.S. officials regularly insist upon their commitments to Israel and aggrandize these statements through means such as aid, arms sales, and missile defense cooperation⁵¹.

In 1985 the United States and Israel were involved in an executive trade agreement, that is, Free Trade Agreement (FTA) which ensured the elimination of all customs duties between the two trading partners. The exportations to the United States have increased since the FTA went in effect⁵².

Israel's armed forces have become one of the most technologically advanced militaries in the world thanks to U.S. military aid. This aid of the U.S. for Israel has lent itself to maintain Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME) since Israel is in need of more sophisticated equipment in case of any regional conflict. On November 30, 1981, the countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) setting a framework to increase the national security of both countries and this MOU was followed by some others mostly referring to the development of the defense system of Israel. It was not until 1998 that the U.S. and Israel, with another MOU, established a framework to address the increasing regional threats from ballistic missiles. This MOU indicated that "In the event of such a threat, the United States Government would consult promptly with the Government of Israel with respect to what support, diplomatic or otherwise, or assistance, it can lend to Israel"⁵³.

The U.S.-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act (P.L. 112-150) of 2012 and U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act (P.L. 113-296) of 2014 encouraged U.S.-Israel relations even more in different fields such as defense, homeland security, cyber issues, energy, and trade. In fact, U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act stated Israel as a "major strategic partner" of the United States however the meaning of this designation has not been explained in U.S. law⁵⁴.

Since the late 1970s, U.S. arms sales have been a considerably important mechanism for not just Israel but also Arab countries regarding their security concerns. Given that, some Members of Congress have reflected that sale of U.S.

⁵¹ ZANOTTI Jim, "Israel: background and U.S. Relations", CRS, October 28, 2016, p. 18.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

weapons to other regional countries might ruin Israel's QME over its neighbors. Nevertheless, successive Administrations have claimed that Arab countries are "too dependent on U.S. training, spare parts, and support to be in a position to use sophisticated U.S.-made arms against the United States, Israel, or any other U.S. ally in a sustained campaign"⁵⁵.

In 2008, Congress established legislation entailing that any proposed sale of U.S. weaponry to "any country in the Middle East other than Israel"⁵⁶ must assure Congress with a "determination that the sale or export of such would not adversely affect Israel's qualitative military edge over military threats to Israel"⁵⁷. With this legislation, two countries continue to indicate their mutual comprehension of the U.S. commitment to not erode Israel's QME⁵⁸.

However, the U.S. legislation does not explain what might include a "legally defined" perverse effect to QME. According to what Robert Gates, former Secretary of Defense wrote in 2010, the U.S. government in the rule of Obama pointed out concerns from the Israeli government regarding an U.S. sale of F-15 aircraft to Saudi Arabia. The U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act (P.L. 113-296) requires the assessment of how arm sales would affect the balance in the region, the identification of measures that can be taken by Israel in response to the potential sales and the commitment of U.S. to Israel regarding these potential sales⁵⁹.

The fact that the U.S. started selling Arab states more sophisticated weapons because of the increasing regional concerns about Iran did not cause any formal objections by Israel. This may be due to the fact that, adhering to the QME requirements, U.S. is not selling to the Arab Gulf states more advanced equipment than it sells to Israel. However it is not certain if any alteration in the nature and political state of Arab regimes might transform the threat perceptions of Israel in time⁶⁰. Nevertheless, President Obama clarified the U.S. position in the Middle East, in an April 2015 interview. He stated that his priorities are: "Number one, this is our best bet by far to make sure Iran does not get a nuclear weapon, and number two,

⁵⁵ ZANOTTI Jim, "Israel: background and U.S. Relations", *CRS*, October 28, 2016, p. 20.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁹ HAGE-ALI Chady, "Washington et le Proche-Orient : le jeu des nuances", *Politique étrangère*, Été 2013, Vol. 2, p. 43.

⁶⁰ ZANOTTI Jim, *Op. Cit.*, p. 21.

what we will be doing even as we enter into this deal is sending a very clear message to the Iranians and to the entire region that if anybody messes with Israel, America will be there”⁶¹.

⁶¹ FRIEDMAN Thomas, “Iran and the Obama Doctrine,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/06/opinion/thomas-friedman-the-obama-doctrine-and-iran-interview.html>

Chapter 2. The Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Middle East

1. Image and Foreign Policy of Turkey under Erdoğan

1.1. The image of Turkey

It is important to realize that the separation between Europe – and therefore, the West – and Turkey is a “geographical abstraction”⁶². The Strait of Bosphorus linking the supposedly European part of Turkey to its Asian part is a meaningless separation⁶³. In terms of lifestyle, Ankara, the capital of Turkey might be located in Asia but one visiting the city cannot say that it is less of a European city than Yerevan, the capital of Armenia – a European country – located even further east⁶⁴.

From the *sick man of Europe*, Turkey under Ataturk made the necessary changes to modernize itself, adopting the Western alphabet, secularizing its institutions and westernizing the dress code. Turkey became the combination of philosophical principles and spiritual beliefs that have led it to adopt “European” legislations, with the notion of civil rights and the rule of law, apanage of the democratic states and institutions. The changes were not forced upon the population which deployed fervor in realizing the legacy of Ataturk⁶⁵.

About ten years ago, Turkey was still defined with positive traits such as a multiparty democracy, a member of NATO for 60 years and its powerful southern flank, a good candidate for the accession to the European Union with the negotiations being in progress since 2004, and a fast growing economy⁶⁶.

Today, Turkey’s perceived traits are its “populist government [tending more and more towards authoritarianism], terrorism, regional instability, Russian opportunism, the failure of Western strategic vision, and the loss of external traction

⁶² BRZEZINSKI Zbigniew, *Strategic Vision. America and the Crisis of Global Power*, New York, Basic Books, 2012, p. 132.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 132

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133-134.

⁶⁶ LOGAN David, “Turkey and the West: Whatever went wrong?”, *British Academy*, January 2017, p. 36.

on the part of the EU”⁶⁷. The new perception has a concrete impact on Turkey’s prosperity, stability and governance⁶⁸.

Even though the American officials tried to promote Turkey as an important partner, the only Muslim democracy, and so on; many issues still darken the positive rhetoric: the Armenian genocide, Greece and Cyprus, the Kurds and the general islamophobia. On the other hand, internal supports from the United States to Turkey are very few. In 2002, during the first visit of Erdoğan in the United States as the leader of the new Turkish majority, the only private delegation that he met was made of Jewish organizations⁶⁹.

This good perception from Jewish communities was short lived. Indeed, the strong words from Erdoğan against Israel after the attack on the flotilla that was seeking to break the blockade imposed upon the Gaza Strip and the threat of the presence of warships in the Mediterranean⁷⁰ saw many reactions in the United States, notably by the pro-Israel groups which launched campaigns to discredit Erdoğan and demonize the AKP, having an Islamist agenda and moving away from the West in favor of a neo-Ottoman policy⁷¹.

1.2. AKP in power

“Peace at Home, Peace in the World”. Pronounced by Atatürk in 1931 for the first time, the quote became the motto of Turkey’s foreign policy for the last century⁷² and it is still written on the website of the Turkish foreign affairs⁷³.

With the end of the bipolar world, Turkey has had much more possibilities to influence the foreign policy of the United States. “Ankara can now reshape its

⁶⁷ LOGAN David, “Turkey and the West: Whatever went wrong?”, *British Academy*, January 2017, p 36.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p 36.

⁶⁹ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Que veut la Turquie? Ambitions et stratégies internationales*, Paris, Autrement, 2009, p. 64-65.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Infra*, **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**

⁷¹ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America’s Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 198-199.

⁷² ERICKSON Edward, “Turkey as Regional Hegemon – 2014: Strategic Implications for the United States”, *Turkish Studies*, autumn 2004, Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 26.

⁷³ Synopsis of the Turkish Foreign Policy, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/synopsis-of-the-turkish-foreign-policy.en.mfa>

environs and influence the development of regional dynamics by throwing its weight either behind ‘the West’ or ‘the Rest’”⁷⁴.

According to Samuel Huntington, “global politics is [...] always about power and the struggle for power”⁷⁵. There are four types of structures shaping the world order, based on power: the *unipolar* system, with one superpower, no significant major powers and many minor powers; the *bipolar* system, with two superpowers both dominating a coalition of allied states; the *multipolar* system, with several major powers of comparable strength; and the *uni-multipolar* system, with one superpower and several major powers⁷⁶.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 transformed the global balance of power. The bipolar world became unipolar with the United States as the single superpower, but it did not last long. The supremacy of the United States has been challenged and the world order evolved again to become a uni-multipolar system in which “the settlement of key international issues requires action by the single superpower but always with some combination of other major states [...], preeminent in areas of the world”⁷⁷. The United States is still the superpower but there are several major powers⁷⁸.

The structural shift created an opportunity for actors of the system to find a new function in the new world order. This opportunity to find a new function led regional powers to compete for power, creating local crises. These regional powers developed a more active foreign policy while they were passive under the bipolar system of the Cold War⁷⁹. The role of these states, also called *pivotal states* and *swing states*⁸⁰ is increasingly important in a world that is shifting toward a multipolar system⁸¹.

The *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP) – the Justice and Development Party – is culturally conservative but market-oriented and, while they believe that the

⁷⁴ GABER Yevgeniya, “Turkish-American Relations in the Post-Cold War Era: Reconsidering the Power Balance Equation”, in *Change and Adaptation in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Ankara, SETA, 2013, p. 35.

⁷⁵ HUNTINGTON Samuel, “The Lonely Superpower”, *Foreign Affairs*, 1999, Vol. 78, No. 2, p. 35.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 35-36.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁷⁸ GABER Yevgeniya, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 33-34.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸⁰ *Cf. Infra*, Geostrategic Players and Geopolitical Pivots

⁸¹ GABER Yevgeniya, *Op. Cit.*, p. 35.

American way of managing the situations and crises in the Middle East is counterproductive, they aim to cooperate instead of confronting. The foreign policy of Turkey is independent and its first focus is to start by increasing the economic cooperation with its Middle Eastern neighbors, and then follow the economy by deepening the cultural links⁸². This independent stance can be linked with the rise of Erdoğan and his accession to premiership in 2003, although the independence from the West does not mean a total denial: the involvement of Turkey in NATO remains important and so is the commitment to the European Union, its major trading partner. Nonetheless, the West is no longer the only partner of Turkey⁸³.

It would be too simple to explain the antagonization of Israel and the rapprochement with the Middle East neighbors and Iran by a neo-Ottoman theory as Erdoğan “has vehemently denied any desire to revive the Ottoman legacy”⁸⁴. In fact, Erdoğan is also the first President who shows a certain distance with Kemalism, it would seem that he does not want to reestablish a legacy but rather create his own.

It would also be too simple to believe that Erdoğan is seeking to establish an Islamic imperialism while he advocated the importance of secularism during his visit in Egypt: “In Turkey, constitutional secularism is defined as the state remaining equidistant to all religious [...]. In a secular regime people are free to be religious or not [...]. Do not fear secularism because it does not mean being an enemy of religion. I hope the new regime in Egypt will be secular⁸⁵”. Actually, Erdoğan once praised the freedom of religion in the United States, stating that his daughters went to study there so that they could practice their religion by wearing the scarf. At the time, in 2004, it was not yet authorized to wear the scarf in Turkish universities⁸⁶. In the first chapter, using Joseph Nye’s work, we have defined the three main sources of *soft power* and the condition for the political values to become part of the *soft power* of the country defending them is that the country must “live up to [these values] at home and abroad⁸⁷”. The secularism and the freedom of religion that were extolled

⁸² GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America’s Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 192.

⁸³ GERGES Fawaz, *Op. Cit.*, p. 196.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁸⁶ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Que veut la Turquie? Ambitions et stratégies internationales*, Paris, Autrement, 2009, pp. 65-66.

⁸⁷ NYE Joseph, *The Future of Power*, New York, Public Affairs, 2011, p. 84.

by Erdoğan both at home, praising the attitude of the United States, and abroad, notably in his speech in Egypt, are both political values part of Turkey's *soft power*.

Since 2008, the President of Turkey is elected by universal suffrage. He is the commander of the armies, responsible for the promulgation of international treaties and he chairs the *Milli Güvenlik Kurulu* (MGK), the National Security Council⁸⁸. The Parliament still has foreign policy powers: it approves military operations, signature of treaties and war declarations⁸⁹.

Turkey's rise as a country in geoeconomy and geopolitics coincides with the relative decline of the United States and the loss of influence in the Middle East but, since it is a democracy, the public opinion has an impact on the shape of its foreign policy. The fact that Turkey wants to focus more on its neighbors and the Muslim world does not mean that it is abandoning the West, it keeps a traditional Western orientation and the will to cooperate with it⁹⁰.

This need to balance the country between the West and the Middle East is not something new. Samuel Huntington already talked about Turkey as "[t]he most obvious and prototypical torn country⁹¹". The concept of *torn countries* describes situations in countries where the leader and the elites wish to pursue a strategy of *bandwagoning* behind the West while the society's culture and history are non-Western. Even with the rise of AKP – which represents a less elitist approach with personalities like Erdoğan who were not part of the elites – the cleavage still exists : Turkey is part of NATO and, although the process has been extremely slowed⁹², candidate to the European Union while there is a resurgence of Islamism within the society, despite its secularity and there is a recentralization of Turkey towards the Middle East. This recentralization was accelerated by the refusal of the European elites to accept the Turkish elites' vision: Turkey is a European state. In 1993, Huntington thought that, being rejected by Europe and rejecting Mecca, Turkey

⁸⁸ BALCI Ali, *Türkiye Dış Politikası: İlkeler, Aktörler, Uygulamalar*, Istanbul, Etkileşim Yayınları, 2013, pp. 174-175.

⁸⁹ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Que veut la Turquie? Ambitions et stratégies internationales*, Paris, Autrement, 2009, p. 44.

⁹⁰ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 201.

⁹¹ HUNTINGTON Samuel, "The Clash of Civilizations?", *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, Vol. 72, No. 3, p. 42.

⁹² Cf. *Infra*, Accession of Turkey to the European Union

could focus itself towards Tashkent with the fall of the Soviet Union⁹³. It is true that Turkic civilizations historically spread from the Balkans to the Uyghurs' minority in China but the AKP decided to focus on its closer neighbors instead of pursuing the concept of *Pan-Turkism*. Pan-Turkism is a political movement that emerged in the late 19th century for the purpose of creating a political union of all Turkish-speaking population in the Ottoman Empire, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan and China⁹⁴. Instead of pursuing this goal, the AKP followed the Davutoğlu doctrine, aiming to connect with the Islamic neighbors instead of the Turkic populations.

1.3. Davutoğlu doctrine

Ahmet Davutoğlu is an academic specialized in international relations. He started building the foreign policy of Turkey in 2002, as a diplomatic advisor, firstly for Abdullah Gül, minister of foreign affairs, and secondly for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, prime minister, in 2007. Davutoğlu then became minister of foreign affairs himself in 2009 and his task was to put in place the foreign policy that he had developed⁹⁵.

Davutoğlu's foreign policy's aim is to gain in *Stratejik Derinlik* (Strategic Depth) by combining the work of Samuel Huntington and geopolitics⁹⁶. He agrees with Huntington's notion of "cultural fault lines"⁹⁷ separating the civilizations but he does not believe that a clash is inevitable: it could lead to a "coexistence inter-civilisationnelle pacifiée"⁹⁸ (peaceful inter-civilizational coexistence). Turkey is geographically situated at the limit between the *Hearthland* and the *Rimland*⁹⁹, and the end of the bipolarity of the Cold War brought a multipolar world in which Turkey needed to reevaluate its position. Turkey is no longer at the border between two antagonist blocks; it now has 8 neighbors with a direct border and more if we include

⁹³ HUNTINGTON Samuel, "The Clash of Civilizations?", *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, Vol. 72, No. 3, p. 42.

⁹⁴ CIZRE-SAKALLIOGLU Umit, Texte traduit de l'anglais par BENSEMANE M'hamed, "Kémalisme, hyper - nationalisme et Islam en Turquie", *NAQD*, 1997, Vol. 1, No 10, p. 58.

⁹⁵ KAZANCIGIL Ali, "La diplomatie tous azimuts de la Turquie : émergence d'une puissance moyenne en Méditerranée", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2010, Vol. 3, No. 74, p. 111.

⁹⁶ MONGRENIER Jean-Sylvestre, "L'Etat turc, son armée et l'Otan : ami, alliée, non aligné ?", *Hérodote*, 2013, Vol. 1, No. 148, p. 63.

⁹⁷ HUNTINGTON Samuel, *Op. Cit.*, p. 25.

⁹⁸ GROG Gérard, "La doctrine Davutoglu : une projection diplomatique de la Turquie sur son environnement", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2012, Vol. 4, No. 83, p. 74.

⁹⁹ Cf. *Infra*, Geopolitics

the maritime boundaries¹⁰⁰. Turkey's position gives it a potential to be a mediator between civilizations and it could contribute to the alleviation of Huntington's probable clash¹⁰¹.

Davutoğlu wanted a peaceful foreign policy to promote stability in the region and have “zero problems with the neighbors” in order to reinforce Turkey's *soft power*. His aim was to use persuasion and negotiation to solve conflict instead of resolving around *hard power* and using force. For Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkey's “major source of power is its identity, which is rooted in its historical and geographic richness¹⁰²”. The country balances its Muslim roots with modern universal values such as democracy, Human rights and secularism. Although Turkey is not an Arab country, its dynamic market, the religious and historical affinities, and the cultural influence – with Turkish TV shows being watched by millions of Arabs – seemed to make it possible for Turkey to become an example to follow¹⁰³.

The foreign policy of Turkey now rests on four main principles: “security for all, high-level political dialogue, economic integration and interdependence, and multicultural coexistence”¹⁰⁴. Added to the four principles are five operational principles: a *balance* between freedom and security, the diplomacy must be *proactive* and *preemptive* to anticipate the conflicts, *multidimensional* so that it can be compatible with global relations, and *rhythmic*, meaning that Turkey must be active in every international organization that it is part of¹⁰⁵. The goal was to combine the *soft power* of Turkey with numerous economic investments and a reinforcement of its diplomatic force. Until recently, Turkey's diplomats did not speak Arabic because Turkey was focused on the West but, with the rejection of the West, it is making a considerable effort to strengthen its possibilities in the Middle East to become a

¹⁰⁰ GROC Gérard, "La doctrine Davutoglu : une projection diplomatique de la Turquie sur son environnement", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2012, Vol. 4, No. 83, p. 77.

¹⁰¹ ÇAKMAK Cenap and GÜNEYSU Gökhan, "Turkish – American Relations During Obama Era : Unfulfilled Expectations", *Turkish Studies*, 2013, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 204.

¹⁰² GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 201.

¹⁰³ KAZANCIGİL Ali, "La diplomatie tous azimuts de la Turquie : émergence d'une puissance moyenne en Méditerranée", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2010, Vol. 3, No. 74, p. 112.

¹⁰⁴ DAVUTOĞLU Ahmet, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy", *Foreign Policy*, May 20, 2010, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/05/20/turkeys-zero-problems-foreign-policy/>

¹⁰⁵ GROC Gérard, "La doctrine Davutoglu : une projection diplomatique de la Turquie sur son environnement", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2012, Vol. 4, No. 83, p. 80.

leader in the region. It is true that the place is to be taken, the other options – Iran or Israel – are paralyzed by tensions all over the place¹⁰⁶.

Turkey has advocated for a reform on the United Nations, claiming that the changing distribution of power in the international political system is going toward “a more level-playing field and a newly emerging multipolar world demanded translating these trends into formal structures”¹⁰⁷. This rebellion against the UN institutions which is not unique to Turkey is also a rebellion against the U.S. and this is particularly reflected in the votes. Differences between Turkey’s positions and the United States’ are well showed when we analyze the votes at the UN. In 1995, 70.6% of the votes were identical but the amount of identical votes drops a lot and very quickly: in 2002 it was only 42.9%¹⁰⁸. In June 2010, when Turkey enjoyed a seat in the Security Council, despite intensive lobbying by the Obama administration, it opposed a strengthening of the sanctions against Iran¹⁰⁹.

On May 17, 2010, Brasilia and Ankara announced that an agreement had been made with Iran regarding its nuclear program. This is an example of a challenge against the U.S. and the deal was viewed with a bad eye by Washington. The situation worsened on June 9, 2010, when both Brazil and Turkey voted against a resolution of the Security Council to increase the sanctions against Iran, in order to preserve the deal of May¹¹⁰. The Council members and the U.S. were very surprised by the “no” vote of Turkey as an abstention seemed more probable. The opposition angered the U.S. administration and Erdoğan made efforts to make things better with Obama, meeting him during the G20 in Toronto in 2010 and sending a delegation of parliamentarians and policy advisors to Washington to explain the Turkish position¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁶ KAZANCIGIL Ali, "La diplomatie tous azimuts de la Turquie : émergence d'une puissance moyenne en Méditerranée", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2010, Vol. 3, No. 74, p. 112.

¹⁰⁷ GABER Yevgeniya, "Turkish-American Relations in the Post-Cold War Era: Reconsidering the Power Balance Equation", in *Change and Adaptation in Turkish Foreign Policy*, Ankara, SETA, 2013, p. 35.

¹⁰⁸ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Que veut la Turquie? Ambitions et stratégies internationales*, Paris, Autrement, 2009, p. 64.

¹⁰⁹ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 192.

¹¹⁰ HALE William, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 171.

¹¹¹ CAKMAK Cenap and GÜNEYSU Gökhan, "Turkish – American Relations During Obama Era : Unfulfilled Expectations", *Turkish Studies*, 2013, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 197.

This desire to be proactive and preemptive in its diplomacy by Turkey, expressed by a willingness to become the mediator of choice for its neighbors, can be explained by the concept of leadership of Sandra Destradi¹¹² in which she explained that the nonpower influence of Klaus Knorr¹¹³ is an “essential feature in [International Relations]”¹¹⁴. One kind of nonpower influence mechanism that is important in this situation is the example of “[a country] act[ing] as a successful intermediary in bringing conflict between [two other countries] to a conclusion that is acceptable to both, and preferable to continued conflict”¹¹⁵. Turkey wants to express its leadership status by offering its services of mediator. Some authors¹¹⁶ argued that Turkey would want to go further as to become a regional hegemon but, while it is correct to affirm that Turkey is moving towards becoming a regional power, the will to become a hegemonic state is not proven yet. The first condition would be a divergence between American and Turkish interests because, otherwise, mutual solutions can be sought. Minor divergences will be analyzed in this paper but a major divergence still has to appear¹¹⁷.

Sandra Destradi identified three “ideal-typical regional strategies” for regional powers to use: empire, hegemony and leadership¹¹⁸. The leader-State “guides a group of states in order to realise or facilitate the realization of their common objectives”¹¹⁹. The difference with the hegemon or the empire is that the leader does not use power *stricto sensu* to convince the other states “since the followers’ participation is voluntary and in their own interest”¹²⁰.

Although the success of Davutoğlu’s vision was limited, the soft power impact on the neighbors is undeniable: “Turkey [...] has captured the imagination of millions of citizens in neighboring countries”¹²¹.

¹¹² DESTRADE Sandra, “Regional powers and their strategies: empire, hegemony, and leadership”, *Review of International Studies*, 2010, Vol. 36, No. 4, p. 922.

¹¹³ Cf. *Supra*, Smart Power **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**

¹¹⁴ DESTRADE Sandra, *Op. Cit.*, p. 922.

¹¹⁵ KNORR Klaus, *The POWER of NATIONS*, New York, Basic Books, 1975, p. 311.

¹¹⁶ ERICKSON Edward, "Turkey as Regional Hegemon – 2014: Strategic Implications for the United States", *Turkish Studies*, autumn 2004, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 26-45.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹¹⁸ DESTRADE Sandra, *Op. Cit.*, p. 903.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 921.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 923.

¹²¹ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America’s Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 201.

Before the uprising of 2011, Turkey had a promising growth of influence in the Middle East, seen as an ambitious regional power and accumulating diplomatic successes. With the instability in the Middle East, the growth of its influence has been halted. The ambiguity of its foreign policy regarding the Syrian crisis and the jihadist movements created mistrust both amongst the actors in the region and on the international scene. Turkey is in a difficult position, having bad relations with Russia, Iran and even Egypt¹²².

It was a big turnaround for Turkey who had strong connections with both Iraq and Syria before 2011 with its zero problems foreign policy. The relations with Syria, especially, had spectacular improvements between 2008 and 2011 that led Erdoğan and Davutoğlu to imagine a free trade area going from Syria to Morocco, an excellent alternative to the European Union, at a moment where negotiations with the EU were stagnating¹²³.

2. Syrian crisis

2.1. Bashar al-Assad

Since 2005, Turkey and Syria had tried to restore the tense relations. Both countries have abolished the visa requirement, there were joint Cabinet meetings, increased trade relations and a personal relationship was born between Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Bashar al-Assad¹²⁴. Turkey became Syria's largest trading partner in 2010¹²⁵.

At the beginning of Syria's "spring", Turkey tried to support its new ally. Although Erdoğan had a close relationship with Assad, he criticized his regime for the repressions of popular protests taking place since spring 2011. All the efforts of the Turkish diplomacy were going towards the improvement of the relations between the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the Syrian regime but it was vain¹²⁶. Erdoğan made the mistake to believe that the younger and less experimented Assad would

¹²² MARCOU Jean, "La Turquie en quête d'un nouveau positionnement au Moyen-Orient", *Politique étrangère*, 2016, Vol. 2, été, p. 63.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹²⁴ RYTZ Henriette and JOYAUX Dominique, "Atout turc ?", *Outre-Terre*, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 38, p. 310.

¹²⁵ ROBINS Philip, "Turkey's 'double gravity' predicament: the foreign policy of a newly activist power", *International Affairs*, 2013, Vol. 89, No. 2, p. 394.

¹²⁶ BEYLAU Pierre, débat sur le "Proche-Orient : le jeu des grandes puissances et les acteurs régionaux du conflit", *Les Cahiers de l'Orient*, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 113, p. 13.

“defer to his greater authority”¹²⁷ while the Syrian leader thought that he had “tamed Turkey on behalf of the Arab world, and was not going to be told what to do”¹²⁸. A personal dimension between the two leaders entered the conflict and complicated it. After a few months, Erdoğan declared that Assad should either accept the legitimate democratic requests of his citizen or step away from power. Faced with his refusal, he switched sides, betting on the fall of Assad’s regime and dashing at full speed in the middle of the crisis¹²⁹.

In 2007, Turkey took the decision to create a partnership with the Iraqi Kurdistan that became stronger throughout the years¹³⁰. That decision proved to be good for its security¹³¹ and its economy¹³², and it allowed Turkey to have a coherent strategy in regard of Iraq in general¹³³. It is the experience of the relations with the Iraqi Kurdistan that led Ankara to bet on the rebels’ card in Syria but the effects were really different.

Firstly, during the summer 2012, the forced evacuation of Assad’s forces from the Syrian Kurdistan let the place for a new actor in the Syrian crisis: the PYD¹³⁴, an organization partner of the PKK.

Secondly, Turkey had hoped that the rebels would be moderate Muslims, fighting for a secular and democratic state like Turkey but they proved to be mainly jihadist organizations¹³⁵.

Thirdly, Turkey has established itself as a place of refuge for the opponents of Assad, opening its borders and creating a refugee crisis¹³⁶.

Turkey also imposed military and economic sanctions on Syria and hosted the Syrian opposition to which it allied itself in order to force Assad to step down¹³⁷. Turkey

¹²⁷ ROBINS Philip, "Turkey's 'double gravity' predicament: the foreign policy of a newly activist power", *International Affairs*, 2013, Vol. 89, No. 2, p. 394.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

¹²⁹ MARCOU Jean, "La Turquie en quête d'un nouveau positionnement au Moyen-Orient", *Politique étrangère*, 2016, Vol. 2, été, p. 64.

¹³⁰ *Cf. Infra*, KRG

¹³¹ *Cf. Infra*, PKK

¹³² *Cf. Infra*, KRG

¹³³ MARCOU Jean, *Op. Cit.*, p.65.

¹³⁴ *Cf. Infra*, PYD

¹³⁵ MARCOU Jean, *Op. Cit.*, p.65.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.65-66.

became the rear base of all Syrian opposition and the Free Syrian Army: the Syrian National Council has its headquarters in Istanbul. Ankara also allows the delivery of weapons to the rebels, passing through its territory and the Free Syrian army could operate from Turkey until it was able to do so from conquered areas of Syria¹³⁸. It even allowed NATO to place *patriots* missiles on its soil not long after a Turkish plane was shut down by the Syrian army¹³⁹.

2.2. Daesh/ISIL

Turkey is, like the U.S., disappointed by the results of the moderate Syrian opposition against the regime. To protect its interests, Ankara is therefore forced to bring non official support to more effective forces such as the Jihadists movements¹⁴⁰. Support is provided in a variety of ways: passage of weapons and fighters, supplies, and so on. The neutrality towards Daesh is explained by calculations of realpolitik to preserve Turkey's interests and notably its energy interests. Turkey's growing energy needs have sometimes led to ambiguous and questionable positions¹⁴¹.

The “good” relations between Daesh and Ankara quickly turned gladiatorial. In June 2014, during the capture of Mosul by Daesh the terrorist organization took Turkish diplomats hostage. This shows again the ambiguity of the relationship because Ankara did not even bother to evacuate its consulate, thinking that Daesh would not dare to go after Turkish citizens. Moreover, the hostages were treated well and released two months later while Daesh usually executes his prisoners¹⁴². In February 2015, Turkish forces evacuated the tomb of Suleyman Shah in a location closer to the border between Turkey and Syria because Daesh had threatened to attack it¹⁴³.

¹³⁷ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 201.

¹³⁸ RYTZ Henriette and JOYAUX Dominique, "Atout turc ?", *Outre-Terre*, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 38, p. 310.

¹³⁹ BEYLAU Pierre, débat sur le "Proche-Orient : le jeu des grandes puissances et les acteurs régionaux du conflit", *Les Cahiers de l'Orient*, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 113, p. 13.

¹⁴⁰ MARCOU Jean, *Op. Cit.*, p. 356.

¹⁴¹ JABBOUR Jana and REBIERE Noémie, "La Turquie au cœur des enjeux géopolitiques et énergétiques régionaux", *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2014, Vol. 4, No. 91, p. 46.

¹⁴² MARCOU Jean, "La Turquie et l'Etat islamique : d'un mariage de raison à un divorce à l'amiable", *Outre-Terre*, 2015, Vol. 3, No. 44, p. 357.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.66.

Pressured by its allies and by the attacks committed by Daesh on its territory, since 2015, Turkey agreed to conduct airstrikes on Daesh in Syria and developed its police operations to dismantle the network established in Turkey. It was done willy-nilly because the Turkish government fears that Daesh would be replaced by a stronger and entirely autonomous Syrian Kurdistan, threatening Turkey's national sovereignty by reinforcing the PKK and the Turkish Kurds¹⁴⁴.

Finally, rhetoric also shows that Daesh and Turkey have become enemies. Online publications and videos from Daesh showed animosity against Erdoğan and Turkey for the first time in 2015. In the same year, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs called Daesh a "terrorist organization" for the first time¹⁴⁵. In August 2015, the Turkish air force participated to an operation against Daesh with the coalition led by the United States, for the first time¹⁴⁶.

3. Kurdish issue

After the end of the Cold War, the Kurdish issue became the first security threat for Turkey.

3.1. KRG

Like the United States, Turkey is also one of the most important contacts for the Iraqi Kurdistan. It is its principal ally¹⁴⁷ and economic partner with contracts to export oil via pipelines passing through Turkey¹⁴⁸.

It is a paradox for Turkey to have become an ally of the Iraqi Kurdistan after years of repressions against the Kurds. The attitude from Turkey towards the KRG rapidly changed, when the latter saw the trade opportunities that a partnership would create. In March 2010, Erdoğan made a visit to the Kurdistan Region, an acknowledgment of the expanding partnership. Thousands of Turks work in the region and Turkish companies amount for more than two thirds of the foreign

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.67.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

¹⁴⁷ SIMONET Loïc, "Les hydrocarbures du Kurdistan irakien, au Cœur de l'imbroglio régional", *Géoéconomie*, 2015, Vol. 2, No. 74, pp. 153-154.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-158.

companies investing in the region¹⁴⁹. In 2015, the main import origin in Iraq was Turkey with \$8.55 billion, accounting for more than a quarter of the total imports¹⁵⁰.

The Iraqi Kurdistan is the only success of Davutoğlu's "zero problems" foreign policy. The rapprochement between the two can be explained by the *realpolitik*: the economic effervescence of Turkey requires a lot of energy¹⁵¹. The economical *hard power* of Turkey becomes *smart* in Iraq because of the mixture with *soft power*: Turkish religious associations create schools for Arabs, Turkmens and Kurds in Iraq, joining cultural influence to the business opportunities¹⁵².

Turkey has a relatively ambiguous policy towards the Iraqi government, often claiming that it does not want to create instability in Iraq but the agreements with the KRG led the Federal government of Iraq to file a claim to the International Chamber of Commerce in 2014¹⁵³. Turkey's attitude shows clearly that it considers the independence of Kurdistan inevitable in the long run, thus degrading its relations with Bagdad¹⁵⁴.

In March 2013, Erdoğan and Nechervan Barzani – the prime minister of the KRG since 2012 – created a structure to facilitate the exploration and the exportation of the Kurdistan's oil without going through Bagdad, which angered Washington¹⁵⁵.

3.2. PKK

After the operation *Provide Comfort*, the Kurds were able to establish a base in Northern Iraq and, from there; PKK insurgents launched attacks on targets in Turkey. There was an important support from Syria towards the PKK: Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK was able to take refuge in Syria and the PKK forces were able to use training camps in Lebanon, provided by Syria. In 1993, the influence of the PKK in the South East of Turkey was so intense that the climate was close to revolts such as the Palestinian intifada, and the PKK was so well established that it raised taxes and prohibited the activities of other parties. In March 1993,

¹⁴⁹ SPITAEELS Guy, *L'Hégémonie Contrariée. Obama, deux ans après*, Liège, Luc Pire Edition, 2011, p. 76.

¹⁵⁰ Observatory of Economic Complexity : Iraq, <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/irq/>

¹⁵¹ SIMONET Loïc, "Les hydrocarbures du Kurdistan irakien, au Cœur de l'imbroglie régionale", *Géoeconomie*, 2015, Vol. 2, No. 74, p. 160.

¹⁵² SPITAEELS Guy, *Op. Cit.*, p. 77.

¹⁵³ SIMONET Loïc, *Op. Cit.*, p. 163.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

Öcalan declared a unilateral ceasefire but he was probably surprised by the consequences: the Turkish government resumed a full scale war against the PKK and the Turkish army gradually regained control of the territories until 1998. At the same time, the Turkish military also made incursions against the PKK in Iraq, sometimes joining forces with the Peshmerga – the military forces of the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan¹⁵⁶.

Until 1998, Syria was the host of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan but the combination of Turkey's diplomatic efforts and military threats pushed Hafiz al-Assad in expelling Öcalan from Syria on October 7. After wandering through Europe – Russia, Italy, Belarus and Greece – he was arrested in Nairobi, Kenya by a Turkish security team on February 16. He was sentenced to death on June 29, 1998 but a sentence of this kind could not be enforced without parliamentary approval, which did not happen. The European Union and the Council of Europe pressured Turkey to abolish the capital punishment and this was realized in 2002, transforming the sentence of Öcalan to life imprisonment at the same time. In 1999, the PKK declared its second unilateral cease-fire¹⁵⁷.

With the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the PKK saw resurgence in its activities with the appearance of a Kurdish administration in the North of Iraq, supported by the United States. The PKK ended the cease fire in September 2003 and its attacks killed almost 150 people between 2003 and 2005. After a pause in its actions, the abuses resumed in the autumn of 2007, killing and abducting Turkish soldiers. It evened the relations between the Turkish government and the American authorities in Iraq who either did not want to stop the PKK or was not able to do it. To prevent a unilateral action from Turkey in Iraq, in November 2007, President Bush agreed to give intelligence to the Turkish army and allowed it to conduct field operations in Iraq, severely damaging the PKK's forces¹⁵⁸.

While the PKK is an armed organization, Kurds in Turkey have also organized non-violent activities and political parties. These parties have maintained more or less close relations with the PKK throughout the years. The least that can be said about the relations between the Turkish government and the Kurdish parties is

¹⁵⁶ HALE William, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 144.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

that they were tense. In 1991, 22 Kurdish representatives were elected as part of the *Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti* (SHP) – the Social Democratic Populist Party – and then joined the *Halkın Emek Partisi* (HEP) – the People’s Labor Party – but the promotion of Kurdish interests led the party to be banned by the Constitutional Court in 1993. The successor party, the *Demokrasi Partisi* (DEP) – the Democracy Party – was also shut down in 1994 for treason and some representatives were arrested after their parliamentary immunities were lifted. The party that took over then was the *Halkın Demokrasi Partisi* (HADEP) – the People’s Democracy Party – and it was able to run in the 1995 and 1999 general elections although it did not reach the election threshold that was 5% at the time. It ended up being banned in 2003¹⁵⁹. The successor of HADEP, *Demokratik Halk Partisi* (DEHAP) – the Democratic People’s Party, succeeded in reaching the election threshold of 10% in the elections of 2007 and securing 19 seats and then merging with the DTH to form the *Demokratik Toplum Partisi* (DTP) – the Democratic Society Party¹⁶⁰.

In 2005, Erdoğan changed the Turkish government’s attitude towards the Kurds by accepting cultural rights. He recognized that there are secondary identities for the Turkish citizens. The right to broadcast in Kurdish on public radio and TV and to teach in Kurdish had only been acquired in 2002. Progresses were made under the AKP with the creation of Kurdish language departments in some universities and a private Kurdish TV channel emerged. In 2009, they launched the “Kurdish opening”, offering new opportunities for the fighters of the PKK to be resettled outside of Turkey. The DTP and the PKK took advantage of the opening and turned it into propaganda, leading the Constitutional Court to ban the DTP on December 11, 2009. It reformed into the *Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi* (BDP) – the Peace and Democracy Party – that tried to be more moderate. From then, Turkey also received help from Syria and Iran (facing attacks from an ally of the PKK) in fighting against the PKK as well as from the U.S. intelligence and the Iraqi-Kurdish administration¹⁶¹.

Today, the Kurds in Turkey are represented by the *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* (HDP) – the People’s Democratic Party – that was founded in 2012 and

¹⁵⁹ HALE William, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, New York, Routledge, 2013, pp. 144-145.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

regroups other minorities than the Kurds. In the general elections of 2015, the HDP managed to bypass the 10% threshold with 13.12% of the votes, securing 81 seats in the parliament¹⁶².

3.3. PYD

Erdoğan seeks to restore Turkey's leadership in the Sunni world and his main obstacle is the Kurds. In 2015, he recognized that Daesh was not Turkey's enemy. What Erdoğan fears is that the Kurds of Syria would get their autonomy and join the Kurds of Iraq who already have achieved a certain autonomy¹⁶³.

With its anti-Kurdish campaign, Turkey damaged its image in the region, especially during the siege of Kobanê in 2014 and with the support of the non-Kurdish rebels, Ankara showed that it had common interests with jihadists and therefore ruined its image on the international scene. At the same time, the Kurds who are fighting against these same jihadists are gaining a lot of prestige and support¹⁶⁴.

Turkey's hostility towards the PYD, the relative tolerance of Daesh and the late rallying of the international campaign against the terrorist organization hindered the American strategy in Syria. Ankara also criticized the American support of the PYD, arguing that it was an indirect support to the PKK¹⁶⁵.

By accepting that the removal of Assad was not a feasible short term objective¹⁶⁶, Turkey had the opportunity to focus on the Syrian Kurdish issue. In doing so, Ankara and Moscow were able to find common stances, the former wanting to avoid the development of the PYD and therefore the PKK, and the latter wanting to fight Assad's opposition. The common ground between Turkey and Russia led to the adoption of the Resolution 2336 in the Security Council, on December 31, 2016, showing a detachment from the U.S. and a cooperation between Turkey and Russia to try "to end violence in Syria" by instating a ceasefire, and to

¹⁶² KEMAHLIOĞLU Özge, "Winds of Change? The June 2015 Parliamentary Election in Turkey", *South European Society and Politics*, 2015, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 445-464.

¹⁶³ SFEIR Antoine, interview realized by François Euvé, "Quelles perspectives pour le Proche-Orient?", *Etudes*, Février 2016, Vol. 2, p. 26.

¹⁶⁴ MARCOU Jean, "La Turquie en quête d'un nouveau positionnement au Moyen-Orient", *Politique étrangère*, 2016, Vol. 2, été, p.66.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p 71.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *Supra*, Bashar al-Assad

achieve an eventual settlement¹⁶⁷. Although the cooperation between the two countries shows that Turkey is independent from the West and it is a first step for Russia's strategy to establish a *finlandization* of Turkey – forcing it to favour Russia for economic reasons –, long term objectives will be very hard to reconcile¹⁶⁸.

4. Israel

Israel is similar to Turkey since they have the two biggest army forces of the region and they are both strong democracies¹⁶⁹. The relations between Turkey and Israel have been rhythmized by the relations between the latter and the United States. In 1996, Turkey and Israel had signed three military cooperation agreements and a free trade agreement. In 2001, a military cooperation, presented as humanitarian, was introduced by Washington, Tel-Aviv and Ankara¹⁷⁰. When the Turkish parliament refused to grant access to the American soldiers in 2003, the deterioration of the relations with the U.S. had an impact on those with Israel. During the 2009 World Economic Forum in Davos, Erdoğan aggravated the tensions by making a scene¹⁷¹, directly blaming President Shimon Perez for bombings in Gaza¹⁷².

In 2010, *IHH İnsani Yardım Vakfı* (IHH) – IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation – a conservative Turkish NGO (with a lot of governmental support and ties with the AKP), organized a flotilla to break the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip. On May 31, armed Israeli forces boarded the *Mavi Marmara*, one of the largest ships and nine activists – 8 Turkish citizens and 1 Turkish-American – on board were killed. There were strong international condemnation of the raid and the strongest came from Turkish officials. In June, Ankara recalled its ambassador from Tel Aviv, ended the common military exercises with Israel, and closed its airspace to Israeli military aircrafts. Erdoğan also froze the trade ties with Israel¹⁷³. On July 5,

¹⁶⁷ Resolution 2336 (2016) of the UN Security Council, 31 December 2016, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2336\(2016\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2336(2016))

¹⁶⁸ LOGAN David, "Turkey and the West: Whatever went wrong?", *British Academy*, January 2017, p. 38.

¹⁶⁹ RYTZ Henriette and JOYAUX Dominique, "Atout turc ?", *Outre-Terre*, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 38, p. 306.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

¹⁷¹ WALT Stephen, "The real significance of Erdogan's Davos Outburst", *Foreign Policy*, February 2, 2009, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/02/02/the-real-significance-of-erdogans-davos-outburst/>

¹⁷² SPITAEELS Guy, *L'Hégémonie Contrariée. Obama, deux ans après*, Liège, Luc Pire Edition, 2011, pp. 79-80.

¹⁷³ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 198.

Davutoğlu threatened Tel Aviv to break the relations (without précising which relations) if it did not apologize for the raid, something that Prime Minister Netanyahu judged impossible¹⁷⁴. The incident isolated Israel on the international scene, with the U.S. as their only supporter due to the “pro-Israeli instincts of the Congress”¹⁷⁵.

The need for U.S. to mediate between the two countries kept increasing when, in 2011, during a tour in the countries that experienced Arab Springs (Egypt, Tunisia and Libya), Erdoğan had strong words against Israel, calling it “the West’s spoiled child”¹⁷⁶ and threatening the establishment of a Turkish navy’s presence in the Mediterranean. Turkey sees the unconditional support of the U.S. toward Israel as a factor of instability in the region, fueling conflicts¹⁷⁷. The conflicting situation between its partners had consequences for the U.S. that could no longer work inside the trilateral cooperation and had to totally reframe its foreign policy in the Middle East in the context of the Arab Springs. It also deteriorated the collaboration within NATO, of which Israel is one of the major allies.

The situation between its two allies forced the United States to push for an appeasement and it led Obama to personally intervene by asking the release of the captured activists¹⁷⁸. During his visit in Israel in March 2013, President Obama managed to get the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to apologize to Erdoğan for the attack and announce compensations for the victims’ families¹⁷⁹. It was a big step but the Palestinian issue is still not solved and it is complicated. While the Hamas is considered as a terrorist organization by Israel and the United States, Ankara maintains good relations with it which is both an issue for the relations between Ankara and Tel-Aviv, but also an opportunity to find a solution to the Palestinian issue, the United States having the possibility to contact the Hamas through Turkey¹⁸⁰.

¹⁷⁴ SPITAEELS Guy, *L'Hégémonie Contrariée. Obama, deux ans après*, Liège, Luc Pire Edition, 2011, pp. 80-81.

¹⁷⁵ HALE William, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 172.

¹⁷⁶ GERGES Fawaz, *Op. Cit.*, p. 198.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

¹⁷⁸ SPITAEELS Guy, *Op. Cit.*, p. 81.

¹⁷⁹ RYTZ Henriette and JOYAUX Dominique, "Atout turc ?", *Outre-Terre*, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 38, p. 308.

¹⁸⁰ RYTZ Henriette and JOYAUX Dominique, "Atout turc ?", *Outre-Terre*, 2014, Vol. 1, No. 38, p. 309.

Despite political tensions after the incident of 2010, economic relations continued between the two countries. In 2010, the total volume of Israeli-Turkish trade reached \$3 billion and it kept growing, exceeding \$5 billion in 2014. At the same time, the political climate in the Middle East had a strong impact on the relations between the two countries. While they did not feel the need for a military alliance in 2010, the civil war in Syria and the rise of Iran were motivating factors in renewing the ties. On Sunday, the 26th of June 2016, Israel and Turkey reached an agreement to normalize ties, ending the six years long *mavi marmara* issue. This was announced in a press conference by Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım after long negotiations. The deal had economic dimensions: Turkish aid was delivered to the Gaza Strip under Israel's supervision and the latter provided \$22 million to the family members of the 9 activists killed. A clause also spoke of cooperation between Ankara and Hamas to find missing Israeli civilians and to recover the bodies of two soldiers¹⁸¹.

The full restoration of diplomatic relations is unlikely going to result in a return to a military and intelligence partnership even if the rise of Iran or terrorist group threats are of common interest to both countries¹⁸². Nevertheless, the advance towards normalization and the return of ambassadors had several effects. In addition to authorizing humanitarian access, Turkish exports to the Gaza Strip, via Israel, were facilitated by a reduction in restrictions. The Turks have also made efforts: the prosecutions against the Israelis who attacked the *mavi marmara* have been canceled. The trading volume had reached its peak in 2014. It fell back to \$4.1 billion in 2015 and to less than \$4 billion in 2016. Nonetheless, both countries stay very important to one another and Turkey is Israel's 6th largest trading partner¹⁸³.

¹⁸¹ CUNNINGHAM Erin and EGLASH Ruth, "Israel and Turkey announce deal to repair relations after six-year split", *Washington Post*, June 27, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/israel-turkey-announce-deal-to-repair-relations-after-six-year-split/2016/06/27/aa2399ae-3bd5-11e6-9e16-4cf01a41decb_story.html?utm_term=.b2fa4f93669f

¹⁸² ZANOTTI Jim, "Israel: background and U.S. Relations", CRS, October 28, 2016, pp. 16-17.

¹⁸³ ARBELL Dan, "Tensions over Jerusalem expose vulnerability of Turkey-Israel relations, one year after normalizing ties", *Brookings*, July 31, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/07/31/tensions-over-jerusalem-expose-vulnerability-of-turkey-israel-relations-one-year-after-normalizing-ties/>

Chapter 3. The Relations between the U.S. and Turkey

1. Historical background of the U.S.-Turkey relations

1.1. Pre-Cold War

The relations between the United States and the Ottoman Empire date back to the 19th century when the United States was politically isolationist and the Ottoman Empire was part of the European balance of power politics but saw the U.S. as an alternative partner to the European countries¹⁸⁴. The first trade agreement between the two countries was signed on May 7, 1830¹⁸⁵. It was a Treaty of Commerce and Navigation and embassies were opened following it. The U.S. focused mostly on the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire because of the Christian common roots. In 1862, the Ottoman Empire was granted the most favored nation status by the U.S. in their second Treaty of Commerce and Navigation¹⁸⁶. During the American Civil War, the Ottoman Empire supported the North which ended up being victorious, increasing the cooperation and confidence¹⁸⁷ between the two countries. The Ottoman Empire purchased weapons from the U.S. at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. The diplomatic relations were halted with the First World War until the Turkish Independence War and the reopening of embassies in 1927. A trade agreement was signed in 1929 and “the relations between the two countries gained momentum after the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 and Atatürk’s letter of condolence to the U.S. president after the Los Angeles earthquake in 1933. Continuing correspondence between Roosevelt and Atatürk played a part in warming relations between the two nations”¹⁸⁸. During the Second World War, Turkey wanted to recover its economy and not engage itself in a war. Therefore it had a waiting policy which did not help the relations with the U.S.¹⁸⁹. When Turkey declared war against Germany, the defeat of the Nazi regime was already guaranteed and the

¹⁸⁴ TÜRKMEN Füsün, "Turkish-American Relations: A Challenging Transition", *Turkish Studies*, March 2009, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 110.

¹⁸⁵ HOWARD Harry, "The Bicentennial in American-Turkish Relations", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 30, no. 3, 1976, p. 291.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

¹⁸⁷ KARA Serdar, *Turkish – American Relations post 9/11*, Thesis for the Naval Postgraduate School of Monterey, California, Dudley Knox Library, 2007, p. 7.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁸⁹ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Que veut la Turquie? Ambitions et stratégies internationales*, Paris, Autrement, 2009, pp. 59-60.

victorious powers were furious of Turkey's evasive stance¹⁹⁰. The U.S. were the fiercest opponent in seeing Turkey having a role in the new era and it was Great Britain that convinced it to consider Turkey positively as a contributor for the Western interests¹⁹¹.

1.2. Cold War

During the Cold War, the foreign policy of Turkey is characterized by the fear of the Soviet Union, leading it to join multiple alliances. During the Korean War (1951-1953), the Turkish brigade stood out and thanks to the rescue of American soldiers, Turkey received the approval of the United States to join NATO in 1952¹⁹². Turkey also joined the Balkan Pact of 1953 and the Baghdad Pact in 1955. Strong ties between the United States and the Turkish army led the former to recognize and endorse the latter's coups d'état in 1960 and 1971¹⁹³.

The main characteristic of the Cold War in international relations is the confrontation between the U.S.S.R. and the West. "In this context, Turkey assumed great strategic importance. It shared a border with the Soviet Union and, across the Black Sea, with other Warsaw Pact States. It controlled Soviet access from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean via the Bosphorus. Membership of NATO and of CENTO (whose other members were Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and the UK) contained risks as well as advantages for Turkey, but connection with the West (a key part of Atatürk's legacy) and protection against the old enemy, Russia, provided by membership of NATO prevailed"¹⁹⁴.

The first difficulties arose during the missile crisis in Cuba which resulted in the removal of the American missiles located in Turkey, without having consulted the Turkish authorities. For Ankara, this was the first time that the protection from the Soviet Union by the United States did not seem foolproof¹⁹⁵.

¹⁹⁰ ÇAKMAK Cenap and GÜNEYSU Gökhan, "Turkish – American Relations During Obama Era : Unfulfilled Expectations", *Turkish Studies*, 2013, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 194.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

¹⁹² DORRONSORO Gilles, *Que veut la Turquie? Ambitions et stratégies internationales*, Paris, Autrement, 2009, pp. 59-60.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁹⁴ LOGAN David, "Turkey and the West: Whatever went wrong?", *British Academy*, January 2017, p. 36.

¹⁹⁵ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 60-61.

In 1964, Turkey plans a military intervention in Cyprus to protect the Turkish community on the island. The response from President Johnson casts a chill on the relations. Indeed, in a letter – that was made public – to the Turkish government, Lyndon Johnson warned Turkey that its “NATO allies have not had a chance to consider whether they have an obligation to protect Turkey against the Soviet Union if Turkey takes a step which results in Soviet intervention without the full consent and understanding of its NATO allies”¹⁹⁶. These threats deteriorated the relations between the two countries and did not prevent the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The invasion triggered a certain escalation: The United States imposed an arms embargo that lasted until 1978 and removed its nuclear missiles from Thrace. In response, Turkey closed the American bases on its soil. It will be necessary to wait for the 1980 coup to see the relations normalize¹⁹⁷.

The military intervention in 1980 did not face significant opposition from the United States. There were a few criticisms in the international press and in the U.S. Congress but this did not resolve in sanctions against Turkey. On the contrary, the U.S. continued to grant aid to the Turkish military. The preference given to the authoritarianism of the military can be explained by the context of the Cold War in which the aggravated destabilization of the country, by diminishing the authority of the military, risked bringing it into the camp of the Soviet Union. By supporting the military, they also gave them confidence that they could succeed in accomplishing the democratic transition. The balance of power in their favor, added to an economic support coming from the U.S., the World Bank and the IMF helped the military to end the economic crisis, one of the causes of their uprising. They therefore had the possibility of organizing democratic elections in 1983, leading to the victory of Turgut Özal¹⁹⁸.

1.3. Post-Cold War

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the relationship between Turkey and the United States is transformed. The amount of American soldiers in Turkey is greatly

¹⁹⁶ BOLUKBASI, Suha. “The Johnson Letter Revisited.” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 1993, Vol. 29, No. 3, p. 517.

¹⁹⁷ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Que veut la Turquie? Ambitions et stratégies internationales*, Paris, Autrement, 2009, pp. 61-62.

¹⁹⁸ AYDIN-DÜZGİT Senem and GÜRSOY Yaprak, *International Influences on the Turkish Transition to Democracy in 1983*, Stanford, CDDRL, July 2008, p. 3-4.

decreased: from 20,000 in 1960 to 8,000 in 1997; 14 out of 20 military bases are closed; and the economic help from the U.S. military is reduced from \$700 million in 1986 to \$500 million in 1991 and to \$175 million in 1997. Turkey is no longer needed as an outpost against the U.S.S.R. but its strategic importance remains firmly anchored for the United States, this time facing the Middle East¹⁹⁹.

In the first Gulf War, the partnership between the two countries is at a peak, with an excellent cooperation between President Bush and President Özal. On January 17, 1990, both Presidents met and Özal warned Bush of the dangers emanating from Saddam Hussein, dangers for both Turkey and the United States. He renewed his warning in a phone call on July 22, explaining that Saddam was going to invade Kuwait²⁰⁰.

The war did not serve the interests of Turkey, its loss were both political (with the establishment of a Kurdish autonomous region²⁰¹) and economical: the loss is estimated to around \$2 billion per year because it could not perceive royalties over the pipeline and because of the exportations' reductions²⁰².

While Bush showed a great interest in the Middle East, on the other hand, President Clinton, at least in his first mandate, is mostly focused on the internal issues of the United States and not on its foreign policy; and definitely not on Turkey. This attitude will change during the second Clinton mandate. In 1999, during an official visit in Turkey, Clinton announced a strategic partnership between the two countries²⁰³. President Clinton turned out to be highly popular in Turkey due to the U.S. interventions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Kosovo, respectively in 1995 and 1999. These operations were aimed at defending Muslims from the Serbian regime of Milosevic. President Clinton also was praised in Turkey after his speech in front of the Turkish Parliament, as well as participating in bringing the OSCE summit to Istanbul in 1999²⁰⁴.

¹⁹⁹ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Que veut la Turquie? Ambitions et stratégies internationales*, Paris, Autrement, 2009, pp. 62-63

²⁰⁰ BALIK Gürkan, *Turkey and the US in the Middle East: Diplomacy and Discord during the Iraq Wars*, New York, I.B. Tauris, 2016, p. 39.

²⁰¹ Cf. *infra*, KRG

²⁰² DORRONSORO Gilles, *Op. Cit.*, p. 67.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²⁰⁴ KIRIŞCI Kemal, *Turkey's foreign policy in turbulent times*, Paris, EUISS, 2006, p. 83.

After the September 11 attacks, the government of Turkey and its population stood up behind the United States' decision to invade Afghanistan to apprehend Osama bin Laden, dismantle al-Qaeda and the Taliban, hosting the terrorist organization. Turkey participated in the multinational force, providing troops. It also provided support to Hamid Karzai, President of Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014²⁰⁵.

The invasion of Iraq will create tensions between the two countries. In Turkey, the transition of government will have influence on the support toward the United States. Prime Minister Ecevit found an agreement during his visit in Washington on January 16, 2002: a concrete investment of Turkish forces in Iraq of 50,000 soldiers – officially in order to prevent a massive afflux of refugees such as the one from 1991 – canceling any chance of Kurdish independence; and a support to the Iraqi Turkmens by the United States in exchange²⁰⁶. Such an agreement clearly came from the executives because both the army and the public opinion were opposed to a unilateral intervention by the United States from the start²⁰⁷.

Unfortunately for the realization of these common interests, in the Turkish general election of 2002, the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP) – the Justice and Development Party – managed to win 34.28% of the votes and therefore 363 out of 550 seats in the Turkish Parliament due to the election threshold of 10%²⁰⁸. When Erdoğan came to power, he expressed his opposition toward American interferences in the Middle East to transform the political regimes. In the first time, he negotiated the Turkish support to an intervention in Iraq on the condition of legality: if the Security Council allows it. Since such a resolution became very unlikely, Erdoğan made a visit in the United States on December 10, 2002 and a deal seemed reachable. The deal would have been favorable for Turkey which would have received \$6 billion as well as a \$24 billion loan, be granted an access for 60,000 soldiers to create

²⁰⁵ KIRIŞCI Kemal, *Turkey's foreign policy in turbulent times*, Paris, EUISS, 2006, p. 79.

²⁰⁶ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Que veut la Turquie? Ambitions et stratégies internationales*, Paris, Autrement, 2009, p. 68.

²⁰⁷ KIRIŞCI Kemal, *Op. Cit.*, p. 79.

²⁰⁸ CAGAPTAY Soner, The November 2002 Elections and Turkey's New Political Era, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, December 2002, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 42.

a control zone and the Iraqi Turkmens would have been recognized as founding members of the Iraqi nation²⁰⁹.

Nonetheless, the Turkish Parliament, following the public opinion did not endorse the agreement, putting the relations between Turkey and the United States into another crisis. The crisis was aggravated when, on March 20, 2003, the Parliament voted a resolution allowing its soldiers to enter Iraq, without the American approval. This led to the arrest and detention of eleven Turkish special forces soldiers – accused of preparing anti-Kurdish attacks in al-Sulaymaniyya – by the U.S. army on July 4, 2003. After a flurry of telephone diplomacy between Ankara and Washington and the burning of U.S. flags in front of the American embassy, the soldiers were evicted back to Turkey two days later²¹⁰. The crisis was at its peak after 2 American operations: *Operation Black Typhoon* in Tala'far, resulting in about 58 Turkmens' deaths²¹¹; and *Operation Phantom Fury* in Fallujah, one of the worst battles for the U.S. army since the Vietnam War, suffering about a hundred casualties and many more wounded²¹². These operations have generated comments and criticisms from the Turkish government that were not well received by the American administration. The Turkish public opinion toward the United States was deteriorating even more during the war because the American forces could not realize a stable transition in Iraq. The invasion of Iraq sets the basis of the modern anti-Americanism²¹³ that we see in Turkey today²¹⁴.

It is important to understand a misunderstanding by the Bush administration which saw Turkey as an “agent of change that could assist in democratizing the region”²¹⁵. In reality, Turkey was much more inclined to influence the other countries of the region by being an example of success and it focused on *soft power*,

²⁰⁹ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Que veut la Turquie? Ambitions et stratégies internationales*, Paris, Autrement, 2009, p. 68.

²¹⁰ TÜRKMEN Füsün, "Turkish-American Relations: A Challenging Transition", *Turkish Studies*, March 2009, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 123.

²¹¹ DORRONSORO Gilles, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 69-70.

²¹² KIRIŞCI Kemal, *Turkey's foreign policy in turbulent times*, Paris, EUISS, 2006, p.79.

²¹³ Cf. *infra*, The image of the United States

²¹⁴ KIRIŞCI Kemal, *Op. Cit.*, p. 79.

²¹⁵ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 193.

emphasizing dialogue and economic ties while the United States relied on *hard power* to impose its reforms²¹⁶.

Although Turkey did not allow a ground passage for the American troops, in 2003, Erdoğan – prime minister at the time – emphasized the importance of the cooperation in the fight against terrorism²¹⁷.

Aware of the damages done by the previous administration to the relations with the Muslim world, Obama aimed to reset the relationships, working on that both at home where Muslims were directly associated with Al Qaeda and radical extremism, and abroad²¹⁸.

When President Obama made his first trip to Turkey in April 2009, in a joint press conference with Turkish President Abdullah Gül, he explained that coming to Turkey was a statement for the world. He thought that Turkey could be a model for the world and “that Turkey and the United States can build a model partnership in which a predominantly Christian nation and a predominantly Muslim nation, a Western nation and a nation that straddles two continents”²¹⁹ work together. Turkey shares indeed deep connections with the Christian West and the Muslim world.

Later that day, in a speech at the Turkish Parliament, Obama said that “the United States is not at war with Islam and will never be”²²⁰. It is important to note that Bush said the exact same thing on multiple occasions but it is clear that Obama seemed to believe it much more than his predecessor²²¹.

Turkey was the first Muslim country that Obama chose to visit and it was an important statement. He recognized “Turkey as the most pivotal pro-United States country in the Muslim world, essential to his foreign policy agenda to repair

²¹⁶ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 193.

²¹⁷ INBAR Ephraim, “À quoi servent les relations israélo-turques ? ”, *Outre-Terre* 2005/1 (no 10), pp. 235-251.

²¹⁸ GERGES Fawaz, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 98-99.

²¹⁹ OBAMA Barack, The President's News Conference With President Abdullah Gul of Turkey in Ankara, Turkey, April 6, 2009.

²²⁰ OBAMA Barack, The President's speech at the Turkish Parliament, April 6, 2009, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/full-text-of-the-us-presidents-speech-at-turkish-parliament-11376661>

²²¹ HADDAD Mezri, “L'islamisme, enjeu géopolitique majeur de la stratégie américaine... à ses risques et périls”, *Outre-Terre*, 2013, Vol. 3, No. 37, p. 274.

America's relations with Muslims"²²². He wanted to emphasize the possibility for Turkey to be an effective bridge between the West and the East²²³. During his visit, he made sure to show his support toward a Turkish accession to the European Union²²⁴.

Since Obama's campaign was partly based on the end of the Middle East wars and the withdrawal of American troops, that diminishes the possibilities of operation and relations with the Muslim countries, he needed allies to defend his interests in the region²²⁵.

On May 1, 2009, Davutoğlu visited Washington and after meeting Obama's team, he predicted that there would be a "golden age in Turkish-American relations"²²⁶. Both countries cooperated in important fields such as the International Security Assistance force in Afghanistan in which Turkey contributed, and in the reconstruction of Iraq²²⁷.

2. Geopolitical interest of Turkey for the United States

2.1. Geopolitics

In order to analyze the geopolitical importance of Turkey for the U.S., we must define what we mean by geopolitics.

The founder of global geopolitical perspectives is Halford Mackinder, an English geographer. Although he did not invent the word "geopolitics", he analyzes the relations between states in the scope of space and politics. Mixing geography and politics is a must for Mackinder who believed that statesmen need geographical knowledge to take strategic decisions.

Mackinder considers that the whole planet has been conquered and wonders which part of the world must be held to control its entirety. His postulate is that a

²²² GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 194.

²²³ SPITAEELS Guy, *L'Hégémonie Contrariée. Obama, deux ans après*, Liège, Luc Pire Edition, 2011, pp. 71-72.

²²⁴ Cf. *Infra*, Accession of Turkey to the European Union

²²⁵ GERGES Fawaz, *Op. Cit.*, p. 195.

²²⁶ HALE William, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 169.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

central position allows for global radiation. In *The Geographical Pivot of History*²²⁸, he mostly used the expressions “pivot area” and “pivot state” when referring to that area, but in *The Round World and the Winning of the Peace*²²⁹ and *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, he calls this strategic region the *Heartland* of the Continent²³⁰. For Mackinder, the Heartland is located in Eurasia – without giving it specific borders – and its control grants the domination of the World-Island.

Around the Heartland, there are two circles: the *inner crescent* and the *outer crescent*²³¹. The former, also called the marginal crescent, is composed by a belt of countries surrounding the Heartland such as Germany, Austria, Turkey, India and China²³². The latter, also called the insular crescent, is comprised of islands and very distant countries from the Heartland such as Britain, South Africa, Australia, the U.S., Canada and Japan²³³.

Mackinder’s definition of the Heartland evolved throughout the years. In 1904, the Heartland was mostly Russia but after the First World War, he saw the importance of the Eastern Europe and wrote his famous slogan: “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island: Who rules the World-Island commands the World”²³⁴. With the Second World War, he refined his definition of the Heartland mostly as the be the U.S.S.R.²³⁵.

Nicholas Spykman, during the Second World War, promoted an American interventionism for the post-war period, afraid by the idea of a return towards the *Monroe Doctrine* after the victory. He is distancing himself from the idealistic policies of American presidents since Wilson and will be one of the founding fathers of the realist thought in international relations.

²²⁸ MACKINDER Halford, “The Geographical Pivot of History”, *The Geographical Journal*, April 1904, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 434-436.

²²⁹ MACKINDER Halford, “The Round World and the Winning of the Peace”, *Foreign Affairs*, July 1943, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 595-605.

²³⁰ MACKINDER Halford, *Democratic Ideals and Reality. A study in the Politics of Reconstruction by the Right Honourable Sir Halford J Mackinder*, Washington, National Defense University Press, 1996, p. 55.

²³¹ Cf. Annex 1

²³² MACKINDER Halford, *Democratic Ideals and Reality. A study in the Politics of Reconstruction by the Right Honourable Sir Halford J Mackinder*, Washington, National Defense University Press, 1996, p. 191.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

Spykman was a critic of Mackinder's theory. Although he "accepted Mackinder's description of the World Island, the Heartland, and the inner and outer crescents, his perspective was different. While Mackinder's writing focused on the "organizers" and their potential offensive use of their land power, Spykman's focus was on the democracies"²³⁶. In *The Geography of the Peace*, he defends a theory in which Mackinder's inner crescent is actually the critical geopolitical area²³⁷. He renamed the inner crescent the *Rimland*²³⁸ and changed Mackinder's slogan in: "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world"²³⁹. The principle is to control the Rimland to contain the expansion of the Heartland. By that, he is the forerunner of the American policy of the *containment* of communism, elaborated by George Kennan in his famous "long telegram"²⁴⁰.

In *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, the former National Security Advisor of President Jimmy Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski elaborates a program for the United States, to maintain its leadership in the world. To do so, Brzezinski advises to focus on Eurasia, the main geopolitical issue. By controlling Eurasia, a power has the control over two of the three most developed and productive regions of the world with 70% of the world population, most of the important natural resources and more than 60% of the world's GDP. The control also induces an automatic dominating position towards Africa²⁴¹.

Brzezinski sees Eurasia as a chessboard in which players fight for a global prominence and each player owns different pieces – analogies to power sources – to use. The key players control the center, South, East and West of the chessboard²⁴². The criteria for the U.S. to maintain their dominant position are multiple: the center must be attracted by the West, the South must remain uncontrolled by a sole player

²³⁶ MACKINDER Halford, *Democratic Ideals and Reality. A study in the Politics of Reconstruction by the Right Honourable Sir Halford J Mackinder*, Washington, National Defense University Press, 1996, p. xix.

²³⁷ SPYKMAN Nicholas, *The Geography of the Peace*, Hamden, Archon Books, 1969, p. 41.

²³⁸ Cf. Annex 3.

²³⁹ MACKINDER Halford, *Op. Cit.*, p. xx.

²⁴⁰ Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall ["Long Telegram"], February 22, 1946. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Elsey Papers, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/6-6.pdf

²⁴¹ BRZEZINSKI Zbigniew, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York, Basic Books, 1997, pp. 30-31.

²⁴² Cf. Annex 5.

and the East should remain divided so that the U.S. is not expelled. The risks would be for the center to control the South or ally itself to a player of the East, a strong alliance between the major actors of the East, or a split between the U.S. and the other members of the West²⁴³.

The vastness of the Eurasia prevents a direct and total control; it means that choices must be made regarding the use of the American resources²⁴⁴. The democratic factor of the U.S. is also to take into account because it excludes imperial mobilization from the population, not willing to die abroad for its country or even intervene unless the direct interests are at stake. The ways to influence the other countries also have changed, globalization created more economic ties between countries, allowing for alternatives to the U.S., and the use of force as a mechanism of political pressure has been greatly diminished with the development of nuclear weapons. Despite the decline of state nationalism, nation-states remain the basic unit of the world system and the states create their foreign policy in regard of their geographical situation²⁴⁵.

As geopolitics postulates that pre-eminence on the Eurasian continent serves as an anchor for global domination, the United States must identify the actors that have a geostrategic dynamic allowing them to modify the balance of power. States that can either have an impact on major actors or on the regional conditions. The U.S. must then elaborate foreign policies adapted to these states to either control them or become their partner²⁴⁶.

2.2. Geostrategic Players and Geopolitical Pivots

If one follows the precepts of Brzezinski, the U.S. must allocate its resources and its influence to states that make it possible to change the balance of power. Turkey is one of them and it is a *geostrategic player*.

The geopolitical players have enough power and will to project their influence beyond their borders. They can influence the international relations and affect the American interests. These states have potential and seek to obtain a

²⁴³ BRZEZINSKI Zbigniew, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York, Basic Books, 1997, pp. 31-35.

²⁴⁴ Cf. *Infra*, Geostrategic Players and Geopolitical Pivots

²⁴⁵ BRZEZINSKI Zbigniew, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 36-38.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

dominant position in their region or on the international scene. The reasons are many: national greatness, ideology, religious messianism or economics²⁴⁷.

Turkey is also a *geopolitical pivot* because of its geographical position. The geopolitical pivots are important, not because they are powerful or motivated to exercise regional domination, but because they are located in a strategic place and are potentially vulnerable. This vulnerability has an influence on the behavior of the geostrategic players located around. The important strategic location may be a passage between regions, an access to resources, an area that can be used as a shield, and so on²⁴⁸.

In 1996, Robert Chase, Emily Hill and Paul Kennedy, based on the work of Halford Mackinder, have established a discriminating strategy toward the developing world for the United States to focus on a relatively small number of pivotal states that are the most important in order to guarantee the stability of the international system. The goal is to avoid spreading the U.S. attention and resources all over the globe and be cost-ineffective²⁴⁹. As Brzezinski stated, there needs to be a “careful, selective, and very deliberate deployment of American’s resources on the huge Eurasian chessboard”²⁵⁰.

The pivotal state is a “hot spot that could not only determine the fate of its region but also affect international stability”²⁵¹. To this trait are added three criteria to identify a pivotal state: a large population, an important geographical location, and economic potential. The United States is therefore enjoined to invest in those countries to maintain their intern stability. The authors believe that the realist perspective focused on military and political security is not adequate anymore and the threats to the stability of the pivotal states are multiple and cannot be addressed by traditional security forces: “overpopulation, migration, environmental degradation, ethnic conflict, and economic instability”²⁵².

²⁴⁷ BRZEZINSKI Zbigniew, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York, Basic Books, 1997, p. 40.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

²⁴⁹ CHASE Robert, HILL Emily and KENNEDY Paul, “Pivotal States and U.S. Strategy”, *Foreign Affairs*, 1996, Vol. 75, No. 1, pp. 33-35.

²⁵⁰ BRZEZINSKI Zbigniew, *Op. Cit.*, p. 35.

²⁵¹ CHASE Robert, HILL Emily and KENNEDY Paul, *Op. Cit.*, p. 33.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

In addition to being a geostrategic player and a geopolitical pivot, Turkey is also a *swing state*. “Swing states”, in U.S. internal politics, refer to a small amount of American states able to influence the outcome of the presidential election one way or the other. They do not have the largest population or the strongest economy but their mixed orientation, the fact that no candidate or party has an overwhelming majority makes them matter the most²⁵³. In international politics, Daniel Kliman and Richard Fontaine argue that some countries occupy a similar position and they call them *Global Swing States*. There are four criteria defining a global swing state. Firstly, the country must possess a large and growing economy. Secondly, it must occupy a strategic location, either at the center of its region or at the hinge of multiple regions. Thirdly, the country requires having a democratic government, in order to be able to promote liberal values and norms by being an example to follow. Lastly, the country must be influential in its region and on the global level, “and although they desire changes to the international order, they do not seek to scrap it”²⁵⁴.

3. Relationship between Obama and Erdoğan

When Obama came to power, he was well advised that Turkey is a country where the interpersonal relationships are important. Special attention must therefore be paid to people and a relational investment with regard to society and individuals must be made. Forgetting it and thinking that results can be achieved through a strictly professional approach, exposes people to difficulties and bottlenecks. While it would be hard to define the relationship between Obama and Erdoğan, it is certain that they spent a lot of time in consultation and developed a close personal relationship²⁵⁵ and they both have called each other friends in the past²⁵⁶. The personal relationship they have established has had a significant impact on the relations between their two countries.

²⁵³ KLIMAN Daniel and FONTAINE Richard, “Turkey: A Global Swing State”, *German Marshall Fund*, April 13, 2012, p. 1.

²⁵⁴ KLIMAN Daniel and FONTAINE Richard, “Global Swing States. Brazil, India, Indonesia, Turkey and the Future of International Order”, *German Marshall Fund*, November 2012, p. 13.

²⁵⁵ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America’s Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 195.

²⁵⁶ ÇAKMAK Cenap and GÜNEYSU Gökhan, “Turkish – American Relations During Obama Era : Unfulfilled Expectations”, *Turkish Studies*, 2013, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 196.

At the beginning, Obama saw Erdoğan as a bridge between the East and the West, being a moderate Muslim leader²⁵⁷. In 2009, when Erdoğan came to Washington D.C., he attended a 2 hours meeting with Obama at the white house. After their discussion, the President of the United States stated that he was “happy to call Turkey an ally state and Mr. Erdoğan my friend”²⁵⁸.

The June 2010 crisis on the Iranian nuclear program that saw Turkey vote on the side of Iran and against the U.S. in the U.N. Security Council was quickly overcome because of the personal relationship between the two leaders. Indeed, after the vote, Obama called Erdoğan an “extraordinary friend and partner”²⁵⁹.

When asked about his relationships with foreign leaders in 2012, Obama named 5 leaders with whom he had confidence and trust and felt close to : Angela Merkel, Prime Minister Singh, President Lee, David Cameron and Prime Minister Erdoğan²⁶⁰.

On the 24th of September 2014, Obama chaired the U.N. Security Council Summit on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Erdoğan began his speech by saying “*Değerli dostum Barack'a çok teşekkür ediyorum*” – I thank my dear friend Barack –, showing that they still were in good terms²⁶¹.

The honeymoon between the two heads of state will end towards the end of Obama's second term. During one of their last encounter for the dinner of the Turkey-U.S. Business Council, Erdoğan called Obama “*Dostum Barack*” – my friend Barack – but at the same period the U.S. President, disappointed by the Turkish

²⁵⁷ GOLDBERG Jeffrey, "The Obama Doctrine", *The Atlantic*, April 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>

²⁵⁸ ARDIÇ Engin, “2 Saat Görüşüler”, *Sabah*, December 7, 2009, http://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2009/12/07/iste_erdoganin_programi

²⁵⁹ ERGIN Sedat, “Obama ile Erdoğan'ın arası bozuldu mu ?”, *Sonsayfa*, August 28, 2013, <http://www.sonsayfa.com/Haberler/Siyaset/Obama-ile-Erdoganin-arasi-bozuldu-mu-244190.html>

²⁶⁰ OBAMA Barack, interview realized by ZAKARIA Fareed on January 18, 2012, “Inside Obama's World: The President talks to TIME About the Changing Nature of American Power”, *Time*, January 19, 2012, <http://swampland.time.com/2012/01/19/inside-obamas-world-the-president-talks-to-time-about-the-changing-nature-of-american-power/>

²⁶¹ CANIKLİGİL Razi, “Erdoğan BM Güvenlik Konseyi'nde konuştu”, *Hurriyet*, September 25, 2014, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/erdogan-bm-guvenlik-konseyinde-konustu-27269900>

refusal to use its army to restore peace and stability in Syria, referred to his Turkish counterpart as “a fiasco and an authoritarian”²⁶².

4. Accession of Turkey to the European Union

In December 2002, during the Copenhagen summit, George W. Bush himself called on European leaders to support the accession of Turkey to the European Union²⁶³.

In October 2005, Condoleezza Rice, at the time Secretary of State for George Bush, advocated the case of Turkey during the negotiations that led to the Negotiations Framework for Turkey being adopted by the European Union²⁶⁴.

In April 2009, when President Obama visited Turkey for the first time, he emphasized on the importance of Turkey joining the European Union. Of course, there was the importance of building a bridge between the West and the East, but the economic argument was not negligible. In 2009, the Turkish Government’s debt was 49% of the GDP with an annual budget deficit of 3%, lower than most European Union countries²⁶⁵. Already linked with the European Union by a Customs Union agreement since 1995, with a GDP per capita and exportations – most of them going to the EU – rising quickly, Turkey was a solid candidate. In fact, Turkey kept an increasing GDP and a decreasing debt, descending to 27.57% in 2015²⁶⁶.

In 2012, in *Strategic Vision. America and the Crisis of Global Power*, Brzezinski talked about how much an inclusion of Turkey in the European Union would mean for the United States. He even imagined a “larger West for 2025”²⁶⁷. Today, we seem very far off from that.

It is very interesting to note that the predicted consequences of Turkey’s accession to the European Union for the United States are everything and their opposite. Already in 2002, some Europeans argued that the improvement of the

²⁶² SIDAR Cenk, “Obama, Erdoğan için artık platonik bir dost”, *Diken*, March 31, 2016, <http://www.diken.com.tr/obama-erdogan-icin-artik-platonik-bir-dost/>

²⁶³ KIRIŞCI Kemal, *Turkey’s foreign policy in turbulent times*, Paris, EUISS, 2006, p. 84.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁶⁵ SPITAELS Guy, *L’Hégémonie Contrariée. Obama, deux ans après*, Liège, Luc Pire Edition, 2011, p. 72.

²⁶⁶ National Public Debt Turkey 2015, <http://countryeconomy.com/national-debt/turkey>

²⁶⁷ BRZEZINSKI Zbigniew, *Strategic Vision. America and the Crisis of Global Power*, New York, Basic Books, 2012, p. 154

relations between the U.S. and Turkey under Clinton's presidency and that the support from the United States toward the inclusion of Turkey meant that the latter would become an "American Trojan Horse in the EU"²⁶⁸. This position is paradoxical because of fears emitted from the United States, apprehending that the accession of Turkey to the EU would reinforce the anti-Americanism feeling²⁶⁹.

The delay of the accession to the European Union forced Turkey to look for other partners and Obama, on point, noted that "[The EU membership issue] is inevitably destined to impact on the way Turkish people see Europe. If they do not feel part of the European family, then obviously they're going to look elsewhere for alliances and affiliations."²⁷⁰

During a conference in Louvain-la-Neuve last November, Anthony Gardner – the United States Ambassador to the European Union – talked about his country's perception of the process. He said that Turkey has not fulfilled the conditions for accession to the EU club and it is unfortunately moving away from it. Ten years ago, the U.S. government pressured both parties to accelerate the process because it saw that Turkey was a model for the Arab countries, but Erdoğan is taking an opposite direction from the shared values between the United States and the European Union. Gardner nevertheless insisted that the process has not ended and that it is important to keep hope for those fighting for democracy by leaving a window open²⁷¹.

5. Anti-Americanism in Turkey

Despite a relative success for Obama among the Turkish population, there is an increasing anti-Americanism in Turkey. In 2015, the points of view among the Turkish population concerning Obama were much divided with 45% having confidence in Obama on World Affairs against 46% who were not confident²⁷².

The anti-Americanism is not a new sentiment in Turkey but the current form of anti-Americanism is new because it comes from diverse groups of the Turkish

²⁶⁸ AYDIN-DÜZGİT Senem and TOCCI Nathalie, *Turkey and the European Union*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 88.

²⁶⁹ KIRIŞCI Kemal, *Turkey's foreign policy in turbulent times*, Paris, EUISS, 2006, p. 84.

²⁷⁰ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 196.

²⁷¹ GARDNER Anthony, United States Ambassador to the European Union, Conference in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, November 22, 2016.

²⁷² Cf. Annex 8.

society – even formerly pro-American ones – usually opposed to each other but united under the anti-Americanism sentiment²⁷³.

5.1. Internal sources of anti-Americanism

The first internal source of anti-Americanism is a direct consequence of the first external one²⁷⁴. Left-wing groups have taken over the Cyprus crisis and turned it into a long-term campaign, bashing the American presence in the Turkish internal affairs, criticizing U.S. interferences²⁷⁵. The groups even went further in speaking of US imperialism through NATO. They therefore militated for a withdrawal of Turkey from NATO. The US was not the only reason but internal disagreements turned into frictions which have led to a situation very close to the civil war leading to the intervention of the army in the 1980 coup, putting an end to violence²⁷⁶.

Turkey has been a committed member of NATO since its inception in 1952, helping the Alliance in actual combat with its army, the second-largest among the NATO countries²⁷⁷ and the second largest tank inventory²⁷⁸. Turkey is an important NATO asset and it played a role both in Afghanistan and in the North of Iraq²⁷⁹. Erdoğan also granted a pivotal support, at the request of Obama, enforcing the no-fly zone in Libya²⁸⁰.

When it comes to extended nuclear deterrence, Turkey relies on the United States for its security²⁸¹ but considering conventional weapons, Turkey plays an important role as part of NATO: in 2011, Turkey agreed to host an American radar within the framework of NATO's missile defense system. The system is designed to prevent Iranian attacks²⁸². Turkey's government downplayed the possible nuclear threat from Iran but they still were aware of the potential risk coming from the rogue

²⁷³ TÜRKMEN Füsun, "Anti-Americanism as a Default Ideology of Opposition: Turkey as a Case Study", *Turkish Studies*, September 2010, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 335.

²⁷⁴ Cf. *Infra*, External sources of anti-Americanism

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

²⁷⁷ BRZEZINSKI Zbigniew, *Strategic Vision. America and the Crisis of Global Power*, New York, Basic Books, 2012, p. 136.

²⁷⁸ ERICKSON Edward, "Turkey as Regional Hegemon – 2014: Strategic Implications for the United States", *Turkish Studies*, autumn 2004, Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 34.

²⁷⁹ GERGES Fawaz, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 199.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

²⁸¹ BRZEZINSKI Zbigniew, *Op. Cit.*, p. 114.

²⁸² GERGES Fawaz, *Op. Cit.*, p. 195.

country. At first they wanted to acquire their own anti-missile system but the cost made them consider the NATO option. The radar station was built in the base of Kürecik and it is connected with missiles stationed in Romania²⁸³.

Worried by some border issues, consequences of the Syrian crisis, Turkey has asked and obtained NATO's support on several occasions. Nonetheless, Ankara was disappointed by the refusal of the United States to intervene in Syria, even when in 2013; Damascus used chemical weapons²⁸⁴. The fact that there exists an oil trade between Turkey and Daesh is an obstacle regarding the cooperation between NATO and Turkey²⁸⁵.

The second internal source of anti-Americanism is a consequence of a new kind of nationalism which has materialized in Turkey since the beginning of the century. This nationalism is opposed to democratic reforms and it is partly based on a conspiracy theory since it condemns "European and American plots to divide and rule our country"²⁸⁶. Obviously, the invasion of Iraq contributed to this perception of the U.S. as a threat to the Turkish position in the region, in particular by allowing a Kurdish autonomy to settle in Iraq. This conspiracy perception can be explained by the influence of the media, books, films or TV series that have shown the U.S. an evil²⁸⁷.

The statistics clearly show that the impact of these propagandas has been strong on the Turkish population: in a 2006 survey conducted among Muslims, 59% of the Turkish population believed that Arabs did not carry out the 9/11 attacks²⁸⁸. A 2007 survey shows that between 2002 and 2007, among the Muslim countries, the U.S. experienced the worst decline in their image in Turkey. The popularity of the U.S. decreased from 32% to 13%²⁸⁹.

²⁸³ HALE William, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 171.

²⁸⁴ MARCOU Jean, "La Turquie en quête d'un nouveau positionnement au Moyen-Orient", *Politique étrangère*, 2016, Vol. 2, été, p. 71.

²⁸⁵ SFEIR Antoine, interview realized by François Euvé, "Quelles perspectives pour le Proche-Orient?", *Etudes*, Février 2016, Vol. 2, p. 26.

²⁸⁶ TÜRKMEN Füsün, "Anti-Americanism as a Default Ideology of Opposition: Turkey as a Case Study", *Turkish Studies*, September 2010, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 339.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

²⁸⁸ Global Public Opinion in the Bush Years (2001-2008), December 18, 2008, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2008/12/18/global-public-opinion-in-the-bush-years-2001-2008/>, p. 4.

²⁸⁹ Global Unease With Major World Powers, June 27, 2009, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2007/06/27/global-unease-with-major-world-powers/>, p. 18.

5.2. External sources of anti-Americanism

Historically, there were two major external sources of anti-Americanism. The first source is the Cyprus crisis that led to the “Johnson letter” in 1964, patronizing Turkey and making it doubt the security provided by the United States²⁹⁰. The second external source of anti-Americanism was initiated with the invasion of Iraq and Turkey’s refusal to allow a passage for the American troops²⁹¹.

During the war in Iraq, the Sulaymaniyya incident of July 4, 2003 marked the beginning of a “new and vociferous type of anti-Americanism in Turkey that found supporters across the board, including nationalists, leftists, and radical Islamists”²⁹².

The consequences of the Iraq War on the image of the U.S. in Turkey can still be felt today. In 2015, Turkey did not have a really good image of the United States with 58% of its population being unfavorable and only 29% being favorable²⁹³. The favorability towards the U.S. during the last two decades shows a vertical parabola with its highest peak in 1999/2000 with 52% of favorability and its lowest rate in 2007 with 9%. The win of Obama in the elections of November 2008 was supposed to create an improvement in the relationship between Ankara and Washington, as well as improve the image of the U.S. and reduce the anti-Americanism sentiment in Turkey. The least that can be said is that it was not instantaneous: “a survey conducted in 2009 still found that only 14 per cent of the Turkish respondents had a favorable view of the United States, the worst rating for the U.S. among all the surveyed countries”²⁹⁴.

After the pit of 2007, the level of favorability increases very slowly until it reaches the 29% of 2015²⁹⁵. These statistics show that the war in Iraq had a huge negative impact on the image of the United States from the Turkish population with the favorability dropping as low as 15% in 2003. It also shows that under Obama, the

²⁹⁰ Cf. *Supra*, Cold War

²⁹¹ TÜRKMEN Füsün, "Anti-Americanism as a Default Ideology of Opposition: Turkey as a Case Study", *Turkish Studies*, September 2010, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 335.

²⁹² TÜRKMEN Füsün, "Turkish-American Relations: A Challenging Transition", *Turkish Studies*, March 2009, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 123.

²⁹³ WIKE Richard, STROKES Bruce and POUSHTER Jacob, America’s Global Image, PewResearchCenter, June 23, 2015, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/23/1-americas-global-image/>

²⁹⁴ HALE William, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, New York, Routledge, 2013, p. 170.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Annex 6.

favorability increases, although the increase is slow, until the official end of the war in Afghanistan in 2014, allowing the favorability to jump from 19% to 29% in 2015.

While the war in Iraq by the United States was very badly seen by the Turkish population, there is much more support for the U.S. actions against Daesh. Indeed, in 2015, 48% of the population showed support in the fight against ISIL while 30% were against it²⁹⁶.

6. The Role of Ethnic Lobbies in the United States

“Ethnic interests groups [...] have traditionally played an important role in determining US foreign policy”²⁹⁷. Lobbying is a right protected in Anglo-American traditions since the Magna Carta of 1215 which sanctified the right of petition (to a lesser extent than today). The right was included in the U.S. Declaration of Independence as well as in the First Amendment to the Constitution, protecting²⁹⁸ “the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances”²⁹⁹. According to Füsün Türkmen and Samuel Huntington, “ethnic politics are more harmful than beneficial to US national interests, generating unnecessary animosities and illusions of common interests where few or none exist. [...] They are often pursued at the expense of broader interests and American relations with long-standing allies. Turkey is certainly among them”³⁰⁰.

6.1. Armenian Diaspora

Diasporas are social groups that have experienced forced eviction from their origin country and had to resettle themselves in a new country where they become a minority with distinctive cultural aspects. Diasporas are transformation factors for their home country because they usually reside in the West and therefore have more economic means that they use to contribute in developing their origin country's economy. They can also spread ideas, technologies and they participate in the

²⁹⁶ Cf. Annex 7.

²⁹⁷ TÜRKMEN Füsün, "Turkish-American Relations: A Challenging Transition", *Turkish Studies*, March 2009, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 115.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²⁹⁹ Constitution of the United States, written in 1787, ratified in 1788, and in operation since 1789, https://www.senate.gov/civics/constitution_item/constitution.htm

³⁰⁰ TÜRKMEN Füsün, *Op. Cit.*, p. 117.

political transformation of their home country by helping in building the civil society and political parties³⁰¹.

Diasporas have an influence in international relations, they can have an impact on wars and conflict, and they are an element of both stability and instability. Usually, diasporas are victims of an event and they are a political actor opposing against the idea of nation-State – the central actor of the international relations – because they want to stay specific with their own identity. Diasporas have an influence on international politics through *lobbying*, mostly in the United States³⁰².

The Armenian diaspora, present in the United States has an important impact on the relations between Turkey and Armenia as well as between Turkey and the United States. It is engaged against the normalization process between Turkey and Armenia³⁰³. There are two main pressure groups representing the Armenian diaspora in the United States: the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA) and the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA). These two groups have pushed international organizations and parliaments of countries to recognize the Armenian genocide³⁰⁴.

The Congressional support for the Republic of Armenia and Armenian issues does not reflect the strategical importance (or unimportance in this case) of Armenia and the Caucasus for the United States. The support is largely disproportionate due to “intense lobbying efforts of Armenian-Americans in the United States”³⁰⁵.

6.2. Recognition of the Armenian “genocide”

The Armenian genocide refers to the death of 1.5 million Armenians conducted by the Ottoman government in 1915. The question of whether or not it was a genocide complicates the relations between the United States – put under pressure by the Armenian diaspora and the Turkish lobby – and Turkey. The Turkish

³⁰¹ CHETERIAN Vicken, "Histoire, mémoire et relations internationales : la diaspora arménienne dans les relations arméno-turques", *Relations internationales*, 2010, Vol. 1, No. 141, pp. 25-26.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁰⁵ TÜRKMEN Füsün, "Turkish-American Relations: A Challenging Transition", *Turkish Studies*, March 2009, Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 116.

leaders have always vehemently refused to consider the issue of the recognition³⁰⁶. It has become a matter of both Turkish and American foreign policies.

To avoid angering Turkey, the American executive avoids uttering the “G word” with only 2 exceptions in its history³⁰⁷: Ronald Reagan in a public speech in 1983 and John Evans, the United States Ambassador to Armenia in 2005.

Under the Bush Jr. administration, the Armenian genocide was not called as such. Rather, George W. Bush referred to it as “mass killings”³⁰⁸, stating that taking a resolution recognizing an Armenian genocide would “do great harm to our relations with a key ally in NATO and in the global war on terror.”³⁰⁹ Condoleezza Rice and Robert Gates, respectively Secretary of States and Secretary of Defense, also sent letters to the Congress, vigorously opposing an acknowledgment of the genocide due to concerns regarding the cooperation with Turkey in Iraq³¹⁰.

When he was a senator, Obama was in favor of the Armenian Genocide recognition and claimed that he would recognize the Genocide if he became president. His first Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, also showed herself favorable to a resolution going in that direction but after coming to power, their position became more ambiguous³¹¹. When Obama was questioned on the topic by a journalist in Ankara, during the joint press conference with President Gul on April 6, 2009, his answer was elusive: stating that he did not have to focus on his views but rather on encouraging Turkey and Armenia in finding a common solution on the matter³¹².

The stance from the President and the Secretary of State did not prevent the House Foreign Affairs Committee to approve with 23 voices against 22, a nonbinding resolution recognizing the mass killing of Armenians by Turkish forces

³⁰⁶ ZARIFIAN, "Les États-Unis, la Turquie et le « problème » arménien", *Hérodote*, 2013, Vol. 2, No. 149, p. 53.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-58.

³⁰⁸ BUSH George W., President Bush Discusses Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Legislation, October 10, 2007, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/10/20071010.html>

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ SPITAEELS Guy, *L'Hégémonie Contrariée. Obama, deux ans après*, Liège, Luc Pire Edition, 2011, p. 74.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³¹² OBAMA Barack, The President's News Conference with President Abdullah Gul of Turkey in Ankara, Turkey, April 6, 2009, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=85974> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=su1ytZ0WKkg>

at the end of the First World War as “genocide”. The Turkish response was very quick in recalling its ambassador to Washington³¹³.

April 24 is the official Armenian Remembrance Day, commemorating the deportation of Armenian intellectuals on the same day in 1915. Despite his position as a senator, President Obama did not use the term “genocide” during his statements of April 24. In 2012, he talked about the Armenians who were “brutally massacred or marched to their deaths”³¹⁴. He used the same expression in 2013³¹⁵ and 2014³¹⁶. He completed the expression by talking about those who “were deported, massacred, and marched to their deaths” in 2015³¹⁷ and in his last statement on the Armenian Remembrance Day as President of the United States in 2016³¹⁸.

7. Coup attempt of July 15, 2016

On July 15, 2016, while fighter jets were flying over Ankara and Istanbul, and while clashes between rebellious army units and police force were raging, the U.S. took a long time to condemn the putsch. This very late reaction was not well welcomed by Ankara which raised suspicions against Fethullah Gülen regarding the origin of the coup attempt and it even implied an active participation of the U.S. Despite the authoritarian drifts of Turkey, the U.S. made the mistake of not perceiving the coup attempt as it was: an attack on a European democracy. When the European Union and the U.S. spoke out against the abuses conducted on coup

³¹³ SPITAELS Guy, *L'Hégémonie Contrariée. Obama, deux ans après*, Liège, Luc Pire Edition, 2011, p. 75.

³¹⁴ OBAMA Barack, Statement by the President on Armenian Remembrance Day, April 24, 2012, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/24/statement-president-armenian-remembrance-day>

³¹⁵ OBAMA Barack, Statement by the President on Armenian Remembrance Day, April 24, 2013, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/24/statement-president-armenian-remembrance-day>

³¹⁶ OBAMA Barack, Statement by the President on Armenian Remembrance Day, April 24, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/24/statement-president-armenian-remembrance-day>

³¹⁷ OBAMA Barack, Statement by the President on Armenian Remembrance Day, April 23, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/23/statement-president-armenian-remembrance-day>

³¹⁸ OBAMA Barack, Statement by the President on Armenian Remembrance Day, April 22, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/04/22/statement-president-armenian-remembrance-day>

plotters, Erdoğan and the AKP interpreted these reactions as a “hidden wish, if not outright support, for a successful coup”³¹⁹.

The visit of Joe Biden, then-Vice President on August 24, 2016, was necessary for a return to constructive dialogue between the two states. In a news conference with Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, he declared that the United States “had no prior knowledge”³²⁰ of the Turkish coup attempt and that the U.S. had “no interest whatsoever in protecting anyone who has done harm to an ally”³²¹. That last sentence referred to Fethullah Gülen, the inspirer of the Gülen movement, an organization, initially Turkish that has grown in U.S over the years.

There are more than 200 Turkish-American associations in the U.S. and some of them send money in Turkey to finance community projects in cooperation with on-governmental organizations in Turkey³²². These organizations also help the development of Turkey by sending ideas, know-how or information. One of those is the Turkish American Scientists and Scholars Association (TASSA) which wants to promote a “brain circulation”, opposed to the “brain drain” – young promising minds go to study in the U.S. and end up staying there – issue that many developing countries face³²³.

It was only after the 1980s that Turkish immigrants started to found religious organizations, Islamic cultural centers and mosques. Religion became a more important identity marker: “more and more Turkish Americans [...] define themselves as Turks, Americans, and Muslims”³²⁴.

In 2008, *ForeignPolicy.com*, organized an online vote to discover the “World’s Top 20 Public Intellectuals” and Fethullah Gülen won the first place by a large margin³²⁵.

³¹⁹ AYDINTAŞBAŞ Asli and KIRIŞCI Kemal, “The United States and Turkey Friends, Enemies, or Only Interests”, *CUSE at Brookings*, Number 12, April 2017, p. 4. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/aydintasbas-kirisci_united-states-and-turkey.pdf.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³²² KÖSER AKCAPAR Sebnem, “Turkish Associations in the United States: Towards Building a Transnational Identity”, *Turkish Studies*, June 2009, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 174-176.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

³²⁵ AMBURN Brad, “The World’s Top 20 Public Intellectuals”, *Foreign Policy*, October 7, 2009, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/07/the-worlds-top-20-public-intellectuals/>

Fethullah Gülen is a Turkish preacher, born in 1941, retired religious functionary. He is the most widely known and the most controversial religious personality in contemporary Turkey³²⁶. Fethullah Gülen lives in Pennsylvania since 1999 for medical and political reasons. In October 2008, he finally obtained a green card and was approved for permanent residence in the United States³²⁷.

Followers of Fethullah Gülen formed an intercultural organization, the Rumi Forum in 1999 as well as a local cultural organization in 2003: the American Turkish Friendship Association (ATFA). Mosques and interethnic private schools were built by the Gülen community in the states of New York, Connecticut and Virginia. They even established a university: Virginia International University. The activities of these organizations managed to change the image of Fethullah Gülen who was perceived as a “controversial Islamic scholar in Turkey [and has now the image of] a leader of ‘moderate’ Islam who supports interfaith dialogue in the United States”³²⁸.

The Gülen Movement, under the pretext of promoting the interfaith dialogue, organizes a lot of events that range from “interfaith dinners, to citywide Turkish cultural festival, to speaking forums, to lavish overseas tours of Turkey’s conservative democratic transformation”³²⁹. The organized activities show that the Gülen Movement is becoming a powerful lobby in the United States and its effect is better for the image of Turkey than Turkey’s official lobby at the Congress. Indeed, the Turkish lobby is external, while the Gülen Movement is made up of citizens who have a direct contact with the members of the congress, hosting them in dinners, award ceremonies, and so on.³³⁰.

Concerning the Armenian “genocide”, the United States have managed to avoid the recognition of the term but in regards to the Gülen issue, the effects on the relations were very harmful.

The Gülen Movement used to be an ally of the AKP but, in 2013, it revealed large-scale corruption cases involving high members of the AKP and the family of

³²⁶ HENDRICK Joshua, *Gülen, The Ambiguous Politics of Market Islam in Turkey and the World*, New York, New York University Press, 2013, p. 2.

³²⁷ KÖSER AKCAPAR Sebnem, "Turkish Associations in the United States: Towards Building a Transnational Identity", *Turkish Studies*, June 2009, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 186.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

³²⁹ HENDRICK Joshua, *Op. Cit.*, p. 208.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

Erdoğan himself to the public. The reaction was a purge of officials linked to the movement and since 2015; the Gülen Movement is classified as a terrorist organization by Turkey³³¹.

During the night of 15 to 16 July 2016, there was an attempt at a coup d'état in Turkey. The coup failed but resulted in the deaths of about 300 people and violent reactions from the Turkish government: thousands of soldiers were arrested and thousands of officials were dismissed. The attempt was carried by the *Yurtta Sulh Konseyi* – Peace at Home Council –, a part of the Turkish Armed Forces that Erdoğan accused of being linked to the Gülen Movement³³².

Following the coup attempt, Turkey demanded the extradition of Fethullah Gülen from the United States³³³. Fethullah Gülen denied having any involvement in the coup attempt. Faced with the refusal of extradition by the US, Turkey accused General Joseph Votel (without naming him directly), the head of U.S. Central Command of “siding with coup plotters”³³⁴.

³³¹ BOZARSLAN Hamit, “Le coup d'état raté en Turquie”, *Esprit*, Septembre 2016, Vol. 9, p. 10.

³³² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³³³ DURANDO Jessica, “Turkey demands extradition of cleric Fethullah Gulen from U.S.”, *USA Today*, July 19, 2016, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/07/19/turkey-extradition-gulen-united-states/87284860/>

³³⁴ HARVEY Benjamin, “Erdogan Accuses U.S. General of Siding With Coup Plotters”, *Bloomberg*, July 29, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-07-29/erdogan-accuses-u-s-general-of-siding-with-coup-plotters>

Conclusion and future perspectives

At the beginning of 2017, relations between Turkey and the United States reached a level that had not been so low in decades. The authoritarian tendencies of the government are too strong for Washington to still qualify Turkey as a model for the countries of the Middle East³³⁵.

The internal changes in the country no longer allow for a blind indiscriminate encouragement to Turkish membership in the EU³³⁶.

With the election of Obama, the relations between Turkey and the U.S. had the possibility of a fresh start and Obama has worked to create a friendship with the Turkish leader, Erdoğan, in order to maximize the chances of successful political dialogue. Unfortunately, the international context and internal political developments have defeated this attempt.

The arrival of Donald Trump and a new administration, very different from Obama's, in Washington seems to offer the possibility of a second "reset" that could be beneficial for the relations between the two countries. Trump's vision of the world, very different from Obama's, has some potential to revitalize a partnership that is almost going in reverse. Nevertheless, the international context remains unchanged, U.S. support for Syrian Kurdish forces remains, and the question of Gülen's extradition involves too many internal actors in the U.S. to be easily settled.

What is certain is that the election of Trump will be more positive than what the election of Hillary Clinton would have been, regarding the relations with Turkey. Indeed, information had shown her to be close to the Gülen movement which, after the coup of 15 July 2016, made her much worse than her opponent with his Islamophobic comments³³⁷.

Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, the former national security advisor of Trump stated in a personal contribution to The Hill in November 2016 that "Turkey is vital to U.S. interests. Turkey is really our strongest ally against the Islamic State in Iraq and

³³⁵ AYDINTAŞBAŞ Asli and KIRIŞCI Kemal, "The United States and Turkey Friends, Enemies, or Only Interests", *CUSE at Brookings*, Number 12, April 2017, p. 2. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/aydintasbas-kirisci_united-states-and-turkey.pdf

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Syria (ISIS), as well as a source of stability in the region. It provides badly needed cooperation with U.S. military operations. But the Obama administration is keeping Erdogan's government at arm's length—an unwise policy that threatens our long-standing alliance”³³⁸. Flynn also called Fethullah Gülen a “shady Islamic mullah” who “portrays himself as a moderate, but he is in fact a radical Islamist. He has publicly boasted about his “soldiers” waiting for his orders to do whatever he directs them to do. If he were in reality a moderate, he would not be in exile, nor would he excite the animus of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his government”³³⁹. According to the former national security advisor, Fethullah Gülen is the “bone of contention between the U.S. and Turkey”³⁴⁰.

The comments were much appreciated by the Turkish government, Binali Yıldırım, Prime Minister of Turkey showed his appreciation to Donald Trump in a live statement in which he said: “I call upon the president for a speedy extradition of the head of terrorism as soon as possible. This is what damages our historic relations between the two peoples. If you extradite the head of the terrorist group, we would open a new page in the Turkish-U.S. relations”³⁴¹. This new page will have to wait before being opened. Indeed, even with a complete support from President Trump, the extradition requires a passage in the U.S. courts which could take a long time and allow Fethullah Gülen to gain the support of the American public opinion³⁴².

Moreover, even if the Gülen problem is solved, the Kurdish question remains at the center of the dispute between the two countries. Obama's former Deputy Secretary of State Tony Blinken's explained that the only way for American and Turkish operations to function jointly in Syria was Obama's personal intervention with Erdoğan through their previously established personal relationship. “As deputy secretary of state, I spent hours with my Turkish counterparts trying to find a *modus vivendi* for continuing American support to the Syrian Democratic Forces. At every

³³⁸ FLYNN Michael (Lt. Gen.), “Our ally Turkey is in crisis and needs our support”, The Hill, November 8, 2011, <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/foreign-policy/305021-our-ally-turkey-is-in-crisis-and-needs-our-support>

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ YILDIRIM Binali, “Başbakan'dan Trump'a ‘Gülen’ çağrısı,” *Sabah*, September 11, 2016, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/webtv/turkiye/basbakandan-trumpa-gulen-cagrisi>

³⁴² AYDINTAŞBAŞ Asli and KIRIŞCI Kemal, “The United States and Turkey Friends, Enemies, or Only Interests”, *CUSE at Brookings*, Number 12, April 2017, p. 9. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/aydintasbas-kirisici_united-states-and-turkey.pdf

juncture—from the liberation of Manbij in northeastern Syria to the isolation of Raqqa—they protested angrily and threatened repercussions, including denying the international coalition access to Incirlik air base and slowing counterterrorism cooperation. Anti-American rhetoric surged in the Turkish media. Each time, it took President Obama’s direct engagement with Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to smooth the way just enough to keep going. If President Trump approves the Pentagon’s recommendation to arm the S.D.F., it will fall to him to keep Mr. Erdogan onboard—a first, highly charged test of his diplomatic skills. There is an art to this deal”³⁴³.

This shows what has been said previously about the importance of interpersonal relations in the service of political dialogue and it will be a challenge for Donald Trump regarding his foreign policy vis-à-vis Turkey.

³⁴³ BLINKEN Antony, “To Defeat ISIS, Arm the Syrian Kurds”, New York Times, January 31, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/opinion/to-defeat-isis-arm-the-syrian-kurds.html?_r=0

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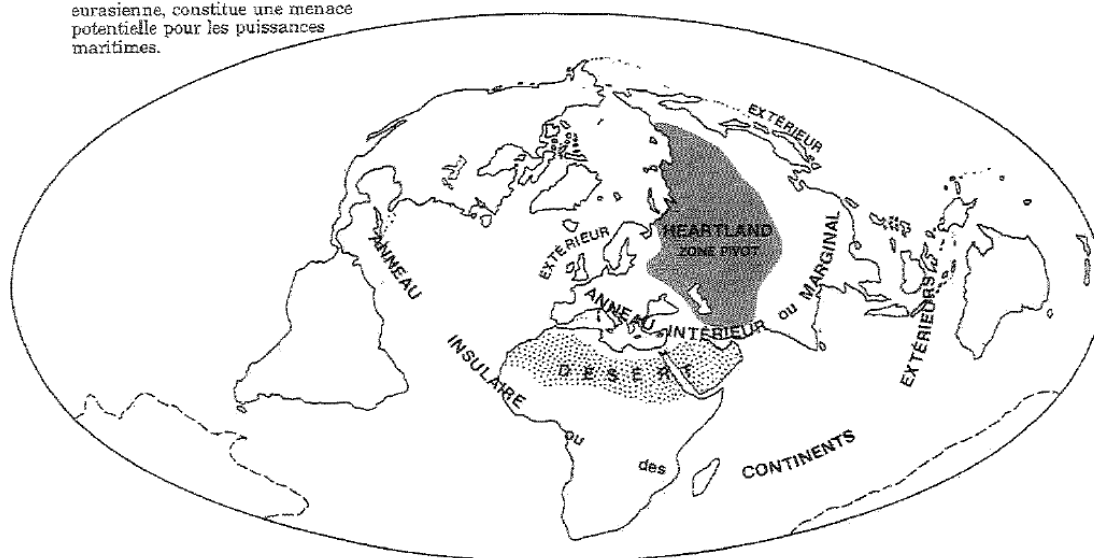
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Annex 1.

Le monde selon Mackinder (1904)

Le contrôle de la zone pivot
(*Heartland*), masse continentale
eurasienne, constitue une menace
potentielle pour les puissances
maritimes.

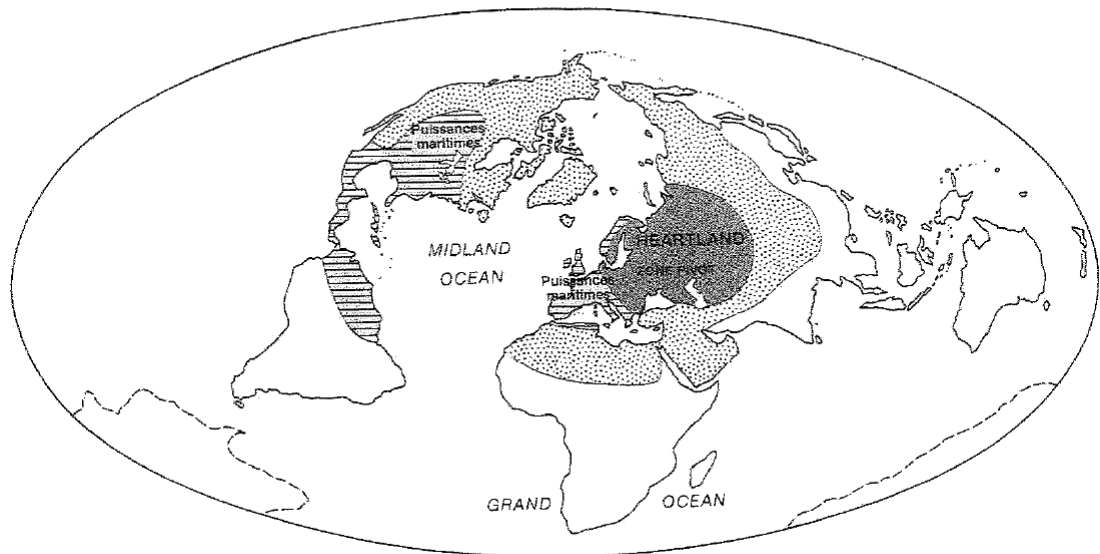


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Annex 2.

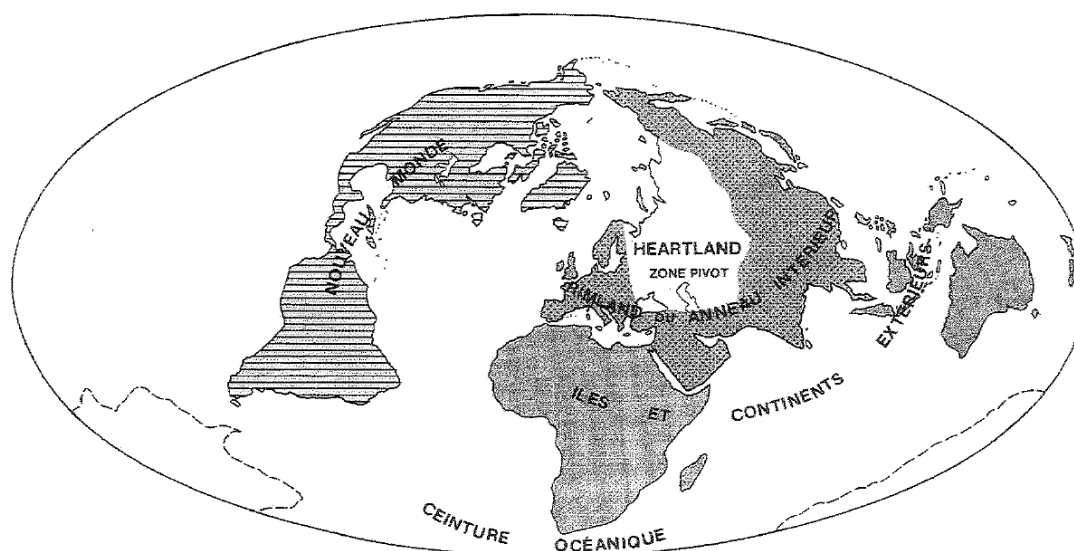
Le monde selon Mackinder (1943)



DE WILDE D'ESTMAEL Tanguy, *Introduction à la Géopolitique*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Diffusion universitaire Ciaco, 2013, p. 115.

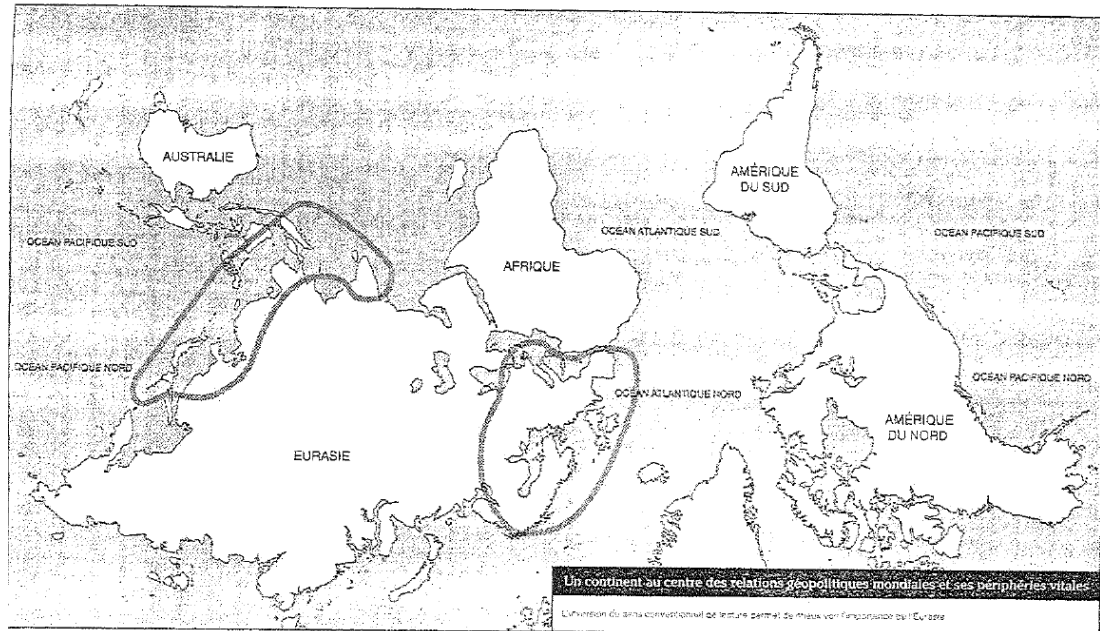
Annex 3.

Spykman et l'importance de l'anneau maritime



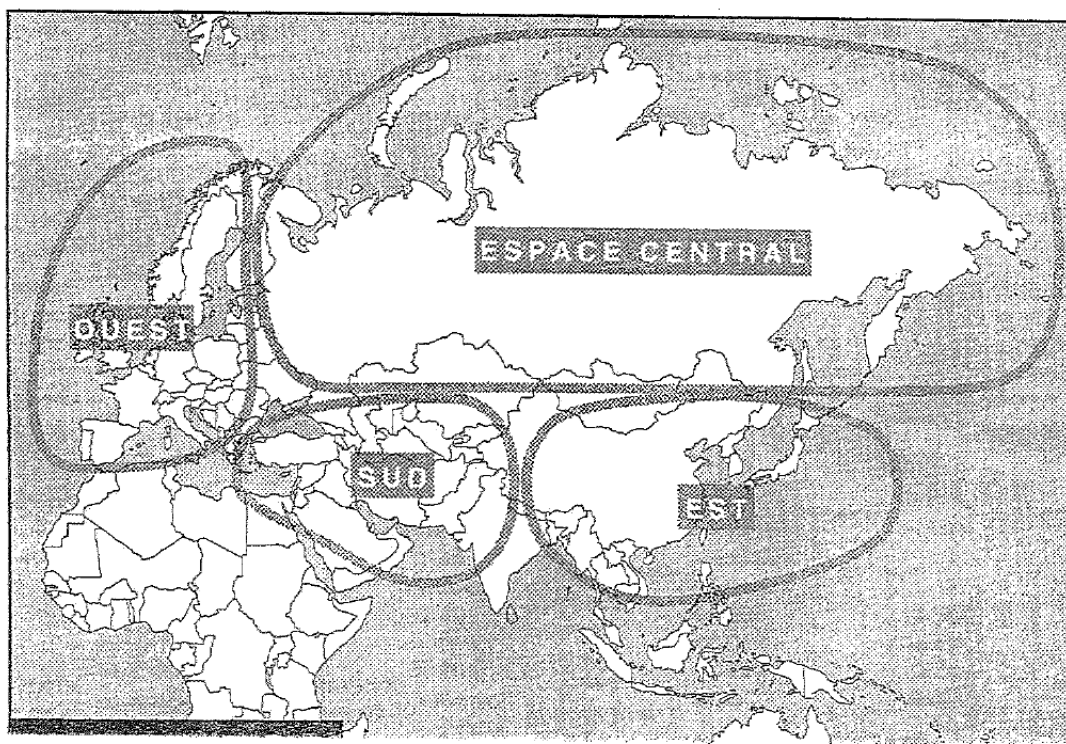
DE WILDE D'ESTMAEL Tanguy, *Introduction à la Géopolitique*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Diffusion universitaire Ciaco, 2013, p. 117.

Annex 4.



DE WILDE D'ESTMAEL Tanguy, *Introduction à la Géopolitique*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Diffusion universitaire Ciaco, 2013, p. 134.

LE GRAND ÉCHIQUIER



DE WILDE D'ESTMAEL Tanguy, *Introduction à la Géopolitique*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Diffusion universitaire Ciaco, 2013, p. 135.

Annex 6.

U.S. Favorability

	1999/ 2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Canada	-	72	63	-	59	-	55	-	68	-	-	-	64	-	68
France	62	62	42	37	43	39	39	42	75	73	75	69	64	75	73
Germany	78	60	45	38	42	37	30	31	64	63	62	52	53	51	50
Italy	76	70	60	-	-	-	53	-	-	-	-	74	76	78	83
Poland	86	79	-	-	62	-	61	68	67	74	70	69	67	73	74
Spain	50	-	38	-	41	23	34	33	58	61	64	58	62	60	65
UK	83	75	70	58	55	56	51	53	69	65	61	60	58	66	65
Russia	37	61	37	46	52	43	41	46	44	57	56	52	51	23	15
Ukraine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	68	69
Turkey	52	30	15	30	23	12	9	12	14	17	10	15	21	19	29
Jordan	-	25	1	5	21	15	20	19	25	21	13	12	14	12	14
Lebanon	-	36	27	-	42	-	47	51	55	52	49	48	47	41	39
Palest. ter.	-	-	0	-	-	-	13	-	15	-	18	-	16	30	26
Israel	-	-	78	-	-	-	78	-	71	-	72	-	83	84	81
Australia	-	-	59	-	-	-	-	46	-	-	-	-	66	-	63
China	-	-	-	-	42	47	34	41	47	58	44	43	40	50	44
India	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	56	55	70
Indonesia	-	-	-	-	38	30	29	37	63	59	54	-	61	59	62
Japan	77	72	-	-	-	63	61	50	59	66	85	72	69	66	68
Malaysia	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	-	-	-	-	-	55	51	54
Pakistan	23	10	-	21	23	27	15	19	16	17	12	12	11	14	22
Philippines	-	90	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	85	92	92
South Korea	58	52	46	-	-	-	58	70	78	79	-	-	78	82	84
Vietnam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	76	78
Argentina	50	34	-	-	-	-	16	22	38	42	-	-	41	36	43
Brazil	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	62	62	61	73	65	73
Chile	-	-	-	-	-	-	55	-	-	-	-	-	68	72	68
Mexico	68	64	-	-	-	-	56	47	69	56	52	56	66	63	66
Peru	74	67	-	-	-	-	61	-	-	-	-	-	-	65	70
Venezuela	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53	62	51
Burkina Faso	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	79
Ethiopia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	81
Ghana	-	83	-	-	-	-	80	-	-	-	-	-	83	77	89
Kenya	94	80	-	-	-	-	87	-	90	94	83	-	81	80	84
Nigeria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	81	-	-	69	69	76
Senegal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	81	74	80
South Africa	-	65	-	-	-	-	-	60	-	-	-	-	72	68	74
Tanzania	-	53	-	-	-	-	46	65	-	-	-	-	-	75	78
Uganda	-	74	-	-	-	-	64	-	-	-	-	-	73	62	76

Note: 1999/2000 survey trends provided by the U.S. Department of State.

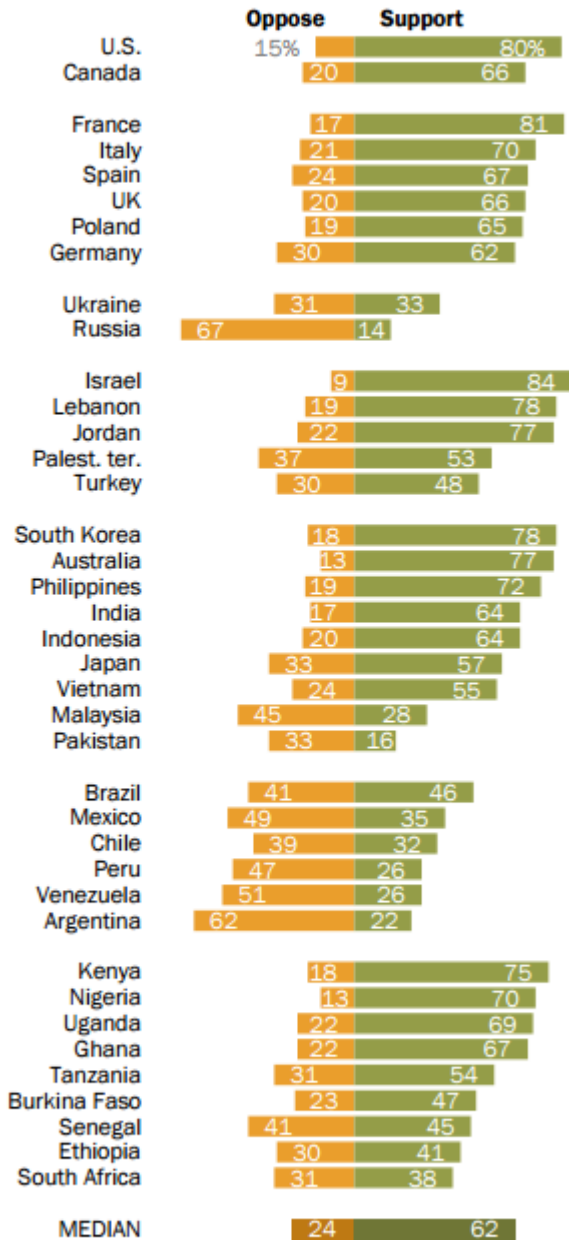
Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q12a.

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<http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/23/1-americas-global-image/>

Widespread Support for U.S. Actions against ISIS

Do you support or oppose the U.S. military actions against ISIS in Iraq and Syria?



Note: Not asked in China.

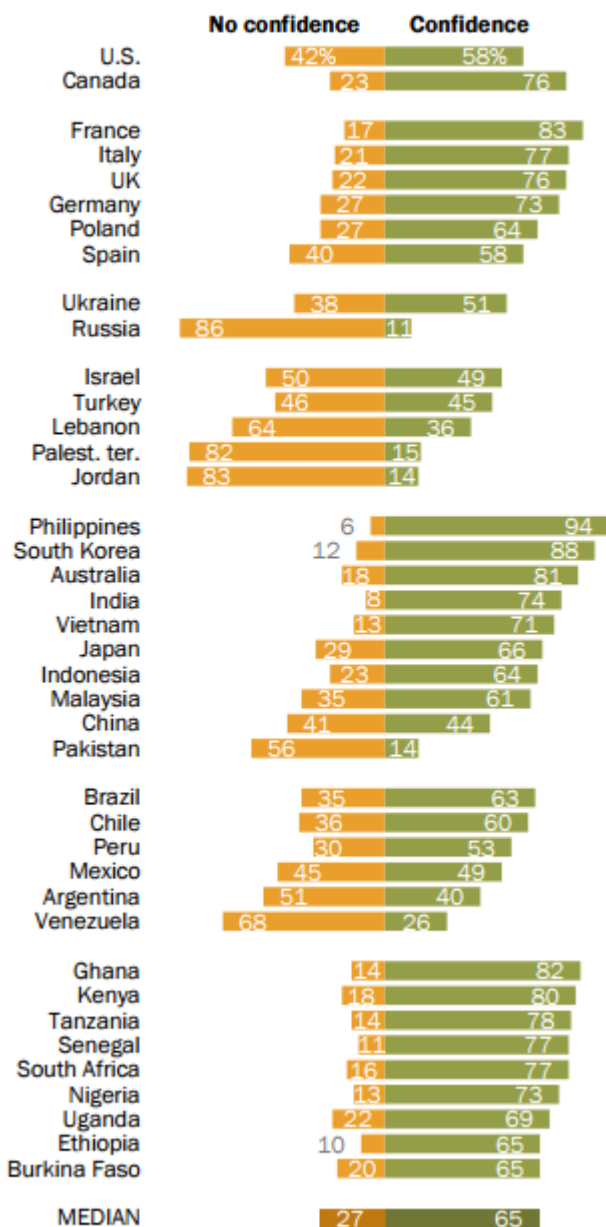
Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q35.

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Annex 8.

Confidence in Obama on World Affairs

How much confidence do you have in U.S. President Barack Obama to do the right thing regarding world affairs?



Source: Spring 2015 Global Attitudes survey. Q25a.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

<http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/23/1-americas-global-image/>

Résumé : Ce mémoire porte sur les relations entre les États-Unis d'Amérique et la Turquie durant les deux mandats du Président Obama. Le principal facteur analysé est le Moyen-Orient et, plus précisément, la crise Syrienne, la question kurde et Israël. Après un bref historique, d'autres facteurs sont également analysés, certains n'ayant aucun lien avec le Moyen-Orient : les intérêts géopolitiques de la Turquie pour les USA, la relation personnelle entre Obama et Erdoğan, l'adhésion de la Turquie à l'UE, l'anti-Américanisme en Turquie, l'influence des groupes d'intérêt ethniques, et la tentative de coup d'Etat de juillet 2016. En conclusion, les perspectives des relations entre la Turquie et les USA sous la présidence de Donald Trump seront brièvement imaginées.

Mots-clés : Turquie, USA, Moyen-Orient, Obama, Erdogan