

**Remarks by Ambassador W. Robert Pearson  
at the Atlantic Treaty Association, 48th General Assembly**

**The United States and Turkey: A Model of Sustained Engagement  
Presentation before the Atlantic Treaty Association  
Session Theme: "Out of Area, Out of Europe-The Way Ahead to Prague"  
October 10, 2002, Conrad Hotel, Istanbul**

I am very honored to be here in Istanbul today, before this distinguished gathering, to discuss such an important topic. One can always count on Ambassador Bayülken to develop an intriguing agenda and attract a dynamic crowd. I am also honored to be among my fellow speakers most of whom I know - Mr. Alan Williams, Dr. Jamie Shea, Dr. Christopher Coker, The Honorable Emilio Colombo, Ambassador Turan Morali, and Ambassador Manuel de la Camara. I would like to extend a special welcome to the delegation from the Atlantic Council of the United States, including its former president Mr. David Acheson.

As we look toward Prague, I must agree with the theme of this session that the events of the last 13 months have added new perspectives to the November Summit. Our original focus on NATO enlargement at Prague is now accompanied by discussions about NATO's potential well outside its traditional role. Furthermore, the attacks of September 11 and the subsequent campaign to combat terrorism have changed the world and Turkey's role in it. Americans and Turks are looking anew at basic assumptions about international relations and security tasks in Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East.

President Bush has underscored the importance of eliminating the threat of international terrorism. The United Nations, with an historic Security Council resolution, has made dealing with international terrorism the top priority for the world community. This global effort will be long and complicated, difficult and costly. Changes we cannot imagine now are certain to follow. The United States by necessity and choice must lead the coalition of states to eliminate terrorism. We could have no better ally than Turkey in that effort. Because of its location, its visibility as a secular democracy with a Muslim population, its economic promise, and the capabilities of its armed forces, Turkey's decisions will have important consequences. NATO will continue to provide an essential framework for developing Turkey's role.

**THE SETTING: A NEW COALITION**

Immediately following the devastating "Day of 9-11," the President made clear that our relations with a country will be measured by new standards. Uprooting international terror networks required then, and requires now, strong action by the international community through a multifaceted coalition. This global mobilization of resources has led to dramatic changes and new approaches to dealing with elusive enemies. Since 9-11, we have achieved a global consensus that the targeting of innocent victims is a crime against all humankind, no matter the motive.

There are three key objectives in this international effort. First, the coalition must maintain global political will for the long haul. Second, the international community must commit the resources necessary for victory. Third, we must convince the world that this is a fight to bring them a better future, not a war of aggression, or revenge, or against Islam. I am absolutely certain that Turkey will continue to play an important role in each of these areas. We listen carefully to Turkish perspectives on the new future our two countries will help shape as partners.

There is one policy, however, that requires no fundamental adjustment: our long-term approach to Turkey. Turkey's unqualified support for the international coalition against terrorism came as no surprise. For 17 years, Turkey fought an anti-terror campaign against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), or KADEK, as they now call themselves. Turks reacted with horror to the massacre of innocents on September 11 and expressed solidarity with the United States, and I personally experienced heartrending expressions of sympathy from Turks all over this country.

Turks quickly related the events to their own battles with terrorism and threats posed by regimes, such as the Taliban, to their secular democracy. Opening of airspace and facilities and strongly supporting NATO accompanied this emotional outpouring.

Turkey, surrounded by strife and serving as a critical passageway for the flow of trade and ideas between Europe and Asia, has always shaped the course of events. Once Turkey was important for where it is; now the world and Turkey itself measures its performance by what Turkey does. Its highly professional military provides crucial logistical support. Insights and input from Turkish leaders, diplomats, and soldiers help to form our approach to a region-Central and South Asia-where U.S. involvement is, by historical standards, relatively recent. Nowhere is this more true than Afghanistan. Turkey assumed the ISAF command in Kabul in June 2002 for six months. Ankara's courageous decision is a significant contribution to a peaceful new Afghanistan.

The United States is leading the coalition of states to eliminate terrorism. The U.S. was attacked on a massive scale. The U.S. has the national will to respond. The U.S. has the resources, and our allies look to us to play that role. Equally important in the region is Turkey's status as a secular democracy and the only NATO Ally with a predominantly Muslim population. As such, Turkey rebuts the theory that the struggle against terrorism masks a war on Islam. Now the U.S., which had viewed Turkey primarily through the prism of Cold War security relationships, built on the NATO framework is developing a more mature relationship with Turkey across economic, trade, energy and regional issues. This not only fostered cooperation in new areas, but also kept debates on disagreements and thorny issues within the larger context.

## **THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

Security cooperation has been the hallmark of U.S. policy toward Turkey since the USS Missouri sailed into Istanbul's harbor in 1946. The end of the Cold War brought new security challenges to the relationship. But throughout the 1990s, Turkey's participation in the Gulf War, UN operations in Somalia, and NATO operations in the Balkans showed that it shared broad security concerns with the United States. These actions, in fact, showed that Turkey's role in transatlantic security is to be a stabilizing force in the region formed by the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the Middle East.

In the post-Cold War world, economic issues began to come to the forefront of bilateral relations. Recognizing its enormous potential, the U.S. Commerce Department proclaimed Turkey in the 1990's as one of the ten "big emerging markets" for U.S. business. Trade more than doubled, but is still at too low a level. This expansion also brought new challenges such as protecting intellectual property rights, contending textile quotas, and reducing barriers to investment to the top of our agenda. Each of these issues has its own dynamic, but the trend is clear: more opportunities for expanded trade and investment for both countries. The U.S. is working hard to pass legislation to create Qualified Industrial Zones and spur additional economic trade with the U.S. New strategic issues also brought us together. The development of an East-West energy corridor from the Caspian to market via Turkey marries our common desire to reinforce regional stability and expand economic opportunities in the region. The Middle East provides another example of our regional cooperation. Turkey has developed a strong relationship with Israel, yet maintains solid ties with the Palestinians and with Arab governments. Turkish insights and participation-based on a long history and privileged status with the parties-complement and inform U.S. efforts.

In fact, I would argue that nearly every issue in U.S. foreign policy impacts our relations with Turkey. Recognizing the importance of this, the United States Government began in 1999 to give the relationship a new title: "strategic partnership." This phrase reflected that the United States has a significant stake in Turkey's ability to integrate into the global economy and stabilize a troubled region.

### **KEEPING IT RIGHT**

As the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, my job is to ensure our partnership with Turkey maintains momentum. Keeping the strategic partnership vital and helping Turks realize their aspirations require the United States' sustained engagement. Encouraging economic reform represents the first challenge. Turkey has implemented ambitious economic reforms in the past 18 months that have laid the foundations for sustained growth. This reform effort brings global standards and values to the economy - increased transparency, reduced political interference, and less opportunity for corruption.

I can tell you that Turkey's economic reform program has achieved marked successes in the face of opposition accustomed to avoiding genuine reform for too many years. First, Turkey has adopted a competitive and flexible exchange rate, which will help Turkish businesses to export. The second achievement has been the strong fiscal and aggressive public debt management policies over the past year. The third achievement is a healthier banking sector.

Turkey now must finish the reform task. This will require a great deal of additional effort, and some tough decisions, but it is the only way Turkey will avoid financial instability, foster economic growth, and bring prosperity to its people.

My government will also maintain its support for a more open, democratic political system. Turks deserve such a society. Turkey wants to open membership negotiations with the European Union as quickly as possible; adopting the needed measures should be an immediate priority.

Turkey began that effort in earnest by passing 33 constitutional amendments, the most sweeping political liberalization since 1982. The amendments represented a broad consensus with support from political parties, employers, unions, and civil society organizations.

In August 2002, the Turkish Parliament took a truly historical step forward in passing another package of reforms, including education and broadcast rights in traditionally used languages as well as limiting the applicability of the death penalty. This latter package has been hailed as a major boost for Turkey's EU membership bid. Businesses heralded the package as a symbol of the government's commitment to transparency and reform. The recently passed amendments cap real, long-term progress in increasing freedom of expression, opening the political system, and encouraging civil society. Implementation of this landmark package will mark another major step forward.

### **CONTINUED WORK**

Maintaining a partnership requires Turkey and the United States to recognize areas where stay actively engaged and move to concrete conclusions. Cyprus, European defense, various trade regulations, and Iraq are such issues. Despite daily press reports claiming that Turkey and the U.S. diverge on Iraq policy, Turks and Americans need to remember how much we both agree on basic issues. Baghdad's leadership threatens the people of Iraq and its neighbors, supports terrorism, and pursues chemical, biological, and nuclear options. Turkey and the U.S. both strongly support the territorial integrity of Iraq. Both of us oppose an independent Kurdish state. Ankara and Washington naturally have their own individual perspectives on Iraq. Tactical approaches, however, should not obscure strategic views. Continued close consultations will help us to resolve such differences without threatening interests.

For Cyprus, the U.S. has the broadest of visions. Hard work to resolve this regional dispute is required. There is still time to make significant progress and we urge the parties to use this time fruitfully. The U.S. supports the UN Security Council principle that a solution must be based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. The U.S. and others recognize that returning to the pre-1974 security situation, where the Turkish minority suffered greatly, is not an option. Finally, the U.S. believes that Cyprus's EU accession process can be an incentive to the comprehensive solution. Beyond that, the United States, like the UN and the U.K., believes strongly that the parties should reach a settlement as soon as possible; otherwise, only a crisis awaits. Creativity and boldness in the current series of talks between the two parties are essential. The stakes are high, and leadership will be needed to pay the premium on a settlement. Such issues must be resolved. They complicate the development of closer Turkey-EU relations and constrict the potential of both parties.

The "new era" also brings new possibilities to Turkey's relationship with Europe. The U.S. has long supported Turkey's EU candidacy. Since 1999, many EU members have expressed disappointment with Turkey's progress. The September 11 attacks, however, remind Europe of Turkey's crucial role not just in guarding NATO's southern flank, but also of its enhanced role in facing the threats of the 21st Century. Turkey has asked for increased European cooperation in combating terrorist groups targeting Turkey and operating in Europe. The U.S. has been and will be supportive.

During and after this crisis, we want to see Europe and Turkey working more closely and cooperatively. Following September 11, the EU member states individually and collectively began to implement tough new measures against international terrorism. Thus, this new security environment should encourage greater dialogue between Europe and Turkey, cause all parties to recognize their common security interests, and increase trust by dealing with sensitive issues. Increased trust can and will strengthen key efforts, such as the EU's defense and security policy and common anti-terrorism measures. The importance of this new mission underlines the need for NATO and the EU to work hand in hand and never in competition regarding European security. Members of NATO and the EU can no longer afford to quibble over how NATO-EU cooperation will work, but must consolidate our partnerships to counter mutual threats. The new environment puts a premium on action over philosophical discussion. Moreover, implementation of Turkey's series of reform packages should provide an additional incentive for the EU to look for ways to ensure that the door remains wide open for Turkey's candidacy.

### **THINKING AHEAD**

The U.S. interests in Turkey are long-standing, deep, and broad. Fortunately, as I have noted, they coincide with Turkish aspirations. Thinking a few years ahead, it is worth noting how this engagement can pay off. In realizing its economic reform program, Turkey can be a model for other struggling emerging markets, proof that others can follow this same model and prosper in the globalized economy of the twenty-first century. Its political system, enhanced by recent constitutional amendments, is proof that a predominantly Muslim nation with the full range of traditional cultural values has a place at the table with the most developed and democratic states. I have no doubt that if Turkey continues down the road it has chosen, it will have the opportunity to become a full EU member.

The end of the Cold War, the rebuilding of the Balkans, the NATO and EU enlargement process, and the 9/11 events now have created a new strategic space between Central Europe and Central Asia and down into the Middle East. In this space, the country with the best combination of land area, youthful population, democratic experience, economic potential and military stability is Turkey. Turkey's own efforts deserve the continued support of NATO and growing engagement with the EU. For nearly fifty years, where NATO has provided security and stability, the EU has followed with economic prosperity and confident democratic progress. So it must be with Turkey. On the front line now as Germany was in the Cold War, Turkey needs the same devoted support by its friends. Europe's great institutions, the EU and NATO, must see this story through to final success.