

Turkish-US Collaboration for a Better World

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Türkiye, a long standing friend and ally of the US, sincerely shares common values such as human rights, democracy, secularism, free trade and a liberal economic system with the US. Furthermore, her tradition of managing different civilizations under the Ottoman Empire presents an opportunity for a serious partnership to demonstrate that civilizations can and do share common values. Anatolia has been a melting pot of cultures, for much longer a period than the US.

During the 21st century, organized crime networks gain global dimensions in traffic of drugs, arms, humans, and organs. Mankind is under threat of chemical, biological, and nuclear mass destruction weapons. In the future, we may have to protect ourselves from spatial threats. Understandably, the superpower of the world, the US is taking actions to preempt such threats. However, those actions will be more effective if taken jointly with other nations sharing similar values, such as Türkiye, and if they are targeted not only to the threats themselves, but also to their root causes.

Globalization of threats has common root causes:

(i) Ease of attaining technology. Big governments started to lose their monopoly in many areas as a result of technological developments (like biological weapons), and they are trying to preserve their superiority in other areas through international agreements.

(ii) Imbalances on earth. About one-fifth of people living on earth are trying to survive with \$1 a day income, whereas nearly half of them manage with \$2 a day. Developed countries spend \$600 billion for military expenditures; provide agricultural subsidies of around \$300 billion, while their foreign aid budgets do not add up to \$60 billion. Furthermore the proportion of humans living in developed countries is decreasing every year.

Another imbalance arises on use of water, which forms the basis of life. An average person needs 5 liters of water daily in order to survive, and needs 50 liters of water

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when other vital activities such as cooking and washing are taken into consideration. However, while an American citizen consumes 250-300 liters of water daily, one of five people around the world are not able to attain safe water. Each year more than 5 million people die as a result of diseases caused by lack of access to water (ten times the number of people lost in wars.) A similar situation is relevant on world energy utilization. The refusal of the highest per capita user of energy to participate in the Kyoto Protocol causes reaction. The US is seen as the most important contributor to global warming and is one of the countries with the cheapest energy utilization.

(iii) Developments in communication technology: Developments in technology is bringing the dictum of “God sees everything” into reality by enabling “The global society to see everything.” Information not given through CNN, reaches people through El Cezire; information not provided there, reach wide communities through the internet. Consequently, all personal, corporate, and social secrets disappear. Era of superiority, gained by those with information, shortens. Whether we want or not, technological developments and democratic way of life increases transparency in all aspects of life. Increased transparency directs communities to be consistent in both internal and external principles.

In summary, governments, no matter how much power they have, will not be able to deal with global threats on their own. Consequently, it is essential to organize on a global scale to deal with global threats.

We should be aware of the main threat originating from the nature of globalization-localization dualism and its potential for both integration and exclusion at the same time. This threat is the ethnic, national or religious conflicts, which display a tendency to spread, and in some cases turn into ethnic cleansing. Stopping that nightmare will doubtlessly be one of the top priorities of a new global governance structure committed to the vision of democracy and equity.

If we are successful in including rather than excluding all the communities into global governance structures, we have to improve our ability to cooperate. Turkiye, the proud custodian of the land and the civilizations flourished on Asia Minor throughout thousands of years, is such a cooperation partner for the US.

Turkiye’s position as the only secularly and democratically governed Muslim-populated country, its experience in fighting terror, as a reliable ally, her military prowess, and deep experience in managing diverse and wide areas puts her in a special position to enhance the strategic vision of promoting democracy, freedom, and liberal economy.

Such a co-operation will be effective if it extends the depth and breadth of the relationship with the US. In particular, as unemployment is an important issue in Türkiye, direct investments and furthering trade with Türkiye will be an important step in winning the hearts and minds of Turkish people. A prospering Türkiye, will not only be the engine of growth and stability in the Middle East, but will also help the competitiveness of Europe, and the Atlantic partnership. US support for Türkiye's EU membership, has been a very positive step in this direction.

At the same time, the US has to utilize the depth of experience accumulated over centuries in Türkiye. For example, when we look at the history of the Ottoman and Anatolian civilizations what we see is great fluidity between religions and communities. Just to give an example, the Seljuk Sultan Izzeddin Keykavus II, whose mother was a descendant of the Byzantine aristocracy, routinely organized in his palace theological discussions between Christian priests and Muslim religious leaders. This tradition, particularly highlighted in its Sufi variant, embodies a philosophy of great tolerance and accommodation. Poets and thinkers like Yunus Emre, Hacı Bektaş Veli, and Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi are inseparable parts of the cultural make-up of the inhabitants of Türkiye. We learn from the historical records that Mevlana Celaleddin, the Sufi religious leader, poet and thinker of the 12. Century, regularly visited the monasteries to exchange views with Christian and Jewish religious people. Prominent Christian clergymen came from Istanbul to discuss with him certain theological issues. It was Yunus Emre, the great Sufi poet and thinker of the 13th century, who preached in one of his poems: "Regard the other, as you regard yourself, this is the meaning of the four Holy Books, if there is any."

This tradition of accommodation and tolerance is the reason why until late 19th century the Ottoman political order did not experience ethnic discrimination. What marked the Seljuk and Ottoman experience in this field was a very specific definition of the "self" and the "other" and an associated administrative form of social organization considerably different from that in the Western world. In this form of organization, the so-called "Millet" (Community) system, different communities enjoyed a considerably high level of autonomy. This system also allowed non-Muslims to be appointed to administrative positions that required a high level of political and financial trustworthiness.

In the 19th century the rise of race based nationalism in the West had its echoes in the Ottoman territory as well. The course of events proceeded in a chain of reactions, paving way to the great sufferings at all parts of the society. History nowhere in the world proceeds along a straight line. Despite the inevitably irregular advance of history, the fundamental context of life in Anatolia is one of coexistence between different groups. In that sense Anatolia's legacy to the world is one of great

diversity management full of rich experiences. These experiences have, therefore, the potential to make significant contribution to the international process of furthering the progress towards better governance of the world.

To deal with global threats, we need legitimate, global cooperation based on globally consistent principles. To be globally consistent will means that we should start implementing common values in all aspects of life. This is not as easy as it sounds. Yet, this is exactly what the single super power of the world has to do. Preaching free trade, but protecting uncompetitive local industries; promoting human rights, but dismissing Ebu Garib and Guantanamo Bay; exporting global rules and regulations, but taking exceptions from Kyoto Agreements and jurisdiction of International Criminal Court does not help the credibility of promoting common values throughout the world.

What changes the world are not armies, arms, and economic power, but the power of ideas. U.S. President Barack Obama seems to understand this better than many other leaders of our time.

During his recent visit to Turkiye, he gave three critical messages:

1. **He emphasized Turkiye's European credentials and secular character**, as defined by the modern state's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In doing so, Mr. Obama re-balanced the previous U.S. view of Turkiye as a "moderate Islam" state. He said that he had chosen to visit Turkiye to send a message to the world. "Turkey is a critical ally. Turkey is an important part of Europe and Turkey and the United States must stand together and work together to overcome the challenges of our times."
2. **He sent a key message was for the Muslim world.** He said "The United States is not, and will never be, at war with Islam." He also praised Islam's contribution to civilization and said America's relationship with it must extend beyond fighting terrorism.
3. **He sent a key message to Europe.** Mr. Obama reiterated U.S. support for Turkiye's E.U. membership, saying "Europe gains by the diversity of ethnicity, culture and faith--it is not diminished by it. And Turkish membership would broaden and strengthen Europe's foundation once more."

President Obama's support for Turkiye's EU membership bid is important, not only for Turkiye, but also for the EU. To the surprise of many, Turkiye successfully completed many reforms and secured negotiations for accession to the European Union. However, recent developments in Europe have created an impression that Europe is reluctant to accept Turkiye as an equal partner. Unless this changes, it will be difficult for Turkiye to proceed with its application for EU membership. This

process will turn into one side constantly changing the goalposts and the other feeling alienated.

Yet, Europe and Turkiye have before them a historic opportunity to throw out the prejudices of the ages, discredit the clash of civilizations, and establish a stronger EU. Turkiye's membership has the potential to mitigate some of the key risks for Europe and help the EU become a role model for global governance.

While Europe's population is aging, Turkiye is entering a golden demographic age--similar to East Asia in the 1980s. The continuation of reforms in Turkiye will not only increase investment, but also make the country an economic powerhouse. In contrast to European worries about inflows of migrants, Turkiye--with its renowned hospitality, quality of medical care, and pleasant climate--may become Europe's Florida in terms of attracting European retirees. While the migration of Turkish people will be limited, the migration of jobs will make up for Europe's declining population. For instance, automotive production has already started moving to Turkiye, where the most profitable Ford and Fiat plants are located.

Only a few emerging markets in the world have the potential to be able to create a virtuous investment cycle of exports and domestic demand. Throughout the region, Turkiye is likely to be an engine of growth. As one observer put it, "Turkiye will be Europe's Viagra by becoming a key agent that helps improve Europe's competitiveness." Don't forget, Turks are employed by companies throughout the world. For instance, the former chair of Pfizer recently said that their most important export from Turkiye was qualified managers. One of the key American idols, Coca Cola is now being headed by a Turk, Muhtar Kent.

The move from G-7 to G-20 is a step in the right direction for inclusion of key players in global decision making. Turkiye's new position in the Security Council of the United Nations is yet another opportunity to collaborate to make the world a better place. Turkish membership to the EU will be key to addressing risks and making the EU a more effective global leader. The United States leadership seems to understand this better than his European counterparts.