

# Highlighting the Working Relationship Between Turkey and the U.S.

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**Ambassador Nabi Sensoy**  
**Ambassador of Turkey to the United States**

This is a speech about our changing world. The biggest change that we experienced previously was what happened after the Second World War. That was a time of tremendous change in the international arena. Then we had the Cold War and another change occurred during our lifetime is of the end of the Cold War which we experienced towards the end of the 1950s. It was 1989 when the Wall in Germany came tumbling down, the Iron Curtain melted away, we did not have two camps opposing each other in the form of NATO and the Warsaw Pact and then we entered the 1990s. We are still in the period of making a new international order which has been mostly characterized by globalization in the last 16 years.

What has happened to the relationships through the international organizations during that time? We see that all organizations have felt the need to adapt themselves to the changing world order and the relationships between countries have been no exception to that. Countries are adapting themselves to the realities of today, so are the bilateral relations themselves. And what happened to Turkish-American relations? Where is Turkish foreign policy now? Has the political importance of Turkey changed in that time in the last 16 years. Well, the answer is yes. The disposition of the United States of America as we all know has changed from that of a bi-polar world of uni-polar world where the United States is the sole power.

I would like to dwell a little bit on what has happened to the geo-political importance of Turkey because many people in the 1990s, the early 1990s, asked the question of whether Turkey is less or more relevant to what's happening in its region in Europe and in trans-Atlantic relations. Since 1952 when Turkey became part of NATO, NATO has been the backbone of our policies. So has relations between Turkey and the United States, and over the years the EU developed to be also in that category, in our components of our foreign policy.

Now, I think the years have all shown us that the importance of Turkey has grown over the years. You will recall that during the Cold War years Turkey was the bulwark of NATO, the southern flank of NATO protecting the values of the West, contributing handsomely to the defense of Europe and the trans-Atlantic community. That was a daunting test in itself but in the new era after the end of the Cold War, Turkey was seen in a different light. Now it is a country which lies at the epicenter of a vast landscape which starts from the Balkans through the Middle East and the Caucasus to Central Asia, even to Afghanistan. There's no doubt that all the hotbeds that we experience in this day and age are happening around Turkey. But the geo-political situation and the growing importance of Turkey in international life, especially with regard to the regional stability and peace, cannot be defined by this change in geo-political importance. Turkey has developed into a different country.

For a long time Turkey was known to be an important country, for NATO, for defense of the Western hemisphere against communism at that time. We were talking about the hard power of Turkey more than anything else. Now after the years of the mid-1990s, Turkey had become distinguished not only by that hard power but also its soft power as well. Now Turkey has become a country which is really projecting the kind of soft power that is defined by democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, and also adoption of a market economy. We have done all of that, especially in the last 20 years. That distinction of Turkey comes from the soft power more than anything else and that's very important.

A second important aspect is that Turkey has really distinguished itself in its economy. I'll give you a few numbers, market economic indicators. I'm not going to shower you with all kinds of numbers but if you take, for example, 1979 and look at the figures of exports from Turkey it was in the order of \$2.9 billion. Now, by your standards, by any standards, it was really a drop in the bucket. When we came to 2000 our exports come up to \$85 billion. Now, after six years we have a volume of trade between Turkey and the rest of the world which is in the order of \$223 billion. That is a tremendous change in numbers and most of it is now defined in exports as well. Turkey has become the 17th largest economy in the world, the 6th largest economy in Europe and is on the way to becoming a member of the EU. The market economic numbers are showing that Turkey is fast becoming a very important country not only in its region but also by the standards of the whole world.

Now, the United Nations is at the core of international relations and over the years the G-8 has become a very important element in tackling international questions. There is another development and that is the Developing 20 and that group includes Turkey. So Turkey is fast becoming an important element for the stability of its region—for peace and stability in the region—and also promoting greater economic activities not only in its region but also beyond.

Now, let me come to our relationship with the United States of America because this is the most important country in the world for us and for many other countries in the world as well, but the United States has been the mainstay of our foreign policy. Together with our opening to the European Union it is one of the two most important components of our foreign policy approaches. I'm very happy to report to you today that Turkish-American relations are back on track especially after what happened in 2003. You will recall that that was the time of intervention by the United States of America in Iraq and the Turkish parliament rejected the passage of American forces from the north to Iraq. We had our own reasons, but that was not very much appreciated here in the United States of America and we experienced a setback in our relationship. Now, I'm very glad that I see that this relationship has recovered again. Last year, maybe you will recall, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mr. Gul and Dr. Rice concluded a document which was made public on the 5 of July of last year. That was called a shared vision document. This was a document which was taking a snapshot of what is being defined by both Turkey and the United States as a strategic partnership; where we are today, what we are doing together, what kind of additional mechanisms are needed, on top of the ones that are already in place, that can carry the Turkish-American strategic partnership into the future. It is a framework document—like a basic document, an important document—that is hoped to carry us to the future.

Turkey and the United States have a long list of positive agendas. I'd like to underline that because when I came here everybody was talking about the differences we were experiencing, especially over Iraq. Turkey and the United States seemed to be out of step, which in essence we were not, but the bad news was, and I saw it as soon as I arrived here, that people are

concentrating more on a short list of negative agendas rather than the long list of positive agenda that we already enjoyed that we already had between ourselves – Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo, all the cooperative schemes that were being devised by Europe, by the United States of America, we have been there. We have contributed to that. Now we have that kind of cooperation in the Black Sea, in the Caucasus, in the Mediterranean basin, in the Middle East itself and in all the countries of that region.

I want to underline this because we often forget that we have this long list of positive agenda and it doesn't stop there either. We're not only about cooperation in regions, on individual countries, on individual problems but on political issues as well and what has become known as asymmetric threats after the end of the Cold War and I'm talking about terrorism, for example. Now, Turkey has stood along with the United States, a good example of fighting together against terrorism. That is why Turkey has joined forces with the United States of America in its bid in Afghanistan, to stem that kind of terrorism and in Iraq where it's creating a lot of problems in my country posing a direct threat to our own security interests. But this cooperation is a very important thing and this is the kind of realization and awareness has not been very widespread, unfortunately, when we look at the other side of the Atlantic. I wish it were, because that is why we have real difficulty acting as a front all together against a common enemy, which is terrorism.

The second asymmetrical threat is the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. There again, whether it's conventional or nuclear we are fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States of America against this scourge as well.

Another asymmetrical threat that we can talk about where the Turks and the Americans cooperate very closely is against any kind of smuggling, whether it's human smuggling, weapons smuggling, drug smuggling, etc. These are very, very important issues which have a lot of relevance in our daily lives, in our own security, in our homeland security and international security as a whole.

So, all these, are indicators that Turkish-American relations are very close, that we share the same values and that is why we have good prospects together. Now Turkey is in a unique position in a world which is being defined sometimes by a clash of civilizations. Turkey with its own democracy is a country taking part in virtually all the organizations in the Euro-Atlantic structures, with the exception of the EU perhaps, but still we have open negotiations with them to become a full member.

At the same time, of course, Turkey is a country whose population is 99 percent Muslim and this gives it a unique opportunity to be a bridge between the Christian world and the Muslim world where people think that these two faiths have come to a point of clash—which we don't believe—and that is why Turkey is in the best position to really prove otherwise. That is why Turkey has taken the lead along with Spain to initiate a scheme which is being called an alliance of civilizations, under the aegis of the United Nations and its Secretary-General. Turkey is also taking part, for example, in the effort which is being initiated by the United States of America and which is now being embraced by the GE-8 itself and I'm talking about the broader Middle East and North Africa initiative. Turkey has voluntarily taken part in that initiative as a democratic partner we are organizing certain activities in Turkey with countries like Italy, Yemen and so on and we are trying to be a very close and useful partner to the United States of America.

Thank you very much for listening.

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