

# Donald Trump's Policy Toward Turkey, Change or Continuity

**Author: A.L. Salar Sewar Ismael, Assistant. Professor. Othman  
Ali**

Ministry of higher education

Soran University

Faculty of Law, Political Science and Management

Department: Politics and International Relations

*E-mail: salar.ismael@soran.edu.iq, othman.muhammed@su.edu.krd*

## ABSTRACT

The main aim of this research is to understand the change in Trumps' foreign policy towards Turkey and to show the most important factors of that policy. The research question is to clarify whether there has been change or continuity in US foreign policy towards Turkey during Trumps era. In answering this question, the researcher contends that there are some changes within the continuity in this regard. This research has two main purposes. First, to understand the process of how the US constructs its foreign policy. To that end, this thesis takes into consideration issues of state identity, American self-perception, and the perception of others. The second is to investigate the most important actors and factors behind US foreign policy towards Turkey during the era of Trumps presidency. A qualitative research approach was adopted and data were collected from various primary and secondary sources. The information collected was analyzed thematically and the themes identified were discussed using findings that were presented by previous studies. Hence, the dissertation pursues, to some not insignificant degree, critical analysis. This study fills a gap in academia with regard to the existence of a thorough study to address the change and continuity in US foreign policy towards Turkey. It is noteworthy that US foreign policy towards Turkey since the coming to power of Trump has had many ups and downs, the dynamics of which need to be explained and analysed, which is what the researcher intends to do.

**Keywords: U.S, Turkey, Change in Foreign Policy, Trump.**

## Background to and importance of the research

Although the study of US foreign policy towards Turkey has been the focus of many studies in many languages, the dynamics and the issues which have a direct impact on the bilateral relations of the two countries have not been addressed sufficiently. We contend that this academic gap could be adequately addressed by analyzing and explaining Turkish–US relations during the Trumps era in the context of neoclassical realism theory. In addition, US foreign policy towards Turkish during the period covered in this study has a direct bearing on the Kurdish issue in general and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in particular. Therefore, the decision makers and academia in the KRG need to pay the needed attention to the matter.

## Research questions

Is the Trump's foreign policy towards Turkey one of change or continuity?

## Outline of the research

The research first, seeks to build a structure that allows for a comprehensive review of the foreign policy decision making and US foreign policy in general. Secondly, explains the terms of the relations between the two parties in terms of cooperation and points of disagreement and tension in Trumps presidential period and then considers the future of US–Turkish relations in respect of their future prospect. The concluding chapter provides a summary of the whole research, in addition to the contributions of the findings.

### 1. The role of domestic politics in US foreign policy decision-making

The president of the United States creates foreign policies with the goal of achieving complex domestic and international goals. It usually entails a complex series of processes, with domestic politics playing an essential role. The significance of a country's head of government in foreign policy decision-making and how that individual is influenced by domestic politics will be critically examined in this chapter. The majority of American foreign policies are shaped by coalitions of domestic and international actors, institutions and other groups. Many driving elements can be recognized when evaluating the head of government or, in other words, the executor of foreign policies, to explain the rationale behind decisions that are made (Souva, Mark & Rohde, David, 2007). The leader's own personality and cognition, degree of rationality, internal politics, and international and domestic interest groups are all aspects to consider. However, it is the domestic political environment, not the other variables mentioned, that affects every single framework of decision-making in a country, even in an international context (Herman, 1994).

#### 1.1 Personalities and US foreign policy

It has long been suggested in the field of FPA that foreign policy crises and wars are characterized by conditions that favour the influence of personality, and that individuals' distinct policy preferences, decision-making styles, and relationships with advisers are critical factors in determining outcomes. Using this as a starting point, this chapter attempts to explore the impact of several US presidents' personalities on American foreign policy towards Turkey.

### 2. President Donald Trump's policy towards Turkey 2017–2020

#### 2.1 *Donald Trump's leadership style and foreign policy analysis*

Individual-level analysis starts with the assumption that policy is made by people. As a result, knowing how the human decision-making process leads to policy making (as a species, in groups, and idiosyncratically) is a key component of individual-level study (Gebhard, 2018). According to Dyson's demonstration of how leadership style had an impact on the foreign policy decision-making process, universally, most people believed that Donald Trump had a fairly simplistic understanding of the international system and of politics. President Trump's approach to foreign policy revolved around making deals very transactional, so he can be shown to have low conceptual complexity. Most people agree that President Trump had a competitive bureaucratic style, liked to hog the limelight and was sceptical of advisers. He has fired a lot of his cabinet members probably more than any other U.S presidents at this stage of the presidency (Harris, 2018). The key debate is over whether President Trump had an internal or external locus of control. For those who important to the internal locus of control would argue that He does believe that he has a very efficacious leader that can make the deal like I can get it done. In that sense, he has an internal locus of control but, on the other hand, he also had the view that America should have a more limited foreign policy and a sense that the country cannot solve everyone else's problems, that it should not try, and that it should be concerned about America first and foremost. In that sense, President Trump fits in the external locus of control category. As a result, Donald Trump can be said to have

low conceptual complexity, an internal and external locus of control, as well as a competitive infighter style because he believed that he could get things done his way, without others, and he did not trust his colleagues with special information.

### *2.2 Donald Trump and the US–Turkish relationship*

Following Donald Trump's inauguration as the 45th President of the United States on 20 January 2017, the leaders of other Western countries largely shivered at the new US president's strong and controversial slogan of "America First!". Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the president of America's long-time NATO ally Turkey, voiced optimism and solid support for the new government. Although the US–Turkey alliance has historically been primarily focused on a strategic partnership with its security alliance, NATO, the potential rebuilding of the US–Turkey relationship had been imagined through the significant changing of the US presidential guard and President Erdoğan's view of the potential political and security benefits to be gained from a strong relationship with an unorthodox US (Aydtintasbas, A; Kirisci, K, 2017).

When Donald Trump was elected president of the United States, Turkish officials welcomed the news and saw it as an opportunity to begin again. They viewed Trump's success as “mass revenge against the establishment”, much like Erdoğan had done previously (Marcou, 2017). The Erdoğan–Trump mutual attraction, according to Soner Cagaptay, might have worked because of the two presidents' populist, anti-elitist, and right-wing authoritarian attitudes (Serdar, 2017). However, problems that existed during Obama's presidency remained throughout Trump's Administration and no significant progress was made. As a consequence of the failure of the two previous models, the Trump Administration was forced to deal with the lack of a strategic model of the relations between the two countries. As a result, relations could not be developed as expected (Jan, 2017).

The main continuous issues between the US and Turkey were well known: Turkey's disappointment with Obama's inability to enforce his ‘red lines’ with the Assad regime; the more recently expanding US–Syrian Kurdish alliance; frustrations in the United States at what the White House once labelled Turkey's increasing authoritarianism; Ankara's demand for the extradition of US-based preacher Fethullah Gülen, whom Ankara believed had been the mastermind behind the failed coup attempt in July 2016; and suspicions of prior US knowledge of the coup (Cagaptay, S; Parris, M; Lesser, I, 2009). There were also other ongoing factors, such as diplomatic concerns, military crises, and some other regional issues. As a result, resentment increased on both sides.

### *2.3 The future of Syria and the Syrian Kurds (YPG/PYD)*

By early 2017, it was easy to say that Turkey's relationship with the United States had not been much worse in decades. The situation of the PYD/YPG and the future of Syrian Kurds appears to have been the most concerning issue. Kahl (2017) believed that although President Trump supported certain extreme views and actions during his campaign, his administration had taken the same position in Syria (supporting Syrian Kurds) as had the Obama Administration (Clawson, 2016). Amanda Sloat, on the other hand, considered (CFR 2018/b) that neither the Obama nor the Trump administration had a specific Syria policy, which appears to have been a major issue that had an impact on the future of the Turkish–American partnership. Turkey was never truly committed to the fight against extreme Islamist groups in Syria, according to the United States' view (especially in the early years of the Syrian civil war). Cook believed that Trump's approach to Turkey was founded on the concept that if Turkey criticized US assistance for Kurdish militias, it should consider its own support for Sunni militias (Gurbuz, 2019). According to this viewpoint, Brett McGurk, Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS, even accused Turkey of supporting al-Qaeda in Syria (Hearing, 2014).

During the bloody Syrian civil war, US authorities encouraged Turkey to do more to prevent jihadist fighters from infiltrating Syria and joining ISIS and other Islamist groups (The Economist 2016). Finally, in May 2017, the Trump Administration took a decisive step by deciding to arm Kurdish militia in Syria. From the perspective

of Washington, the Kurdish militia was a progressive force that successfully fought ISIS (Gordon, Michael R.; Schmitt, Eric, 2017) (Cagaptay, 2016). The US refused to recognize the PYD/YPG as terrorist groups, despite having long classified the PKK as a terrorist organization (US Department of State, 2017). The Turkish government, on the other hand, claimed that the PKK and the PYD/YPG had close ties. As a result, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu warned the US that “weapons delivered to the YPG wind up in the hands of the PKK” (Yale, 2017). “In his meeting with Trump,<sup>1</sup> Erdoğan may first welcome the recent step of the U.S. to put bounties on senior PKK leaders. Yet, he will also clearly underline that Turkey will oppose any attempt by the U.S. to differentiate the PKK from its Syrian affiliate the People’s Protection Units [YPG]” (Yesiltas, 2018). Erdoğan asked Trump repeatedly not to help the PYD/YPG in Syria from the beginning of their conversations, but he was unable to persuade Trump to change his mind (NTV, 2017). “There is no place for terrorist organizations in the future of our region”, Erdoğan declared during a May 2017 visit to the White House, standing alongside Trump. “Taking YPG and PYD into consideration in the region will never be accepted, and it will be against a global agreement that we have reached” (Gaouette, 2017). Moreover, according to Lesser (2016), “Turkish officials and analysts do not share Washington’s view of the PYD as an effective counter to ISIS in Syria” (Lesser, 2016). ()

Turkish authorities had warned Washington that they may attack Kurdish militias in Syria, in which situation Washington should choose which side to assist (Fahim, K; Dadoch, S; Khattab, A., 2019). İlnur Çevik, one of President Erdoğan’s top advisers, even suggested that due to American support for the PYD, there could be unexpected military clashes between American and Turkish troops in Syria (Clawson, 2016). Some American scholars and politicians, such as Michael Doran and John McCain, had also questioned US foreign policy in relation to the PYD/YPG, claiming that it might lead to a dangerous escalation in the two countries’ relationships. Later, the US Army deployed military equipment along the Turkey–Syria border to prevent a military confrontation between the Turkish Army and the YPG (Institute, 2015).

Following harsh criticism from Turkey, the Trump Administration attempted to make policy modifications regarding its assistance for Syrian Kurds. The name of the PYD-dominated opposition organization, for example, had been altered to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). This, however, was viewed as a symbolic act that did not satisfy Turkey (Hoffman, 2019). Furthermore, Mark Toner, then-Deputy Spokesperson for the US Department of State, indicated that US assistance for the PYD was just tactical, and that the US government did not support the PKK (BBC, 2016). After ISIS was defeated, then-US Secretary of Defence James Mattis stated that Washington wanted to return armaments to the Kurdish YPG force in northern Syria. Nasi (2017/c) asserted that Washington promised Ankara the opportunity to monitor weaponry given to the PYD in order to prevent their transfer to the PKK, as well as the assurance that the YPG would leave Raqqa after it was liberated. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the US decision to assist Syrian Kurds was not a hasty or unthinking one, since Turkey had earlier offered Washington a joint military operation against ISIS in Raqqa without the participation of the PYD/YPG, which Washington had turned down. Because of this, Turkey did not support the American anti-ISIS campaign in the early stages of the conflict, which was why Washington developed alliances with Kurdish groups in Syria (AlJazeera 2017/b). However, Turkey’s options against the US in the PYD/YPG conflict may have been limited. For example, according to Akgün (2016), Turkey did not have the luxury of opposing US policies in Syria and should instead have focused on improving its international image by resuming its Kurdish peace initiative. Yetkin (2017/a) claimed that American support for the PYD/YPG was not random and that Washington has already devised a back-up plan in the event that Ankara shut down Incirlik

---

<sup>1</sup> Erdoğan’s visit to Paris for Armistice Day commemorations was expected to see a meeting with his US counterpart Donald Trump, during which key issues, particularly FETÖ and the YPG, would be discussed. For more information, please visit: <https://www.setav.org/en/ypg-is-turkeys-red-line-in-syria-erdogan-to-tell-trump-in-paris/>

Air Base. Yetkin further asserted (2017/b) that, despite Washington's efforts to reassure Ankara by stating that weaponry provided to the PYD would be returned after the Raqqa Operation, the two sides had different perspectives about Syria's future. On the other hand, then-US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson cautioned Turkey about being a responsible NATO ally and to examine its close cooperation with Russia and Iran over Syria's future because such ties with Russia and Iran would lead the bilateral relationship with the USA to strategic change (Hürriyet, 2017/b).

An American military official later announced the US plan to form a new border security force of around 30,000 soldiers alongside the SDF, a US-backed entity in Syria that was largely commanded and manned by PYD forces (AA, 2018). The two countries met on 15–16 February 2018, during then-US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's two-day visit, to discuss Turkey's continuing military action (Operation Olive Branch) in Afrin (a Syrian city controlled by PYD/YPG forces), as well as the situation in Manbij (Menbiç). Despite major differences over the future of Kurds in Syria, Tillerson met President Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Cavuşoğlu, and although no specific information was shared with the press, the meeting demonstrated two governments' determination to collaborate and maintain their partnership. According to certain sources, Turkey offered a joint deployment in Syria with the US and the departure of the PYD/YPG from Manbij. Serhat Güvenç<sup>2</sup> believed that this policy would fail since Washington had already recognized the Kurds as a preferred ally in Syria, while İter Turan emphasized that the two countries would never accept an armed clash in Manbij (Cetin, 2018). Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Cavuşoğlu, on the other hand, stated that after the YPG troops were removed, Turkish and American soldiers would jointly control Manbij (Fraser, S; Mroue, B, 2018). Then, on 4 June 2018, the United States and Turkish Foreign Ministers, Mike Pompeo and Mevlüt Cavuşoğlu, met in Washington, DC, and backed a Manbij plan while reaffirming their mutual commitment to its implementation, a move that could be considered a good step forwards for their relationships in the future (Everycres, 2016). Although the Manbij Agreement is a positive step forwards for Turkish–American relations, there is still a dispute with Syria, and the two allies have yet to agree on a strategy for Syria's and Kurds' future. Turkey and the United States initiated combined patrols around Manbij on the west bank of the Euphrates river in November 2018 (Stewart & Butler, 2018). Furthermore, the US government decided to establish new observation stations along the Syria–Turkey border in order to promote security and stability in the region and avoid a military clash between the Turkish Army and Kurdish forces (Tracker, 2021). President Erdoğan, on the other hand, announced in December 2018 that Turkey would soon begin military action against Kurdish forces in the eastern reaches of the Euphrates (Stewart & Butler, 2018). President Trump then revealed his shocking decision to withdraw American soldiers from Syria in December 2018 (Borger & Chulov, 2018). This move was highly received in Turkey, and in an essay published in *The New York Times*, President Erdoğan (2019) welcomed Trump's decision, stating that Turkey could fight ISIS and the PYD/YPG in the region on its own.

Despite Trump's decision to withdraw US troops from Syria having avoided a potentially disastrous military clash between Turkish and American troops and created a positive atmosphere in Turkey, the two allies' lack of agreement on Syria's future, particularly the fate of the Kurds, remained a major source of contention. For example, in January 2019, President Trump threatened Turkey with economic destruction if Ankara began targeting pro-American Kurdish groups within the SDF, including PYD/YPG elements (BBC, 2019). Trump also stated that President Erdoğan viewed Kurds as Turkey's “natural enemy”, and that he would not allow Turkey to “wipe out all Kurds” (NBC, 2019). This demonstrates that the US expected Turkey simply to execute a 20-mile “Safe Zone”<sup>3</sup> operation and negotiate a political arrangement with Kurdish troops, whereas Turkey

<sup>2</sup> Professor. Serhat Guvenc, is professor of international relations, Kadir Has University and Bagazici University. For more please visit: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/serhat-guvenc-84a6ba32/>

<sup>3</sup> On August 4, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan warned a military assault in northeastern Syria against Kurdish forces. His stated goal was to gain control over further area in the country so that Turkey could build a "safe zone." This would be a 20-35-kilometer region of the Syrian-Turkish border where Syrian refugees in

intended to eliminate all armed Kurdish militia groups in Syria. Furthermore, despite President Trump's determination to withdraw American troops, nearly 1,000 American personnel remained in Syria (ACWDC, 2019).

In terms of the Turkish–American perspective on the Syrian crisis, there was a lack of trust between Washington and Ankara as a result of the PYD/YPG issue, but Washington had yet to make a definitive decision. On the other hand, it is important to recognize that the Trump Administration would have to choose between the PYD and Turkey at some point. As a result, the two countries agreed in July 2019 to establish a joint operations centre in order to coordinate and oversee a projected 20-mile-long (32-kilometre) safe zone in northeast Syria (Reuters, 2019). The Turkish Armed Forces launched Operation “Peace Spring” on 9 October 2019, with land and air operations against PYD/YPG targets in Syrian cities such as Kobani, Tel Abyad, Ras al-Ain, and Qamishli (Siccardi, 2021). Although President Trump did not support Turkey's military operation, he did send a green signal to Ankara by withdrawing US forces from the Turkish and Syrian border areas (N.Y.Times, 2019). According to BBC defence correspondent Jonathan Marcus (2019), Trump defied Pentagon and State Department concerns by making this decision, which they saw as a betrayal of Kurds. Following Erdoğan's and Trump's agreement, Turkey conducted operations within the previously agreed-upon safe zone, and Turkey agreed to bear responsibility for ISIS prisoners held in northern Syria. US Secretary of Defence Mark Esper announced that the US was ready to withdraw all troops from northern Syria as soon as appropriate (Kirby, 2019). During US Vice President Mike Pence's visit to Turkey shortly after Operation Peace Spring, Ankara and Washington agreed to a ceasefire on the condition that Kurdish forces withdraw from the safe zone (Al-Jazeera, 2019). Following this deal, Turkey and Russia reached an agreement to remove Kurdish forces from the Turkish border just about 30 km (19 miles) within 150 hours (Al-Jazeera, 2019/a). Although the Turkish political elite applauded the agreement, President Trump's threatening letter to Erdoğan and his unique diplomatic manner were criticized by Turkish media in the immediate aftermath<sup>4</sup> (BBC, 2019).

#### *2.4 Donald Trump and his perspective on Islam*

Islamophobia in the United States is not new, but Trump's statements continued a long tradition of associating Muslims with terrorism. President Trump was frequently characterized as an Islamophobic figure in Turkish media, according to his harsh anti-immigrant rhetoric during his presidential campaign, as well as his stereotyped perception of Muslims as Islamist extremists (Bazian, 2019). Erdoğan, as an Islamist leader, criticized Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric, particularly his Islamophobic remarks. He publicly chastised Trump for proposing a ban on Muslim immigration to the United States. This caused anti-Americanism to rise sharply among Muslim countries and they disliked the new US president. For example, during his campaign, he demanded that Trump's name be removed from a high-rise building in Istanbul built by his family in

---

Turkey may return. However, on August 7, after extensive discussions, Turkey and the United States announced an agreement on this zone, effectively eliminating the need for the Turkish operation. For more information please visit: <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-safe-zone-agreement-in-northern-syria-improves-turkeys-position/>

<sup>4</sup> President Trump wrote the following to Erdoğan: “Dear Mr. President, Let’s work out a good deal! You don’t want to be responsible for slaughtering thousands of people, and I don’t want to be responsible for destroying the Turkish economy—and I will. I’ve already given you a little sample with respect to Pastor Brunson. I have worked hard to solve some of your problems. Don’t let the world down. You can make a great deal. General Mazloum is willing to negotiate with you, and he is willing to make concessions that they would never have made in the past. I am confidentially enclosing a copy of his letter to me, just received. History will look upon you favorably if you get this done the right and humane way. It will look upon you forever as the devil if good things don’t happen. Don’t be a tough guy. Don’t be a fool! I will call you later. Sincerely, Donald Trump” (BBC, 2019).

collaboration with the Dogan Group (Cortina, 2017). However, during Trump's first international diplomacy tour, which included Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the Vatican, and particularly his historic address in Riyadh (Bell, 2017), many Turkish politicians gained a different perspective on Trump and came to realize him as anti-radical rather than Islamophobic. Saygn Simsek, a member of Trump's Middle East policy team, argued that Turkey, as a secular, democratic, and Muslim-based country, might have better relations with the Trump Administration because the new American president's emphasis and main goal would be radicalism, not Islam as a holy religion. Soli Özel, on the other hand, suggested a cautious optimism in respect of the Trump Administration, arguing that Trump's Islamophobic language may push Erdoğan to react in domestic politics (Ormeçi, 2020).

### *2.5 The cases of Fethullah Gülen and Andrew Brunson*

On 15 July 2016, part of the Turkish military attempted an organized operation in numerous major cities to overturn the government and unseat President Erdoğan, in what was the bloodiest coup attempt in the country's political history. The Turkish government accused Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish preacher and businessman who has lived in self-imposed exile in the US since 1999, of the failed coup attempt (Al-Jazeera, 2017). Following the failed coup attempt in July 2016, Donald Trump remarked favourably on President Erdoğan's leadership but avoided using pro-Gülen rhetoric (Norris, J; Kenney, C, 2017). However, James Clapper, then-US Director of National Intelligence, believed that recent purges in the Turkish Armed Forces following the failed coup attempt may jeopardize the Turkish–American cooperation in the fight against ISIS (Strobel, 2016). Fethullah Gülen and his community (FETÖ) were mentioned in the US State Department's annual report on terrorism for the first time in 2017; however, the group was not added to the terrorism list (State, 2017). Instead, the report focused on the Turkish government's accusations against Gülen and his group, as well as decisions by the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to recognize the group as a terrorist organization in response to Ankara's pressure following the coup attempt (ibid, 2017, p. 159–160). Most Washington-based Turkey observers, such as Soner Cagaptay and Carol Migdalovitz, believed that extraditing Gülen to Turkey would be difficult until Turkey showed credible proof of Gülen's role in the coup attempt (Gunter, 2018). On the other hand, Turkey's Foreign Minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, cautioned Washington that if Gülen was not given over to Turkey, bilateral relations could deteriorate. and he stated in a press conference that “our relations are at a critical turning point. We were either going to correct this and continue our relations or we were going to go into a much more worse position” (Alliance, 2018). Many Turkish scholars and academics, notably Erhan and Siviş, believed that Gülen's extradition would be beneficial to relations between the two countries (Ormeçi, 2020).

Andrew Brunson, a Christian missionary who had lived in Turkey for over two decades, was detained in 2016 and charged with planning to undermine President Erdoğan's regime. He strongly denied the accusations (Fritze, J; Shesgreen, D, 2018). Erdoğan indicated in 2017 that if Washington deported exiled Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen to Ankara, Turkey could release imprisoned pastor Andrew Brunson. According to the statement, which was clearly understood by the US Government to mean that Erdoğan had the power to control judicial judgments in Turkey and that he intended to use Brunson as a prisoner in exchange for Gülen (BBC, 2018). The case of the American pastor affected the relationship between Turkey and the US in different ways. Earlier that year, President Trump and dozens of American senators had asked Erdoğan to free Brunson, who had been held for over two years. The Brunson case became a source of contention between the two countries in 2018, following US Vice President Mike Pence's threat of economic sanctions against Turkey (Finnegan, 2018). Following a meeting of the National Security Council on 30 July 2018, the Turkish state said that Washington's threatening attitude was unacceptable. On 1 August 2018, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) began action against Turkey's Minister of Justice Abdulhamit Gül and Minister of Interior Affairs Süleyman Soylu, based on the continuance of the pastor's extended trial period. As a result of this action, any property or interest in property owned by Gül or Soylu in the United States was blocked. This was instigated because, according to the Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, “Pastor Brunson’s unjust detention and continued

prosecution by Turkish officials is simply unacceptable” (Treasury, 2018). Erdogan stated in a televised speech, “Today I will give our friends instructions to freeze the assets in Turkey of the American justice and interior ministers, if they have any (such assets)”. (TRT, 2018) Therefore, he struck back by freezing the assets of US Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke and US Attorney General Jeff Sessions in Turkey (France24, 2018). The ‘Brunson crisis’ had a negative impact on the Turkish economy and the Turkish lira hit a new low versus the US dollar and the euro in August 2018. In an article published in *The New York Times* on 10 August 2018, President Erdoğan stated that Washington was acting unilaterally and disrespecting Turkey's independent judicial system by urging him to assist in the legal process (Gall, 2019). According to Soli Özel, the Brunson situation was symbolic and the problems between Ankara and Washington were caused by geopolitical disagreements over Middle East prospects and the future of Kurds in the region (Aktan 2018). On 12 October 2018, a Turkish court found Pastor Brunson guilty of assisting terrorism, although he was released due to his time served in prison (CBCNEWS, 2018). Following a case that had strained relations between the two countries, Andrew Brunson appeared in the Oval Office with President Trump. Trump also praised Brunson's release as a political victory and received him as a visitor in the Oval Office of the White House the day after his release. Following Pastor Brunson's release, the two countries reciprocated by lifting sanctions against their respective ministers (BBC, 2018).

To summarize, the Brunson case had a significant impact on American–Turkish relationships. In the end, Washington's pressure on Ankara was too much. Sanctions, trade tariffs, and the possibility of more had caused US–Turkey ties to collapse and the Turkish currency to follow suit. Turkey had to act to normalize relations with the US in the face of spiralling inflation, a 40% decline in the value of the currency, and the commencement of an economic crisis. The case of Pastor Brunson was crucial.

#### *2.6 Kurdish statehood (referendum)*

On 25 September 2017, the KRG in Iraq held a referendum on possible independence from Baghdad. According to the Independent High Elections and Referendum Commission, over 78% of more than five million people participated in the referendum, which was predicted to pass. Even close friends of the KRG, such as Ankara and Washington, had expressed their displeasure with the referendum. Independence was a foregone conclusion for the KRG and many Iraqi Kurds. Although the US and Turkey had both contributed to the development of Iraqi Kurdistan over the previous two decades, neither favoured KRG independence (Snow, 2017).

Turkey's reaction to the referendum on independence was not strong, but it was critical from the first step (Klain & Hintz, 2017). President Erdoğan did not use urgent rhetoric at the onset, although he issued some warnings. President Erdoğan's adviser, İlnur Çevik, even stated that every nation had the right to form its own state. However, following a meeting of the Turkish National Security Council in July 2017, the Turkish government claimed that the referendum result could not be legally and effectively implemented, potentially leading to unfavourable outcomes (K24 2017). The referendum was politically and legally incorrect, according to Turkish Presidency spokeswoman Brahim Kaln, and it would not be binding unless it was accepted by the Iraqi Parliament (CSIS, 2017). However, then-US Secretary of Defence James Mattis stated that the referendum should be postponed but did not advocate for its cancellation (NY.Times, 2017). Ankara adopted a “wait and see” policy for a while, strengthening ties with other powerful actors such as Iran (Yinanc, 2020). Despite Turkey's formal rejection of Kurdish independence, Cook noted (2017) that “it is hard to imagine the Turkish military invading Iraq to snuff out Kurdish independence there” (Cook, 2017). However, as the referendum on Kurdish independence drew closer, Turkey's response got tougher. Turkey had also begun a military exercise at the Ibrahim Khalil border crossing (Ozer, 2017) and had continued to bomb PKK targets in northern Iraq (Al-Jazeera, 2021). Ankara's political tone dramatically shifted; while the KRG was no longer seen as an existential threat, Ankara continued to monitor the independence referendum process from a security standpoint, concerned about the possibility of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq fostering Kurdish long-time dreams of a

greater Kurdistan in the region (CSIS, 2017). Furthermore, at Trump and Erdoğan's meeting on 21 September 2017, both governments expressed their opposition to Kurdish independence (Xinhuanet, 2017).

Turkey, Iran, and Iraq had accepted counter-measures against Kurdish northern Iraq in the case of an upcoming independence vote, according to Turkey's Foreign Ministry. The foreign ministers of the three states expressed concern in a joint statement that the vote would jeopardize Iraq's victories against Islamic State, as well as their fears of new wars and regional conflict. The statement said that "In the meeting, the three ministers emphasized that the referendum will not be beneficial for the Kurds and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), and agreed, in this regard, to consider taking counter-measures in coordination" (Reuters, 2017).

The referendum was held on 25 September 2017, with a participation of 72% and a majority of "yes" votes in favour of Kurdish independence (Rudaw, 2017). President Erdoğan reacted angrily to the referendum and threatened the Kurdish authority. Turkey had stated that if the referendum resulted in a declaration of independence, it would consider imposing economic sanctions on the KRG, as well as military alternatives (Reuters, 2017). The Iraqi central government, as well as Iran, backed Turkey's position and refused to recognize the Kurds' desire for independence. Apart from Israel, other major regional countries and world powers appeared to be rejecting the idea of a Kurdish state, at least for the time being, due to geopolitical considerations. The referendum process resulted in the collapse of Kirkuk and the loss of sovereignty over the Kurdish crossing point to Turkey, as well as fading Kurdish expectations for independence on Iraqi territory (TWI, 2017). Following the backfire of the independence vote, Kurdish President Masoud Barzani decided to resign, indicating that Washington would have to intervene between Turkey and the Kurds in Iraq in the future.

### *2.7 Iran disagreement*

Both Turkey and Iran have experienced substantial internal and external events in recent years, pushing them to review their difficult relations as a result of the Syrian conflict. The rapprochement between Iran and the United States following the nuclear agreement was one of the most significant developments (Thalji, 2014). The JCPOA agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the P5+1 countries regarding Iran's nuclear programme was negotiated by Washington during Barack Obama's presidency. All signing countries, as well as the rest of the world, praised the deal (Robinson, 2021). During his presidential campaign, however, President Trump referred to the JCPOA as the "worst deal ever seen" (Archive, 2016). Despite Trump's close colleagues Rex Tillerson and James Mattis lauding Iran's adherence to the agreement, Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continued to oppose it. On 8 May 2018, Trump declared that the JCPOA would be terminated and that US sanctions against Iran, particularly those targeting the country's oil industry and dealings with its central bank, would be reinstated (Remarks, 2018). As a result, sanctions targeting the Iranian automotive sector, as well as gold and other major metals trading, went into effect on 4 August 2018. The sanctions proposed would have a significant impact on European companies doing business with Iran, as well as Turkey's oil and gas imports (Landler, 2018). Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the Turkish Foreign Minister, issued a statement denouncing Washington and indicating Turkey's plan to collaborate with European allies in refusing to join the sanctions imposed by the US. Then-EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini stated that the EU would continue to work to keep the Iranian nuclear deal alive and that trade with Iran was still encouraged (Yamaguchi, 2018).

On 7 August 2018, Trump threatened US allies in a tweet message, warning that "anyone who does business with Iran will not be doing business with the United States" (Calamur, 2018). The United States decided in November 2018 to grant temporary exemptions to nine nations, including Turkey, China, Japan, India, Greece, Italy, Taiwan, South Korea, and Afghanistan, allowing them to continue buying Iranian oil after sanctions were imposed (BBC, 2019). However, after Iran decided to resume its uranium enrichment programme in July 2019, the Iran debate had the potential to become a hot topic in the coming months. Furthermore, the killing of Iranian

leader Qasem Soleimani by a US air strike at Baghdad Airport on 3 January 2020 elevated the Iran controversy to a severe geopolitical threat.

### *2.8 Military crises (S-400 and F-35)*

The long-range MIM-14 Nike-Hercules missile launchers developed a decade earlier had been the ground component of Turkey's air defence since the 1970s. The Turkish military had repeatedly stated the need to replace them with new-generation weapons since the 1990s, but for decades, the only option considered was the American-made MIM-104 Patriot missile systems, which served as the technological foundation for the development of Turkey's armament systems. As a result of a lack of progress on the issue, an open tender for anti-aircraft missile systems was announced by the Turkish government in 2009, with the major criteria being pricing, supply timeliness, and access to technology. The tender featured bids from the US (Raytheon and Lockheed Martin), China (CPMIEC), Russia (Rosoboronekспорт), and Europe (Eurosam), with the Chinese securing the contract in 2013 (Kardas, 2009). The only document signed was a preliminary agreement, which the Turkish side interpreted as a kind of pressure on Washington. Under US pressure, NATO's Patriot launchers were temporarily moved to Turkey (2012), and the contract with China was suspended and eventually cancelled (in 2015); this was closely connected to the expansion of the war in Syria and the involvement of NATO states' forces in the crisis. Turkey's attempts to finalize the Patriot system acquisition on favourable terms, however, were unsuccessful. Access to the latest version of the system, access to technology, and a price that Ankara would consider affordable were among the requirements (Egeli, 2009). The lack of progress in negotiations with Washington, as well as the deterioration of Turkish–American relations (due, among other things, to US support for Syrian Kurds and the Turkish opposition), as well as Turkey's closer cooperation with Russia on Syria, all fueled the idea of purchasing Russian-made S-400 systems as a bridge project (and a bargaining tool) while obtaining the Patriot systems (Strachota & Wilk, 2019).

Turkey's purchase of Russian-made anti-aircraft defence systems was met with strong opposition from the US (as well as any other system manufactured by non-NATO countries, as evidenced recently by the developments surrounding the tender won by the Chinese company (CPMIEC). This approach was in line with the US government's general assessment of Turkey (Ibid, 2019). Therefore, following Ankara's decision to purchase the Russian-made S-400 air missile defence system, America's criticism of Turkey escalated once again (Hoffman, 2019). Some analysts in Washington believed that the Russian-made equipment could put NATO's security in danger. Stein (2019) claimed, for example, that the S-400 system may capture significant electronic intelligence about the F-35. As a result, the US Congress attempted to delay the transfer of F-35 fighter jets to Turkey (O'Grady, 2019). Turkey, on the other hand, was one of the 11 co-producer countries for the new-generation aircraft. The US Congress adopted a bill delaying the supply of F-35 fighter jets to Turkey on 1 August 2018. President Trump approved a policy bill that would restrict the delivery of F-35 fighter jets to Turkey as one of the NATO members. More recently, the US delayed the delivery of F-35 stealth fighter jet equipment to Turkey (Muspratt, 2018). Furthermore, some observers believed that, as a result of this decision, Washington would impose economic sanctions on Ankara. President Trump blamed the previous US government (the Obama Administration) for denying Turkey access to the American-made Patriot system, therefore legitimizing Ankara's choice to purchase the S-400 system while avoiding any mention of sanctions against Turkey (Dogantekin & Donmez, 2019). Following Turkey's adoption of the Russian-made S-400 air defence system, the US decided to remove Turkey from the F-35 fighter jet programme in July 2019, and Turkey would lose its production work on the jet by March 2020 (Mehta, 2019).

To summarize, the last four years of Trump's presidency saw a series of escalating crises in US–Turkish relationships. While many were defused or postponed, they did not disappear. The Trump era began in ruins, from the Turkish perspective, as a result of the failed coup attempt in 2016, which shattered the model partnership and inflamed anti-Americanism in Turkey. As a pragmatic leader, President Trump attempted to strike a balance between Turkey and the Kurds, even approving limited military operations by Turkey. However,

in order to strengthen the Turkish–American relationship, Trump's second term, or the next US President (the Democrat Joe Biden became the 46th president of the United States in 2021) would have the job of persuading Ankara to pursue a non-contradictory Syria strategy and Kurdish policy.

### 3. Diplomatic issue (brawl during Erdoğan's visit and other polemics)

#### *3.1 Diplomatic issues: American and Turkish visa crises*

The US announced on 8 October 2017 that non-immigrant visa services at its diplomatic facilities in Turkey would be suspended. The action came when Metin Topuz, a Turkish employee of the US Consulate in Istanbul, was detained. Topuz was arrested on suspicion of espionage and membership of the banned FETÖ group, which was accused of organizing the 15 July 2016 coup attempt. The US issued a statement in response to Topuz's detention, stating it was “deeply disturbed by the arrest” and that the charges against him were “wholly without merit”. Mr Topuz's detention was driven by “vengeance rather than justice”, according to outgoing-US Ambassador to Ankara John Bass, who also criticized Turkish mass media coverage of the case. Metin Topuz was accused of being in contact with a number of FETÖ suspects, including police commissioners and other coup plotters such as Oktay Akkaya, a former lieutenant colonel who was one of the main actors in the 2016 coup attempt, and Zekeriya Öz, a fugitive accused of attempting to overthrow the government through the use of force, according to the indictment, which Turkish media outlets also revealed. The suspension of visas for Turkish citizens was justified by Washington as a way to “reassess the commitment of the Turkish government to the security of US Mission facilities and personnel”. On the same day, the Turkish Embassy in Washington issued an almost verbatim statement, stating that it would suspend visa services at its US missions, as well as electronic visas and visas at Turkish borders, and “reassess the commitment of the Government of the United States to the security of Turkish mission facilities and personnel”. Simultaneously, the Turkish Foreign Ministry called Philip Kosnett, the Under Secretary of the US Embassy in Ankara, to convey their disappointment with the US decision. Their decision to bypass Ambassador Bass was based on his past strong comments about Mr Topuz's imprisonment. Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu stated that the visa crisis was inappropriate, that the United States' approach to the issue was “immature”, and that Turkey would not capitulate to “impositions” demanded by the United States in order to resolve the feud if the requirements did not comply with the Turkish Constitution. “We (Turkey) will cooperate if their (US) demands are consistent with our (Turkish) Constitution, rule of law, and sovereignty”, he said, adding that Turkey and the US “can resolve these concerns through bilateral understanding”. According to Presidential Spokesperson İbrahim Kalin, the problem would be resolved shortly as a result of continuing talks between the US team in Turkey and the Turkish government. President Erdoğan stated that Ambassador Bass had “gone rogue” by announcing the suspension of visa services from the United States. He further stated that Turkish authorities, including ministers, had refused to receive farewell visits from Ambassador Bass, who was leaving Turkey for his new job, and that Bass was no longer regarded as the United States' envoy. The State Department, on the other hand, backed Ambassador Bass.

In the following days, both the US and Turkey indicated that they were willing to work together to resolve the problem, but the visa bans remained in place. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson discussed the problem with Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu on 11 October. Tillerson expressed the administration's “profound concern” over Topuz's arrest, according to a State Department summary of the conversation, but also vowed to keep in “close contact” with his Turkish counterpart. The negotiations between the US and Turkey on resolving the issue were progressing, according to Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ. He also described Tillerson's and Çavuşoğlu's talks as “very productive”, adding that “representatives from both sides decided to meet and work together”. On 16 October, a US delegation led by US Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Jonathan Cohen went to Turkey for talks on ways to solve the diplomatic crisis. The Turkish delegation was led by the Under Secretary of the Foreign Ministry, Ahmet Muhtar Gün, and included the deputy undersecretaries of the Foreign, Interior, and Justice Ministries. According to Turkish media sources,

the US delegation arrived in Turkey with four requirements for the reinstatement of visa services. The most important of these was presenting proof to support Mr Topuz's arrest.

Although the visas crisis between the US and Turkey had a significant impact on the bilateral relationship, the military relations between the two countries were unaffected by the conflict. Despite the ongoing diplomatic disagreement, US Defence Secretary James Mattis stated on 11 October that US and Turkish military forces continued to work well together. He also stated that, "We maintain a very close collaboration, very close communication. Military-to-military interaction and integration has not been affected by this". The Pentagon also released a statement noting that "developments have not impacted operational or personnel" factors at Turkish bases.

In summary, the visa crisis had an influence on Turkish markets as it evolved. Following the suspension of visas, the Turkish lira dropped in value. That procedure, however, did not last long. This situation further harmed the image of the US in Turkey, which had already deteriorated significantly following the 15 July 2016 coup attempt. The arrest of Metin Topuz and the US response bolstered widespread perceptions in Turkey that some US officials had participated in the attempted coup. The US response was criticized by both the ruling AKP and the opposition MHP and CHP parties.

### *3.2 Islamophobia discussion*

The election of Donald Trump as a presidential candidate who is anti-Muslim and anti-Islam, and his win over Hillary Clinton, sparked discussion and disagreement in the US political world (Khan, Mohsin H; Qazalbash, F; Adnan, Hamed H, Yaşın, L; Kihro, R, 2021). US President Donald Trump was elected because of his aggressive anti-immigrant rhetoric throughout the presidential campaign, as well as his conventional view of Muslims as Islamist fanatics. In the Turkish media, President Trump was frequently depicted as an Islamophobe. Erdoğan, as an Islamist leader, criticized Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric, particularly his Islamophobic statements. He also openly criticized Trump because, during the US presidential campaign, Trump had proposed a ban on Muslim travel to the US, and Erdoğan asked that Trump's name be removed from a high-rise building in Istanbul which was established in collaboration between Trump's family and the Dogan Group (Levin, 2016). Nevertheless, with Trump's first remarkable international diplomacy tour, which included Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the Vatican, and particularly his historic speech in Riyadh, many Turkish politicians came to regard him as anti-radical rather than Islamophobic (Wright, 2017). Saygı Simşek, a member of Trump's Middle East policy team, claimed that Turkey, as a secular, democratic, and Muslim-based country, could have stronger ties with the Trump Administration because the new American president's concentration and actual target would be on religious extremism, not Islam as a holy religion. Soli Özel, on the other hand, suggested a cautious optimism for the Trump Administration, arguing that Trump's Islamophobic comments may push Erdoğan to react in internal politics (Ormeç, 2020).

As a result, during Trump's presidency, his very public statements and the actions of his administration in respect of Islamophobia influenced the country and had an impact on relationships with Muslim countries. His perspectives on Islam also affected Muslims in the US.

## Conclusion

The main focus of this dissertation is on the significant factors and actors that have shaped US foreign policy towards Turkey, especially after the AKP came to power in 2002. An interpretivist paradigm was adopted since the researcher was interested in using subjective experiences and interpretations from different experts in the researched subject in determining the implications of US foreign policy. A qualitative research approach was adopted since only qualitative data were to be collected and the principal objective of this dissertation was to achieve deeper insight into the dynamics of US foreign policy towards Turkey between 2002 and 2020.

The relationship between Turkey and the United States is currently a shambles. Recent meetings between US president Donald Trump and Turkish President Erdoğan fueled hopes that the US–Turkey relationship could be repaired. However, because the underlying elements that formerly determined the relationship have altered, recovery from the current crisis is difficult.

This increasing divergence between America's and Turkey's worldviews makes it difficult to find a constructive solution to the wide range of bilateral issues that currently exist. This study considered five major areas of disagreement between the two countries and how they may work together to overcome them. The purchase of the S-400 air and missile defence system by Turkey, as well as continuous US assistance for Syria's Kurdish military and political factions, are at the top of the list of matters of concern. Other concerns are the consequences of Turkey's erosion of democratic norms; the US position on self-exiled Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen, whom many in the Turkish government believe was the architect of the failed coup attempt in July 2016; the significance of the Halkbank court judgment on past violations of Iran sanctions; and the differing perspectives of the United States and Turkey on the Middle East. As a result, the relationship between Turkey and the United States clearly has to be redefined.

A foreign policy is a view, a vision, and a goal. US foreign policy towards Turkey has been pretty much consistent in its vision and goals. What has happened between these two countries is that different issues have gained heightened attention at different times. The goals mentioned above have been amplified or reduced in relative importance based on the geopolitical context of the era. What could also be argued is that different strategies have been pursued, adopted and then adjusted to achieve these goals. In essence, what has not changed are the strategies (what to do?) but at the same time what has changed are the tactics (how to do it?) when it has come to issues of American foreign policy related to Turkey. As a result, in order to answer the main question of this dissertation, which is one of whether the relationship between the US and Turkey is one of change or continuity, we have found that we can state that the relationship between the US and Turkey is one of change within continuity. With regard to their differences on some issues, they are still nonetheless an alliance and both countries' officials emphasize the importance of continued US–Turkey cooperation and Turkey's membership of NATO.

## References

- Gordon, Michael R.; Schmitt, Eric, 2017. *New York Times*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/09/us/politics/trump-kurds-syria-army.html>  
[Accessed 28 August 2021].
- ACWDC, 2019. *Arab Center Washington DC*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-safe-zone-agreement-in-northern-syria-improves-turkeys->

position/

[Accessed 1 September 2021].

Al-Jazeera, 2017. *Al-Jazeera*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/7/15/turkeys-failed-coup-attempt-all-you-need-to-know>

[Accessed 1 October 2021].

Al-Jazeera, 2019/a. *Al-Jazeera*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/10/23/turkey-russia-reach-deal-for-ypg-move-out-of-syria-border-area>

[Accessed 2 September 2021].

Al-Jazeera, 2019. *Al-Jazeera*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/10/23/turkeys-military-operation-in-syria-all-the-latest-updates-9>

[Accessed 2 September 2021].

Al-Jazeera, 2021. *Al-Jazeera*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/25/turkish-forces-hit-pkk-in-northern-iraq>

[Accessed 3 September 2021].

Alliance, U. T., 2018. *U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Turkey*. [Online]

Available at: <https://tr.usembassy.gov/u-s-turkey-alliance/>

[Accessed 2 October 2021].

Archive, I., 2016. *Internet Archive 25*. [Online]

Available at:

[https://archive.org/details/CSPAN\\_20160927\\_010000\\_Presidential\\_Nominees\\_Participate\\_in\\_Debate\\_at\\_Hofstra\\_University/start/5878/end/5906.7](https://archive.org/details/CSPAN_20160927_010000_Presidential_Nominees_Participate_in_Debate_at_Hofstra_University/start/5878/end/5906.7)

[Accessed 15 October 2021].

Aydintasbas, A; Kirisci, K, 2017. The United States and Turkey, Friends, Enemies, or Only Interests. *Brookings*, Issue 12, pp. 1-30.

Bazian, H., 2019. Islamophobia, Trump's Racism and 2020 Elections!. *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 5(1), pp. 8-10.

BBC, 2018. *BBC*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45841276>

[Accessed 3 October 2021].

BBC, 2018. *BBCNEWS*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45842735>

[Accessed 6 October 2021].

BBC, 2019. *BBC*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-46859164>

[Accessed 1 September 2021].

BBC, 2019. *BBC*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50080737>

[Accessed 2 September 2021].

BBC, 2019. *BBC NEWS*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-48011496>

[Accessed 16 October 2021].

Bell, M., 2017. *The World*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-05-19/donald-trumps-first-foreign-trip-lot-pilgrimage-and-thats-point>

[Accessed 2 September 2021].

Borger, J. & Chulov, M., 2018. *The Guardian*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/dec/19/us-troops-syria-withdrawal-trump>

[Accessed 29 August 2021].

Cagaptay, S; Parris, M; Lesser, I, 2009. An Obama Policy toward Turkey: Continuity or Change?. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, pp. 1-3.

Cagaptay, S., 2016. U.S. Ties with Turkey and the Syrian Kurds. In: P. Clawson, ed. *Syrian Kurds as a U.S. Ally*. Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, pp. 12-20.

Calamur, K., 2018. *The Atlantic*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/08/trump-iran-tweet/566948/>

[Accessed 16 October 2021].

CBCNEWS, 2018. *CBCNEWS*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.cbcnews.com/news/american-pastor-andrew-brunson-released-from-turkish-prison/>

[Accessed 6 October 2021].

Clawson, P., 2016. U.S. Policy and the PYD. In: P. Clawson, ed. *Syrian Kurds as a U.S. Ally*. Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, pp. 52-60.

Cook, S. A., 2017. *Center on Foreign Relations*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/blog/world-ready-kurdexit-referendum-among-iraqi-kurds-has-middle-east-edge>

[Accessed 2 September 2021].

Cortina, D. S., 2017. *Forbes*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielasirtori/2017/03/20/turkey-trump-istanbul/?sh=7ac25c6313f4>

[Accessed 2 September 2021].

CSIS, 2017. *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/turkey-and-krg-after-referendum-blocking-path-independence>

[Accessed 2 September 2021].

Dogantekin, V. & Donmez, B., 2019. *AA*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/trump-s400-f35-tension-obamas-fault-not-turkeys/1519042>

[Accessed 17 October 2021].

Egeli, S., 2009. Making Sense of Turkey's Air and Missile Defense Merry-go-round. *All Azimuth*, 8(1), pp. 69-92.

Everycres, 2016. *Kurds in Iraq and Syria: U.S. Partners Against the Islamic State*, Online: Everycres.

- Fahim, K; Dadoch, S; Khattab, A., 2019. *The Washington Post*. [Online]  
Available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/with-turkish-offensive-looming-syrian-kurds-mobilize-civilian-defense/2019/10/09/4efca794-ea02-11e9-a329-7378fbfa1b63\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/with-turkish-offensive-looming-syrian-kurds-mobilize-civilian-defense/2019/10/09/4efca794-ea02-11e9-a329-7378fbfa1b63_story.html)  
[Accessed 28 August 2021].
- Finnegan, C., 2018. *abc NEWS*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-demands-american-pastors-release-turkey-congress-weighs/story?id=56690417>  
[Accessed 3 October 2021].
- France24, 2018. *France24*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20180804-erdogan-sanctions-us-officials-tit-tat-row-over-pastor>  
[Accessed 6 October 2021].
- Fraser, S; Mroue, B, 2018. *Military Times*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.militarytimes.com/flashpoints/2018/11/01/us-turkey-begin-joint-patrols-around-northern-syrian-town-of-manbij/>  
[Accessed 29 August 2021].
- Fritze, J; Shesgreen, D, 2018. *USA Today*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/10/12/american-pastor-andrew-brunson-released-detention-turkey/1612749002/>  
[Accessed 3 October 2021].
- Gall, C., 2019. *NewYork Times*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/21/world/asia/erdogan-turkey-courts-judiciary-justice.html>  
[Accessed 6 October 2021].
- Gaouette, N., 2017. *CNN*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/16/politics/trump-erdogan-visit/index.html>  
[Accessed 28 August 2021].
- Gebhard, C., 2018. Student Feature – Levels of Analysis. *E-International Relations*, Issue 2053-8626, pp. 1-4.
- Gunter, M. M., 2018. Erdogan's Future: The Failed Coup, The Kurds & The Gulenists. *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* , 41(2), pp. 1-15.
- Gurbuz, M., 2019. *Arab Center Washington DC*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-united-states-and-the-turkish-kurdish-conundrum-in-northern-syria/>  
[Accessed 28 August 2021].
- Harris, J., 2018. *Brookings*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/why-is-trumps-staff-turnover-higher-than-the-5-most-recent-presidents/>  
[Accessed 8 September 2021].
- Hearing, S., 2014. *U.S. Government Publishing Office*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-113shrg94805/html/CHRG-113shrg94805.htm>  
[Accessed 29 August 2021].

Herman, M. G., 1994. Presidents, Advisers, and Foreign Policy: The Effect of Leadership Style on Executive Arrangements.. *Political Psychology*, 15(1), pp. 75-96.

Hoffman, M., 2019. *American Progress*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/trumps-syria-shambles/>  
[Accessed 15 October 2021].

Hoffman, M., 2019. *Center for American Progress*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2019/03/21/467518/responding-turkeys-purchase-russias-s-400-missile-system/>  
[Accessed 17 October 2021].

Institute, M. C., 2015. *Mc Cain Institute*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.mccaininstitute.org/resources/events/syria-should-the-united-states-do-more/>  
[Accessed 21 December 2021].

Jan, S. K., 2017. *Daily Sabah*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/01/27/with-trump-in-the-driving-seat-of-us-foreign-policy-turkey-expects-strategic-realignment-in-ties-1485555454>  
[Accessed 20 October 2021].

Kardas, S., 2009. Patriot Missile Procurement Option Sparks Controversy in Turkey. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 6(170).

Khan, Mohsin H; Qazalbash, F; Adnan, Hamed H, Yaqin, L; Khuhro, R, 2021. Trump and Muslims: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Islamophobic Rhetoric in Donald Trump's Selected Tweets. *SAGE*.

Kirby, J., 2019. *VOX*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.vox.com/2019/10/7/20902699/trump-syria-turkey-erdogan-invasion-kurds>  
[Accessed 2 September 2021].

Klain, K. & Hintz, L., 2017. *reliefweb*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/series-miscalculations-kurdish-referendum-and-its-fallout>  
[Accessed 2 September 2021].

Landler, M., 2018. *New York Times*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html>  
[Accessed 16 October 2021].

Lesser, I., 2016. Turkey's Travails, Transatlantic Consequences: Reflections on a Recent Visit. *German Marshall Fund*, 9(1621), pp. 1-8.

Levin, N., 2016. *The Wall Street Journal*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/erdogan-wants-istanbul-towers-to-lose-trump-name-1466855822>  
[Accessed 30 September 2021].

Marcou, J., 2017. *Ovipot*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://ovipot.hypotheses.org/14636>  
[Accessed 5 November 2021].

Mehta, A., 2019. *Defense News*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/air/2019/07/17/turkey-officially-kicked-out-of-f-35-program/>  
[Accessed 17 October 2021].

Muspratt, A., 2018. *Defence IQ*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.defenceiq.com/air-forces-military-aircraft/news/us-halts-delivery-of-f-35-to-tukey>  
[Accessed 17 October 2021].

N.Y. Times, 2019. *New York Times*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/13/us/politics/mark-esper-syria-kurds-turkey.html>  
[Accessed 2 September 2021].

NBC, 2019. *NBC News*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUYdkz6c3nw>  
[Accessed 1 September 2021].

Norris, J; Kenney, C, 2017. *Center for American Progress*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2017/06/14/433964/trumps-conflicts-interest-turkey/>  
[Accessed 1 October 2021].

NTV, 2017. *NTV*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/erdogan-abdnin-yanina-terror-orgutunu-yakistiramiyoruz,jb2lxm3MQUOwlZ71euusXg>  
[Accessed 28 August 2021].

NY. Times, 2017. *New York Times*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/22/world/middleeast/iraq-kurds-independence-mattis-barzani-tillerson.html>  
[Accessed 2 September 2021].

O'Grady, S., 2019. *The Washington Post*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/07/12/what-is-russian-s-air-defense-system-why-is-us-upset-turkey-bought-it/>  
[Accessed 17 October 2021].

Ormeçi, O., 2020. "Turkish-American Relations in the Post-Cold War Era", in Historical Examinations and Current Issues in Turkish-American Relations. In: O. Ormeçi & H. Isiksal, eds. *Historical Examinations and Current Issues in Turkish-American Relations*. Berlin: Peter Lang, pp. 61-115.

Ozer, S., 2017. *AA*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkey-iraq-to-launch-joint-military-exercise/919283>  
[Accessed 3 September 2021].

Remarks, 2018. *Trump White House Archive*. [Online]

Available at: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-joint-comprehensive-plan-action/>  
[Accessed 15 October 2021].

Reuters, 2017. *Reuters*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-kurds-referendum-minis-idUSKCN1BW1EA>  
[Accessed 3 September 2021].

Reuters, 2019. *Voice of America*. [Online]

Available at: [https://www.voanews.com/a/middle-east\\_turkey-us-agree-form-joint-operation-center-syria-safe-zone/6173411.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/middle-east_turkey-us-agree-form-joint-operation-center-syria-safe-zone/6173411.html)

[Accessed 1 September 2021].

Robinson, K., 2021. *Council on Foreign Relations*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-iran-nuclear-deal>

[Accessed 15 October 2021].

Rudaw, 2017. *Rudaw*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/25092017>

[Accessed 3 September 2021].

Serdar, S., 2017. *DW Turkce*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.dw.com/tr/%C3%A7a%C4%9Faptay-trump-ve-erdo%C4%9Fan%C4%B1n-birbirine-ihityac%C4%B1-var/a-37204751>

[Accessed 3 November 2021].

Siccardi, F., 2021. *How Syria Changed Turkey's Foreign Policy*. Washington: Carnegie.

Snow, A., 2017. *Turkish Heritage Organization*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.turkheritage.org/en/publications/factsheets/security/a-history-of-the-krg-and-its-relations-with-the-us-and-turkey-4726>

[Accessed 2 September 2021].

Souva, Mark & Rohde, David, 2007. Elite Opinion Differences and Partisanship in Congressional Foreign Policy. *Political Research Quarterly*, 60(1), pp. 113-123.

State, U. D. o., 2017. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2017*, Washington DC: U.S. Department of State .

Stewart, P. & Butler, D., 2018. *Reuters*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-idUSKBN1OG16T>

[Accessed 29 August 2021].

Strachota, K. & Wilk, A., 2019. The S-400 for Turkey The crisis in Turkish-American relations escalates. *OSW Center for Eastern Studies* , Issue 305, pp. 1-9.

Strobel, W., 2016. *Reuters*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-usa-purge-idUSKCN1082U8>

[Accessed 1 October 2021].

Thalji, M. J., 2014. *Al-Jazeera*. [Online]

Available at: <https://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/node/1058>

[Accessed 15 October 2021].

Tracker, G. C., 2021. *Council on Foreign Relations*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-between-turkey-and-armed-kurdish-groups>

[Accessed 29 August 2021].

Treasury, U. D. o. t., 2018. *U.S. Department of the Treasury*. [Online]

Available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm453>

[Accessed 6 October 2021].

TRT, 2018. *TRTWorld*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkey-to-freeze-assets-of-us-justice-interior-ministers-erdogan-19358>

[Accessed 5 October 2021].

TWI, 2017. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/after-kurdish-referendum-regional-implications>

[Accessed 3 September 2021].

Wright, R., 2017. *The New Yorker*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/donald-trumps-three-religion-tour-of-the-middle-east>

[Accessed 30 September 2021].

Xinhuanet, 2017. *New China*. [Online]

Available at: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-09/22/c\\_136629803.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-09/22/c_136629803.htm)

[Accessed 3 September 2021].

Yale, 2017. *YaleGlobal Online*. [Online]

Available at: <https://archive-yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/reuters-turkey-warns-us-blowback-decision-arm-kurds-syria>

[Accessed 8 September 2021].

Yamaguchi, M., 2018. *AP NEWS*. [Online]

Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/8b1c7a0890294fc5b3aed8d1e2e4eda9>

[Accessed 17 October 2021].

Yesiltas, M., 2018. *SETA*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.setav.org/en/ypg-is-turkeys-red-line-in-syria-erdogan-to-tell-trump-in-paris/>

[Accessed 28 August 2021].

Yinanc, B., 2020. *Hurriyet Daily News*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-at-a-wait-and-see-stance-on-us-iran-row-says-academic-150881>

[Accessed 2 September 2021].