Determinants of Turkish-American Relations and Prospects for the Future

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ABSTRACT This article analyzes the fluctuating course of the Turkey-U.S. relationship with a special focus on Barack Hussein Obama's presidency. When Obama held office, he aimed at reinventing U.S.'s image and shifting center of gravity from the Middle East to Asia-Pacific. These led U.S. to develop its relations with its allies in the region to provide the course of politics go along with the American geostrategic goals. Obama suggested a “model partnership” concept to draw a line between his Administration's and that of his predecessor George W. Bush. Differences of opinion, however, meant the concept did not go beyond being a surface change. Ultimately, two problems remained unsolved; the FETÖ leader’s ongoing residence in U.S. and American support for YPG/PYD in Syria.

Introduction

Turkey’s relations with the U.S. have occupied a special significance in its foreign policy agenda since the end of the Second World War. This priority stems from three essential roots: the comprehensive security and military relationship developed since the Truman Doctrine (1947), the intensive economic and financial relationship that emerged as a result of the Marshall Plan (1948), and the joint strategic initiatives, which emerged after the Cold War in the vast Eurasian region.¹

Throughout the 1990s, Turkish and American statesmen have characterized bilateral relations as strategic alliance or strategic partnership. Having been critically damaged during the Iraqi War of 2003, the strategic dimension of the relationship was restructured by a series of trust building measures during George W. Bush’s second term.² However, the AK Party government’s efforts to rehabilitate the relations with a new common strategic vision did not yield the expected positive results. Barack Hussein Obama developed another term and