



**TURKISH INDUSTRIALISTS' AND BUSINESSMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

**THE SPEECH DELIVERED BY  
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FOREIGN POLICY FORUM**

**“THE FUTURE OF TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS”**

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Distinguished Guests,

I would like to begin my words by stressing the rationale behind the formation of alliances in the international arena. We usually see two factors urging the formation of alliances. One is idealistic: nations commit themselves to fight alongside each other because of shared values and ideals. The other is realistic and rests on the analysis of costs and benefits: alliances can save costs and multiply benefits through the division of responsibilities, the sharing of common assets, or simply the protection provided by having a strong party as an ally.

If we are going to make a proper analysis of the history of Turkish-American relationship we need to posit a combination of both factors. Turkey and the United States are two states that do not only have common interests but also allies which have placed their friendship and partnership on a sound foundation by championing the same values and ideals of democracy and liberal economy.

In the Cold war years, we observe that the containment of the Soviet Union provided the real impetus for Turkish-American partnership. Turkey found security in the Turkish-U.S. partnership and within NATO, whereas the U.S. found a staunch ally in NATO's southern flank. In late 1980s and with the onset of 1990s, Turkish-American relations entered to a new era. In the absence of East-West divide there were speculations that the strategic importance of the Turkish-American partnership had diminished, if not altogether disappeared. These presumptions proved to be unfounded. Turkish support for the US led Gulf War of 1990-1991 eliminated doubts over Turkey's strategic significance. Moreover, the convergence of Turkish-American interests in other regions strengthened the dynamics of cooperation. Accordingly, Turkey assumed new roles in South-East Europe, the Caucasus, and the Middle East, which had a bearing on its relations with the United States.

The nature of the Turkish-American relations during the entire Cold War period was such that they were almost exclusively based on military cooperation, although there was some economic assistance along the way as well. With respect to trade and economic ties, the Turkish-American relations prior to the eighties were virtually nonexistent. In 1991 a new understanding called "enlarged partnership" introduced which involves multi-dimensional and multi-lateral cooperation. Attempts to expand economic cooperation and increase high-level political consultation followed. There were two driving factors. On the one hand, Turkish government held that the deepened security relationship necessitated expanded ties and sought the relaxation of U.S. import duties on Turkish goods. On the other hand, Washington viewed economic ties as a means of securing Turkey's westward orientation and encouraging democratic reforms. With the premise that "democratization and market economy encourage peaceful and stable relations" economic ties between Turkey and U.S. expanded.

Throughout those years TÜSİAD has also contributed to the development of Turkish-American relations. With regard to TÜSİAD's contribution I would like to highlight two types of efforts and activities that our association involved. First of all, the achievements of the private sector should be mentioned. Businessmen, by making their investment, production, distribution, financing and management decisions according to market rules has played an important role in the process of Turkey's transition to liberal economy. Equally important is TÜSİAD's support for a series of economic, social and political reforms in numerous occasions, on a variety of platforms, at home and abroad. TÜSİAD also opened an office in Washington D.C., aimed at getting closer to the American public, American policy-makers and to the leaders of the American business world. In return, it attempts to inform the

American corporate world, the politicians and the media in the United States on the political developments as well as business opportunities in Turkey.

Today the distinguished speakers of our conference will analyze the opportunities and the challenges in the years ahead with an effort to redefine Turkish-American relations in the post Iraq war. I believe the current state of Turkish- American relations require mutual understanding as well as confidence rebuilding. Related to future, I think, the question should not be posed as “will Turkish-American relations gain new strategic meaning or will it lose its significance?” It is more appropriate to approach Turkish-American relations as a process in the making. In this process, even if certain periodic differences emerge in the two countries' approaches to regional problems, their desire for the stability and peace should help to eliminate these differences. Since economic relations are an inseparable part of this process, Turkish Businessmen and Industrialists' economic diplomacy would facilitate achievement of common perceptions.

I extend greetings to all of you with respect. Thank you for your attention.