

Turkey: Missing Bill Clinton

Turkey wants an American president who appreciates its strategic importance and recognizes its sovereign rights. **By Mustafa Kibaroglu**

TURKS HAVE TRADITIONALLY PREFERRED A REPUBLICAN president in the United States, at least since the establishment of strategic relationships in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Democratic presidents have been received with less enthusiasm and a degree of suspicion. But now it seems the tide is turning with Republican George W. Bush in the White House. Most Turks are yearning for the days of Democrat Bill Clinton.

Unpleasant feelings toward Democrats stem in part from a letter sent to Ankara by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964. In December 1963, Turkey was concerned that Greek Cypriots would kill Turkish Cypriots with a view to cleansing Cyprus of Turks and annexing the island to Greece. Then-Turkish Prime Minister Ismet Inonu ordered a limited air raid over the island to deter the Greeks. But Johnson wrote that if Turkey used American-origin military equipment in Cyprus, and if, as a result, the Soviets were to interfere or attack Turkey, NATO would not put its policy of collective defense in operation. Another Democrat in the White House, Jimmy Carter, brought about even greater ill feeling when he applied an arms embargo on Turkey in 1975 after Turkey intervened in Cyprus to prevent the possible annexation of the island by Greece. These two events, both having occurred when Democrats were in office, are deeply etched in the minds of many Turks.

Republican presidents, on the other hand, usually placed a much higher value on hard security issues in the context of the Cold War, during which Turkey played an indispensable role as a staunch U.S. ally. Moreover, they usually turned a blind eye to the highly influential role the Turkish military played in domestic politics, a matter that was harshly criticized by other Western countries.

When looked at through the prism of security, Turkey's "estate value" bordering Soviet territory was first among all considerations. Especially during the Rea-

gan administration, which found itself challenged by the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Turkey was seen as the last fortress of Western values on the Eastern front.

The collapse of the Warsaw Pact, followed soon after by the demise of the Soviet Union, did not diminish Turkey's value, as many had presumed it might. The first George Bush, another Republican, was in the White House, and the new battleground, Iraq, was in Turkey's immediate neighborhood. Under the leadership of President Turgut Ozal, Turkey voluntarily sided with the United States to overturn Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The Turkish and American leaders spoke frequently over the phone to exchange views on the conduct of the Iraqi campaign and its aftermath.

DEMOCRAT BILL CLINTON WAS AT FIRST VIEWED WITH A DEGREE of suspicion. It was a time when democratic values were rapidly spreading through territories that had been ruled by authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. Human rights and democratization were the key words that accurately depicted the post-Cold War era. Yet it was at this time that Turkey intensified its fight against the PKK-led Kurdish separatists who used northern Iraq as a sanctuary to launch frequent attacks on Turkey. Not surprisingly, the military campaign against the PKK had negative implications for Turkey—the United States reduced both military and financial aid. But against all odds, Bill Clinton's official visit to Turkey in November 1999, a few months after a devastating earthquake in the northwestern part of the country, and his address to Parliament, created positive feelings toward a Democrat for the first time since John F. Kennedy.

In the run-up to the last U.S. presidential election, the preference of the Turkish public was unclear. Some argued that a Republican president would take good care of Turkey's needs, as usual, especially in the security realm. Others claimed that a Democrat would further ad-

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vance bilateral relations as had Clinton. A Democratic administration, some believed, would show more respect for international law, assign more roles to international organizations, and pursue multilateralism in its foreign relations in the new millennium. Some also argued that Turkey's democracy had strengthened as it drew closer to the European Union as a designated candidate for EU membership. There was, therefore, no reason to worry about criticism from Congress about a "poor human rights record." In such an international context, Turkey would be secure and it could improve its economic situation by reducing military spending, which was usually urged by Republican administrations in Washington.

BUT THE SO-CALLED NEOCONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY, WHICH favors unilateralism in international affairs, has created unexpected difficulties in the U.S.-Turkish relationship. In contrast to the warm climate that existed during the first Gulf War, the invasion of Iraq has resulted in an unprecedented trauma in strategic relations. After Parliament rejected the basing of tens of thousands of U.S. troops on Turkish soil [see Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Turkey Says No," July/August 2003 *Bulletin*], Bush issued harsh warnings to Turkey not to meddle in Iraqi territory. Bush appeared to favor the Kurds in northern Iraq over Turkey in forming

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an alliance against Saddam. That the Kurds have attained such a high profile in the politics of Iraq has caused much resentment among the Turks. And when some Turkish special forces in the northern Iraqi city of Suleymaniyah were arrested by American troops on July 4, 2003, it deepened the degree of resentment. Bush is considered directly responsible for these developments.

Surveys indicate that most Turks believe Clinton would have behaved differently toward Turkey, even though the Clinton administration had done much for the Kurds during his term. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made remarkable efforts to mend the differences between two Kurdish leaders, Jalal Talabani and Masout Barzani, to achieve a unified authority in Iraq's northern region which for more than a decade was protected from Saddam's forces by a U.S.-enforced no-fly zone. Kurdish rule of the region, including the establishment of a parliament and a central bank, was highly visible. Yet, these developments did not make headlines very often, nor did they seriously affect Turkish feelings about the United States or its president. It is difficult to claim the same thing today.

ANTI-AMERICANISM, WHICH IS GAINING GROUND QUICKLY and profoundly in most parts of the globe—and more so in the Islamic world—is also becoming an issue in Turkey. But the threshold is not passed yet, and the pace is not as fast. There are still chances to reverse the mood that is nevertheless growing in the Turkish public domain.

By acknowledging Turkey's serious concerns over Iraq's territorial as well as political integrity, and its desire to play a role in the future restructuring of that country, the United States may yet display an appreciation of the value of Turkish-American relations. There are recent examples of how popular feeling toward the United States can be positively affected. For instance, Bush's decision to offer Turkey an \$8.5 billion long-term credit to cover some of its losses due to the war in Iraq was seen as a step in the right direction.

Similarly, Turks showed their readiness to forget about the past by agreeing in early October to send troops into the zone of conflict when the Bush administration asked for help.

However, in the end, the issue of sending troops only exacerbated the tension of already strained relations. The day after Parliament approved the resolution to send Turkish military units to help keep order and maintain security (a plan drawn up at the request of American officials but much opposed by the public), the U.S. administration bluntly told Turkey to forget it. Although the Iraqi Governing Council, which was appointed by the United States, seemed to be the authority rejecting the deployment of Turkish troops, almost everybody in Turkey

believed it was the opposition of the Kurds that led to the rejection.

Moreover, Bush's unilateralism in foreign policy has other negative implications for Turkey's security. A number of arms control and disarmament treaties as well as the nonproliferation regimes, which are sincerely observed and considered to be mainstays of Turkish foreign policy, are being seriously undermined as a result of the unprecedented negligence of the U.S. president.

As for Bush's National Security Strategy, and the closely associated preemptive-strike doctrine, in its first test in Iraq, "irrelevance" could be the word to define the relationship between theory and praxis.

The concept of preemptive strike, no matter how controversial it may be, may still have some limited relevance in the fight against global terrorism. The groups that have launched "holy war" against the United States and its allies are spread around the world. They cannot be de-

terred by threat of death, nor can they be paid off to make concessions from their doctrinaire beliefs. The degree of devastation caused by attacks by such groups, as witnessed in New York and Washington, D.C., as well as in Bali, in Riyadh, and more recently, in Istanbul, can be enormous.

The threat of retaliation, in those cases when it may be possible, cannot deter such groups. Preemption, with a view to preventing or minimizing devastation, may be an option in such circumstances. But it should be applicable only to non-state actors who have no specific address, not to states. Presumably, states are governed by rational actors, who can agree upon negotiated solutions and make concessions, or can be deterred from launching an attack by the threat of retaliation in kind. In the case of Iraq, the country was neither a non-state actor nor did it have proven links with non-state actors. Thus, the first test of the doctrine of preemption failed. ❄

Germany: Losing Europe

The Bush administration has terminated the consensus among democracies that had been uncontested since World War II. **By Annette Schaper**

THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF JOHN F. KENNEDY'S assassination garnered much attention worldwide. In Germany, Kennedy's famous declaration, "Ich bin ein Berliner" ("I am a Berliner"), expressing his solidarity with the half-city enclosed by the newly erected Berlin wall, is not forgotten. Its public repetition is a regular and welcome exercise. Most Germans are aware that our democracy, our constitution that respects human rights, and our integration into the international community after World War II were achieved with the help of other Western nations, foremost among them the United States. Because of this, transatlantic ties have been considered precious despite various disagreements over international policy issues, such as the German-Soviet gas trade that went against U.S. will, or certain aspects of Willy Brandt's "Ostpolitik"—

reconciliation and détente with the East—at the end of the 1970s. These temporary differences of opinion were considered par for the course and not disruptive. In the past, being pro-American has been synonymous with being in favor of international collaboration and participation in international organizations and treaties.

But now it seems that being pro-multilateral and pro-transatlantic may be contradictory. The Bush administration appears to fundamentally deviate from multilateralism and to disrespect international treaty regimes and laws. It has terminated the consensus among democracies that had been uncontested since World War II.

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