

Turkish Foreign Politics Towards The Middle East At The Beginning Of XXI Century Through The Prism Of Turkish – American Relationships: The Case Of Turkish-Iraqi Relations



Muhamed Ali

Faculty of Islamic Sciences- Skopje

muhamedali@fshi.edu.mk

Abstract

The importance of Turkish-American relations is increasing by day at the beginning of the 21st century. These relations have special importance bearing in mind the fact that, besides their reciprocal effects, they also have important reflections on a regional and global scale. Along with the beginning of the Greater Middle East Initiative, where Turkey was looked at as the key country for its' application, Turkish political factors were forced to create their own strategies for it. The beginning of this new vision's application coincided with the rule of AKP, which in her hinterland, especially in the Middle East, was promoting a new foreign strategy based on the strategic depth doctrine. At the beginning of 21 century, Iraq represents one of the most important countries in the Middle East where common interests and disagreements between Turkish and American strategies are being reflected. Besides the fact Turkish foreign politics towards Iraq is lately facing series of challenges, Turkish-Iraqi economic relations are in constant growth.

Key words: The Greater Middle East Initiative, strategic depth doctrine, Turkish and American strategies, model state.

Introduction

Last centuries' 90's were years that left significant marks on the political history of mankind. The international community witnessed series of events at the beginning of this period – like the Soviet Union fall, the Berlin Wall fall, unification of two German separated parts etc. – which marked the end of Cold War and beginning of a new era of international relations. In this new era, the system of international relations suffered many changes. The most outstanding change for the international community was the fact the mono-polarity – where the USA and their allies from the western world had the headword – took over bipolarity, where previously the main factors were the USA and the Soviet Union. This period was characterized with the US administration insists and efforts for increase of its influence in the Middle East, by Russian influence weakening and factorization of political Islam in this region.ⁱ Along with weakening of the Russian threat towards the Turkish state, as a result of the end of Cold War, a new era between the Turkey-Middle East relations began on the relations Turkey-Middle East, where Turkish foreign politics was factorized by day. Simultaneously, the Turkish-Middle Eastern relations of this period were characterized by three important moments which had vital reflections on the mutual relations.

The first event that marked the factorization of Turkish foreign politics in the Middle East region was the Gulf War (1991), when the Turkish state, by opening its gates of Incirlik military base, widely entered the coalition led by the USA against the Iraqi authorities. The Turkish state, by its active involvement in the creation of the new equilibriums in the Middle East region, proved it is the regional factor that plays the vital role in the Middle East region (Gönlübol 1996: 651) which is considered as a key in international relations. Besides the Turkish active politics in the Middle East during the Gulf crisis (1991), also the establishment of the initiative D-8ⁱⁱ by the prime-minister Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of Islamic party “Refah”, represents a significant argument for the proactive and multidimensional Turkish foreign politics during the 1990's. The members of this new initiative, which aimed to develop mutual political and economic policies, were Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Indonesia and Bangladesh (Ali 2009: 95). However, the internal tensions inside Turkey of the following period

(like the postmodern military turnover of 1997) and the international equilibriums had negative reflections for the successful implementation of the outlined aims of this organization.

The second important moment in the Turkey-Middle East relations during the 1990's is the development of Turkish-Israeli relations and at the same time, deterioration of Turkish-Syrian and Turkish-Iran relations, so that, as a result of the pressure from the Turkish army in 1996, Turkey and Israel signed the Agreement for military cooperation and education, which also had positive implications between the mutual economic relations (Özcan 2008: 122; Soysal, 1999: 548). On the other hand, the terrorist organization PKK support by Syria and Iran, especially the stay of this terrorist organization's leader Abdullah Ocalan in Damascus, was a stimulus enough to deepen the Turkish-Iran and especially Turkish-Syrian tensions. As a result of the Syrian logistic assistance of PKK in 1998, Turkey and Syria were at the brink of war (Bal 2004: 696; Çarkoğlu 1998: 187; Özcan 2008: 117) and Syria, under the pressure of Turkish war threats, was forced to sign an agreement with the Turkish side, agreeing to withdraw its support towards this organization.

Turkey faced series of challenges during the 1990's. Whilst the Gulf War contributed for its factorization, the reinforcement of relations with Israel up to the level of strategic partnership and support PKK enjoyed from Syria and Iran played a key role for its neighbor relations regress. In this study, we will try to do an analytical overview of Turkish foreign politics towards the Middle East at the beginning of XXI century through the prism of Turkish-American relations, with a special review on the Turkish-Iraqi relations in the recent period.

The Great Middle East initiative and the Turkish-American strategies towards the Middle East at the beginning of the XXI century

In conditions of breakdown of the Soviet Union and communism (1991) and the progressive trend of the European Union and China in global proportions during the 1990's, USA as a superpower faced the need of redefining its enemy who, though his role, was supposed to strengthen the American hegemony on the international stage. In relation with confrontation against this problem, the American authorities were warned in 1987 by G. Arbatov, one of the

main councillors of the Soviet Union President at the time, Mihail Gorbachov, who said during one occasion with a threatening expression “leaving you without an enemy is indeed provoking evil”. In these conditions, the American intellectual public started the debates about the ideal portrait of the new enemy, who, according to American strategists and creators of foreign politics, was supposed to be the following: ideologically opposed, different from the aspect of race and culture and strong enough to cause a threat for American security. The most ideal enemy which fulfilled the above mentioned criteria was exactly the “**terrorism**” or “**radical islam**”, which through the 11 September attacks reinforced its first place position on the list of biggest enemies towards American security and state interests. The beginnings of political relations between muslim countries and the USA can be found after World War II, when the muslim countries during the 1970’s played the role of **surrounding** the hegemony of the Soviet Union. However, after the Cold War, the need for defining the new enemy of the USA on international stage was fulfilled through the terms “**terrorism**” and “**radical islam**” (Haytoğlu 2007: 36).

It was quite surprising fact that as a symbol of this new enemy was exactly Osama Bin Laden, who transformed from an ally of the American authorities in the Afghan war against the Soviet Union into a number one threat for American security. Simultaneously, it was also quite surprising that Bin Laden’s appearance coincided at the period when the debate about **the clash of civilizations** in the USA appeared as a main subject inside the American academic circles. In these conditions, the creators of American foreign politics started a debate about the manner of strengthening of American hegemony in the Middle East region, with the aim of reinforcement of American security and maintenance of political, strategic, economic and energetic interest of the USA. During the 90’s of the previous century, we witnessed preparation of series of projections and strategies under the name “new world order”, which can be considered as first theoretic steps on the way of implementation of the Greater Middle East Initiative. Namely, in 1992, in the period when Dick Cheney was the Defense Minister of the USA, Paul Wolfowitz and Lewis Libby prepared a scheme named Defense Policy Guidance which had foreseen monitoring of the American peace. This strategic scheme was sharply criticized by the American public, after which the State Secretary at the time, James Baker, removed it from the agenda of American diplomacy. In this context, in 1994, the previous State Secretary of the USA, Henry

Kissinger, in his column for the well-known newspaper *Washington Post*, asserted that the region around which the USA should be interested is the area between Western India and the Mediterranean. One condition for application for democracy in this region is the establishment of liberal economy. Equally, in 1995, in the main file of the well-known American military magazine “*Joint Force Quarterly*”, the Greater Middle East Initiative was analyzed. In this context, in 1997, on the initiative of Robert Kagan and William Kristol, the think-tank named “Project for the New American Century” was established. For the wider public, this organization published a Document of principles, signed by famous American conservative personalities, like: Paul Wolfowitz, Louis Libby, Donald Rumsfeld, Richard Cheney, Zalmay Khalilzad and Francis Fukuyama.ⁱⁱⁱ The most important segments of this document were the principles of one-directionality, prevention of rival power appearance in the Euro-Asia region and “priority invasion” (preventive attack) application (Çınar 2008:.5; Haytoğlu 2007: 32-33).

The notion Greater Middle East Plan was mentioned in Pentagon documents for the first time in 1999. According to this plan, the Middle East region was supposed to be redesigned through removal of nationalistic identities, unification of people of this region into Middle Eastern identity and the establishment of the United Middle Eastern States, administered by Istanbul (Çınar 2008: 5-6). From the above mentioned, we can conclude that during the 1990’s of last century, the new projections, especially the notion named the Greater Middle East Initiative, were most usually used in academic circles (Şahin 2006: 55-82; Tangülü 2006: 104-105). However, their application in political circles and real politics began at the beginning of XXI century, especially after the 11 September attacks, when a new era of American foreign politics began, characterized by implementation of the Doctrine of George Walker Bush (Çınar 2008: 6), a doctrine that had serious implications on the international community and the Middle East region as well.

Before elaboration of the Bush Doctrine, which represents the main reflection of the implementation process of the Greater Middle East Initiative in the State Department foreign politics, the first moments of public actualization of this project by the most important personalities of President Bush’s administration should be analyzed.

The process named the Greater Middle East Initiative during Bush period was initially actualized in 2002 by the State Secretary Colin Powell who stated that except Iraq, the whole

Middle East should be democratized. In 2004, the American president Bush stated that the USA began with the application of a long-term strategy for the Middle East region. Equally, the American vice president Dick Chaney, in his speech at the World Economic Forum held in Davos, presented the new American strategy about the Middle East, stating he will knock at the doors of American allies for support of the initiative for strengthening of democracy at the Greater Middle East. On the other hand, the counselor of US National Security Council, Condoleeza Rice, in 2003 in the well-known newspaper *The Washington Post*, published a column named “Transforming the Middle East”, where she highlighted the necessity of re-establishment of 22 states in the Middle East region (Tangülü 2006: 78-79, 124). Although there is a wide debate around the aims of this initiative of the USA, the most important aims could be the control over the oil and energetic sources, democratizing^{iv} the politics for easier integration of the region into the western system, preservation of Israel’s security, modernization of societies, as well as advancing and encouragement of moderate or “light” Islam for more efficient war against radical Islam.^v All this was supposed to result with strengthening of US leadership and hegemony on the international stage (Tangülü, 2006: 80; Şahin: 2006: 99). In this context, the application of Bush Doctrine as a main reflection of the Greater Middle East Initiative began with the speech of American president on the 27 September 2001 at the US Congress, where he highlighted the main principles of his doctrine with the words: “We will destroy global terrorism using all our capacities from the field of finance, intelligence and military-legal sanctions. We will destroy terrorists by destroying their financial sources. We will always monitor them and the states or factors which offer them assistance. Simultaneously, every state in the world should decide if they are with us or with the terrorists against us. From this moment, every country which will help the terrorists will be considered as an enemy of the USA. Our people should know we will take all necessary measures for defense from the terrorist attacks (Arı 2003: 267). This doctrine is based on theories and strategic visions created in the 1990’s, which were a subject of our analysis. In the period after the terrorist attacks of 11 September, this new theoretic vision debated in academic circles turned into a practice by the Bush administration and caused series of reactions in the international community. According to this doctrine, it was foreseen to introduce American control over the military, diplomatic and cultural regions of the Middle East. Simultaneously, according to this vision, the implementation

of American overpower was foreseen to become realized over application of military power, without simultaneous establishment of diplomatic or legal base (Haytoğlu 2007: 33).

Through the application of this new strategy, abandonment of military strategy based on “**defense war**” was foreseen and realization of new military concept named “**preventive war**” and “**preemptive war**” (Arı 2003: 270; Haytoğlu 2007: 33). Through this new doctrine, the creators of American foreign politics stated that the USA after the 11 September attacks, unlike the past (when it came to their own security, they should have acted independently without taking into consideration coalition of allies countries), encouraged other countries to join them in the war against global terrorism by forcing them to make a choice between the American or the other side, with the well-known phrase of the Bush administration – you are either with us, or against us. Despite Bush’s famous speech, where he highlighted that the new USA war is “**civilized**” or a “**crusade**” war, the American authorities, fearing from the possible negative implications on the American state interests, on many occasions they highlighted that the US war is not a civilized or a crusade war, but an overall war against “global terrorism” (Arı 2003: 268; Şahin 2006: 42) Equally, this new vision of American foreign policies, unlike their foreign policies from the time of Reagan, Bush and Clinton, which affected between unilateral and multilateral immobility and avoided military clashes until American national interests were not affected, now the international stage was facing an American president who thought that unilateral affection of the USA is corresponding with American world leadership. As a result of this new vision and strategy, the USA decided to retreat from the “Antiballistic Missile” agreement and not to ratify the Kyoto and International Crime Court agreements (Arı 2003: 269). Simultaneously, the agreement between the wars of USA against Iraq in 1991 and 2003 could serve us as a great example for the manner of application of unilateral immobility on the international stage. Namely, in the Gulf War (1991), the USA gave a lot of effort to create international legacy of the war against Iraq, with an aim to withdraw the Iraqi army from Kuwait. However, as far as the Iraqi war in 2003 (see: Yilmaz 2004) is concerned, the negative attitude of the Security Council about the invasion’s safety didn’t represent an obstacle for the American occupation of this country, which confirms the fact that after the 11 September attacks, unilateral immobility started to be applied as the main characteristic of the new American foreign strategy (Arı 2003: 269). The application of Bush Doctrine in American foreign politics caused series of

reactions over the world, especially on the international stage. US international credibility suffered damage and anti-Americanism reached its peak level after the Vietnam War. The high rate of anti-Americanism at the Middle East population, especially Turkish citizens^{vi}, which is considered as a traditional ally of the USA, is a good example for the level of political damages caused by the implementation of the above mentioned foreign politics US vision.

Before the application of the Greater Middle East initiative in American foreign politics, the well-known think-tank organization RAND, in its report delivered to the American State Department, asked to realize Turkey's inclusion in the initiative. This request was explained with the following arguments:

- As a result of ruling by the concept of secularism, Turkey is considered as the most successful country of the Islamic world;
- In recent years, Turkey is representing a good model of moderate Islam; therefore, the actual headship under the leadership of the conservative democrats of AKP should be supported (Çınar 2008: 73)

Along with the beginning of application of the Greater Middle East Initiative by the American authorities, the first steps for Turkey's inclusion towards this American long term project began, with an aim of maintenance of US strategic interests, so that, four days following Dick Chaney's speech delivered at the "World Economic Forum" held on the 24 January 2004 in Davos, Erdogan visited Washington, where he met American president Bush. The new American initiative around the Middle East was the main topic of the meeting. After Erdogan's return from the USA, he declared he had an opportunity to hear directly from the president of the USA his perceptions about the Greater Middle East Initiative. Simultaneously, he added that he made the Turkish government attitude towards this issue very clear and he shares the same ideas about this initiative's aims (Tekkaya 2007: 116; Tangülü 2006: 105; Çınar 2008: 74) Also, Bush's visit to Ankara for the occasion of NATO Summit in 2004 and naming Turkish-American relations in the official documents as "**strategic partnership**", is considered as important signals for the new era of relations between these two countries about the application of the new American strategy around the Middle East region (Tangülü 2006: 105).

In this context, according to American strategies, Turkey should play a vital role for the application of the Greater Middle East Initiative. Namely, according to this American strategy, Turkey with its democracy and economic activity should represent a **model** for the countries of the Middle East region. The theoretic base for Turkey's new role around the implementation of this initiative can be seen in the theories of some prominent American theorists and strategists who, through their analysis and theories, gave significant contribution for the establishment of the new Turkish role in this vital region. The well-known American theorist and strategist Samuel Huntington, in his study *The Clash of Civilizations*, explains that all the big civilizations of the world have one leader country. According to him, countries like Russia, USA, India, China and Japan are countries which are considered as leaders of their civilizations, however, the Islamic civilization is the only one that lacks a country with a leader function. In his opinion, this American theorist points out the importance of the establishment of a leader country of the Islamic civilization, which according to him should be Turkey (Şahin 2006: 155).

Simultaneously, according to the American strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski, Turkey is considered as an important factor in the Middle East within the frames of the application of the Greater Middle East Initiative. According to him, Turkey as a part of the Middle East is under the influence of all military, economic, religious and cultural movements of that region, because this country, as seen from the historic, geographic, religious and cultural aspect, is a part of this region. Simultaneously, he adds, having in mind the geographic vicinity and neighboring relations with this region's countries, Turkey can be considered as a very important partner for the application of this initiative (Çınar 2008: 79). In the process of the Greater Middle East Initiative application, US officials on many occasions have highlighted Turkey's new role within the frames of Middle East redesigning. Namely, the new role of Turkey was sometimes named as **leader mission** in the transformation process of this region, and sometimes as a **model** or an **example** for the other countries in the Middle East.

In this context, President Bush's words should be highlighted, as when he spoke about Turkey's importance in the process of Middle East redesigning, he pointed out that the success of Turkey is of a vital importance for the development of Europe and the Greater Middle East. Equally, the former American ambassador in Ankara, E. Edelman, explaining the above

mentioned initiative, highlighted that this project does not belong to the Bush administration, but is considered as an American long term strategy that will be implemented even after he leaves his position. According to him, in order to realize this new vision, Turkey should represent an example that should be followed by other Middle Eastern countries (Tangülü 2006: 125) These opinions of US administration officials were also confirmed by the US General Headquarters President, General Richard Myers, who confirmed the attitudes of the above mentioned personalities about the role of Turkey with the words: “As a democratic and secular country, Turkey represents a model for the Middle East region” (Tekkaya 2007: 117). However, if we ask the question which is the main factor that contributes for the transformation of Turkey into a main key in the process of implementation of the new American vision for Middle East redesigning, the answer is this country produces democracy and modernization in conditions of stabile economy, it possesses efficient army, it has a system of secular rule inside a country of Turkish Muslim population, it sets parallels of its own foreign politics with American ones and has a constructive dialogue with Israel.^{vii} All these factors are important segments which transform Turkey into a model country for the Middle East region (Tangülü 2006: 126) It should not be forgotten that this new role of Turkey, as well as the Greater Middle East Initiative are important segments of the new American politics and strategies for redesigning equilibriums on the Middle East, with an aim of strengthening of American hegemony on the international stage.

Along with the beginning of the Greater Middle East Initiative, where Turkey was seen as the key country in the process of its application, the inner-political factors of this country were forced to create their own strategies around their role in the following period. The beginning of application of this new vision coincided with the ruling period of the conservative party AKP of Erdogan. Having in mind the fact the American strategists and administration officials within the frames of realization of their goals in the Middle East were giving special importance to the Muslim identity of this country for taking over the leadership around this region’s transformation, AKP’s position for this initiative had important reflections on the Turkish-American relations. Globally looked, although the Turkish government under Erdogan’s leadership was supportive towards the Greater Middle East Initiative, at the same time it had fears of possible negative reactions of this region’s countries. Turkish authorities supported this new initiative under the condition to take into consideration the inner dynamics of the Middle

East region. Prime Minister Erdogan gave special importance to the perceptions and reactions of the neighboring countries about the above mentioned initiative. In this context, the Turkish ministry of foreign affairs requested from its embassies in the Middle East a report which should name the main reasons of the countries in the region suspicious approach towards the American initiative. According to the report prepared by Turkish ambassadors in the Middle East, the American initiative in the countries of the region was perceived as external intervention inside the matters of the region. Simultaneously, it was underlined that the countries of the region believe in the need for transformation, however, according to them, the dynamics of these reforms should have an origin from the region itself (Çınar 2008: 76). When he was asked about the Turkish support of this initiative, having in mind the reaction of the countries about this project, Erdogan answered: “We support all projects that are aiming democracy and welfare development of this region. However, it can be made under the condition these reforms are not imposed from outside. Also, I would like to point out that every project which doesn’t consider the internal dynamics of this region will not get our support”. On another occasion, while he was speaking about the Turkish support of this initiative, Erdogan pointed out the following: “We support these projects, but the people of the Middle East are going through a process filled with disappointing events. Israel applies politics of violence and the situation in Iraq is still not normalized. These happenings are increasing the reactions of people from the Middle East and Northern Africa. Unless the violence in Palestine doesn’t stop and the situation in Iraq doesn’t normalize, only then the Greater Middle East Initiative will have positive meaning for the people of the region. Otherwise, this project will remain on the table” (Tangülü 2006: 129-130). Finally, it should be underlined that Turkey, by joining the American Greater Middle East Initiative, aims to develop its own economy through development of its relations with the USA, and on the other hand, it’s trying to increase its own credibility in the eyes of the people of Middle East through actualization of their everyday problems on the international stage (Tangülü 2006: 130). Simultaneously, Turkish authorities are very carefully trying to avoid usage of the term model for their country, which is actually often being used by the American authorities, from the fear of possibility of growth of negative reactions in the Middle East region; however as an alternative option, they prefer usage of the term **democratic partner** (Çınar 2008: 77). The joining of Turkey towards the Greater Middle East Initiative has strategic importance for Turkish foreign

politics. Namely, the Turkish political elites through this step are advocating strengthening of Turkish presence in the Middle East, intensifying cooperation with the USA and, if possible, to have the function of balance of American strategies in the Turkish hinterland.

Turkish-Iraqi relations at the beginning of the XXI century through the prism of Turkish-American relations

The Iraqi country, as a country located in the center of the Middle East and as a neighboring country as well, has always drawn the attention of Republic of Turkey. However, during the first years of last century, Turkish-Iraqi relations were not characterized by any significant development. The domination of inclination towards the politics isolation of Turkish foreign policies during the first years of the establishment of Republic of Turkey and, on the other side, the fact Iraq was British colony until 1932; represent important factors which determined the weak development of their bilateral relations. After the Iraqi independence from British colonialism, we are witnessing the beginnings of mutual relations between Iraq and Turkey. Namely, the first case of mutual cooperation was the Sadabat Pact signed in Teheran between Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. This pact can be considered as the turning point in Turkish-Iraqi relations before World War II (Girgin 1993: 6; Kürkçüoğlu 1972: 65). Along with the breakdown of the Baghdad Pact (1958) and military coup in Turkey (1960), the Turkish-Iraqi relations entered a new phase where the bilateral relations of these two countries were not characterized by any special development. However, ten years after the Baghdad Pact breakdown, Turkish-Iraqi relations came back to life, especially after the start of economic cooperation in the sphere of business and building of the oil pipeline Turkey-Iraq (Gözen 2009: 213). The Iraq-Iran war took place between 1980 and 1988 and left catastrophic consequences on both countries and generally in the Middle East region. In this period, under the leadership of Prime Minister Ozal and his multidimensional and peace-minded foreign politics, Turkey gave huge contribution in the way of finding solution for this crisis through peace talks (Bal 2004: 681; Ali 2009: 43). This period was also characterized by the appearance of terrorist organization

PKK which during the 1990's, after the end of Gulf War (1991), used Northern Iraq as a logistic position for successful implementation of its terrorist operations (Ali 2009: 43-44).

In the newer history of Turkish-Iraqi relations, one of the most problematic matters is the litigation around water usage that springs from the Tiger and Euphrates. Although the beginnings of this litigation can be found back in the 50's of last century, when the Turkish authorities began building of dams around the above mentioned rivers, the main crisis about the manner of water usage started after the Iraq-Iran war ended (1988-1990). The deepening of crisis around the water in this period had three main reasons:

- Iraq's problems, as a consequence of its war against Iran;
- Iraqi isolation as a result of the USA, United Kingdom and Israeli politics and the reflections of these politics in the Turkish-Iraqi relations;
- Turkish politics around the usage of these waters, so that by the end of 1980's, Turkish authorities intensified its activities for increase of these waters usage in various areas around the Ataturk dam (Gözen 2009: 226-227; See: Acar 1993: 58).
- with the aim of development of the southeastern area of Turkey, mostly populated by Kurds.

It should be highlighted that, as long as the manner of usage of the waters by the Turkish side was justified by **the principle of country's sovereignty**, on the other hand, Iraq along with Syria treated these waters as **international waters** which should be used in accordance with international norms (Çarkoğlu 1998: 193, 195). The different interpretation of international law principles around the usage of water by countries involved in this litigation is one of the biggest reasons of the existence and continuation of this problem in the agenda of the above mentioned countries. Similarly, the beginning of 1990's in the Turkey-Iraq relations is characterized with the Gulf War, which inflicted huge economic and financial losses to Turkish economy. Equally, the fact Iraq didn't pay any of its' debts to Turkey, the suspension of profit made by oil pipeline Yumurtalik transit and the international embargo on Iraq were some of the most catastrophic consequences of the above mentioned war towards the Turkish state (See: Fuller 2008: 188-189; Oran 2002: 258). The application of proactive and pro-integration Turkish politics based on the Strategic Depth Doctrine of Davutoglu^{viii} began right in time when the USA

and UK intensified their efforts for an upcoming invasion on Iraq. Namely, in these moments, Turkey under the leadership of AKP party, took an initiative for a mutual meeting with Iraq's six neighbors in order to stop the upcoming invasion. All the countries answered positively to the Turkish initiative, except Kuwait.^{ix} However, Turkish diplomacy efforts didn't provide the expected results. Through casual meetings of Iraq's neighboring countries, the above mentioned initiative continued its' activities after the Iraqi war, with the aim of legitimacy of the new Iraqi government and strengthening Iraq's sovereignty and integrity (Fuller 2008: 139; Davutoglu, 2008).

As an important moment in post-war Iraq, which had serious reflections on Turkish-American relations, we can consider the event that took place on 4 July 2003 in the Iraqi town of Suleymaniye. Namely, American soldiers attacked the headquarters of Turkish special units located in this town, after what they detained 11 Turkish soldiers. This event was perceived by the Turkish public as a revenge for the Turkish Parliament attitude (1 March 2003) regarding American requests before the start of the invasion on Iraq. One of the most important successes of Turkish foreign politics towards post-war Iraq was the level of contacts with various groups in this country, which differs in ethnic and religious fragmentation. Namely, contrary to frequent failures of the US and UK diplomacies, the Turkish foreign politics succeeded to establish constant contacts with all religious (Sunni and Shiite) and ethnic (Arab, Kurd and Turkmen) groups (Ali 2009: 98-99; Sozen 2008).

The referendum for the future status of Iraqi town Kirkuk is considered as one of the most vital challenges of Turkish-Iraqi relations in post-war Iraq. Namely, this town, except the rich oil and energetic resources, is different by its multi-ethnicity,^x by what, besides the Kurdish and Arabic, also touches the strategic state interests of Turkey. According to Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution from 2005, it has foreseen carrying out a referendum in order to determine this town's status. Through this act, Kurds intended to include the town of Kirkuk to the Kurdish federal leadership, by which they were thinking to achieve economic and strategically-political success. However, Turkish diplomacy had a different vision for the multiethnic town status. Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan in many occasions highlighted the importance of this Iraqi town's status towards Turkish interests. Similarly, according to Turkish authorities, this town was supposed to have a special status by which eventual multiethnic conflicts would be avoided.

This Turkish attitude met a support by the USA and Baghdad as well, so as a result of Turkish efforts the planned referendum for Kirkuk has not been realized until this present day (Yenigün 2010: 401-402; Ali 2009: 99).

In the recent period, the official visit of Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan (10 July 2008) took a vital position in the context of developing Turkish-Iraqi relations. Namely, during this official visit, both sides signed an agreement named “Council for strategic cooperation on a high level”, which had and still has important reflections in the development of mutual relations. The aim of signing of this agreement is establishment of strategic partnership for a long term, through development of bilateral relations in the sphere of politics, economy, culture, security, military areas and water resources. According to the agreement, the Council should be under the leadership of Turkish and Iraqi Prime Ministers. The members of this Council, besides the ministers of foreign affairs of both countries who should coordinate the activities, are the ministers of energetic, trade, investments, security and water resources. According to the agreed, this Council should be held at least once a year on a Prim Ministers level and three times a year on ministers’ level (Yenigün 2010: 394-395). In the frames of the agreement for “Council for strategic cooperation on a high level”, the first meeting on the Prime Ministers level was held on 15 October 2009 in Baghdad, where both sides agreed to cooperate in various spheres. Besides the positive results in these meetings, like the development of mutual economic cooperation, opening of Turkish consulates in the city of Basra (1009) – mostly inhabited by Shiites – and the Kurdish city of Erbil (2010), the debates around **the usage of water, the status of Kirkuk and Turkish military operations in Northern Iraq against the terrorist organization PKK** still remain main challenges of the Turkish-Iraqi relations in the following period. (Yenigün 2010: 395-403, 415)

The development of Turkish economy at the beginning of XXI century, as a result of the new Turkish integration and proactive diplomacy, as well as the occupation of Iraq by the USA and UK (in 2003), by which the international embargo towards this country was ended, determined the birth of a new era of economic relations between the two neighboring countries. Namely, in 2006, Turkey became the biggest importer in Iraq, while in 2007 compared to the one in 2006, Turkish export in Iraq increased for another 9, 9 % and the import from Iraq increased for 71,6 %, by which the trade turnover between these two countries reached the number of 3,5

billion US dollars. Equally, as a result of good relations between the two countries, with the support of the public and private sectors in Turkey, in 2008 in the Turkish city of Gaziantep, the first international economic fair under the patronage of the Iraqi state was held. At this fair, international businessmen and investors had the direct opportunity to meet the possibilities for investment in the Iraqi market.^{xi} During the first two months of 2009, Turkish export to Iraq was 830 million USD, which represented an increase of 75 % compared to the same period in 2008. We should point out that Turkish export to Iraq consists of electrical appliances, steel and iron products, oil, cement and furniture and the biggest part of the import consists of oil and oil products. In contrary to the period of 1996-2002 when the scope of trade exchange between these two countries was 6 billion USD in the period 2003-2009 the trade exchange between these two countries was 24,2 billion USD. From this data, we can see the difference in the development of economic cooperation between the two periods. Northern Iraq, mainly populated by Kurdish population, can be considered as a base of Turkish building companies in Iraq. Namely, Turkish building companies are taking the first place on the list of building companies of this vital area which is going through a massive economic growth in the post-war period (Yenigün 2010: 416,417,419).

Besides the building activities, Turkish companies with their investments are very active in the energetic and oil sector as well, a fact that indicates Turks are interested in the strategic sectors of Iraqi economy. In this context, as examples we can name Turkish companies like “Genel Enerji”, “Petoil” and “Doğan Holding”, which are investing in the Northern Iraq energetic sector, as well as the Tirkosh oil company TRAO, which is active in the oil sector of this country (Yenigün, 2010, p. 422, 426).^{xii} From the above mentioned, we can conclude that the coincidence of the period of AKP party rule in Turkey with post-war Iraq has had and still has positive reflections on the development of Turkish-Iraqi economic relations.^{xiii} Except the early challenges, the deepening of political relations between Turkey and Iraq will have positive reflections on bilateral economic relations for the short, but also for the long time period.

Table 1. Economic relations Turkey-Iraq 1996-2009 in millions USD

Year	Export	Import	Trade scope
1996	219,0	32,0	251,0
1997	549,0	454,0	1 003,0
1998	366,0	247,0	613,0
1999	247,0	414,4	661,4
2000	371,2	487,8	859,0
2001	839,0	505,0	1 344,0
2002	649,7	677,3	1 327,0
2003	829,1	112,6	941,7
2004	1 820,8	467,6	2 288,4
2005	2 752,0	459,3	3 211,3
2006	2 615,7	375,0	2 990,7
2007	2 844,8	645,1	3 489,9
2008	3 915,2	1 321,0	5 236,2
2009	5 123,5	952,3	6 075,8
2010*	2 205,5	492,0	2 697,5

*This information contains only the first five months of the year 2010.

Source: Yenigün 2010: 416.

Table 2. Dislocation of Turkish building and infrastructural companies according to areas in Northern Iraq

Irbil	260
Suleymaniye	225
Doha	97
Zaho	45
Aqra	7
Others	269

Source: Yenigün 2010: 420

Conclusion

The Middle East can be considered as one of the most important areas where political, economic and cultural effects of the new vision of Turkish diplomacy are being reflected, based on the **Strategic Depth Doctrine**. At the **beginning of XXI century**, Turkish-American relations have entered a new era which characterizes with deepening of mutual interests and disagreements in this region. With the beginning of the **Greater Middle East Initiative**, where Turkey was seen as the key country in the process of its' application, the political factors of this country were forced to create new own strategies for it. The beginning of the application of this new vision coincided with the period of Prime Minister Erdogan's rule. Bearing in mind the fact the American strategists and US administration officials, within the frames of the realization of their goals in the Middle East, were giving special importance to the Muslim identity of this country in order to take over the leadership in the transformation of this region, AKP's position towards this initiative had important reflections for the Turkish-American relationships.

After Saddam Hussein regime fall, Turkey took an active political and economic role in post-war Iraq. Besides the development of Turkish-Iraqi relations in the recent period, their bilateral political relations are facing some series of challenges. Turkish state is very active in the equilibriums of the Iraqi economy as well. Namely, besides the building activities, Turkish companies through their investments are active in the energetic and oil sector, a fact that indicates that Turkey is also interested in the strategic sectors of the Iraqi economy. In this context, we should point out the Turkish *soft power* which plays a vital role in the growth of sympathies of the Arab public opinion towards the Turkish population and state.

For further factorization of Turkish diplomacy and Turkish-Iraqi relations in this region, besides the development of bilateral economic relations, we could also recommend the further deepening of political relations of Turkey with Iraq and increase of efforts to overcome the litigations between these two countries. Simultaneously, we could suggest a continuation of the cooperation with the American foreign politics and synchronization of attitudes for the happenings in the Middle East and Iraq, a deed which may result with further factorization of Turkish diplomacy in the region.

ⁱIn this period, the most prominent examples of political Islam in this region are the Islamic parties and movements in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia etc.

ⁱⁱDevelopment eight.

ⁱⁱⁱFor more detailed information and ideas of Fukuyama about the “End of history”, see in: Fukuyama, F. (2006). *The End of History and the last man*. translation: Gëzim Selaci & Ardian Gola. Prishtina: Zenith.

^{iv}The death of thousands of civilians as a result of US Army military activities and happenings like the one of Abu Ghuraib, are factors which brought the sincerity of American democratization in the region under a question mark.

^vThe terms **radical** and **moderate** Islam were roughly criticized by some circles Middle East region. As an example, we will mention Erdogan’s opinion according to whom: “**Islam is one and only, we can’t divide it into radical and moderate**”.

^{vi}The rate of anti-Americanism between Turkish population in 2010 was 49%, while in 2011 it was 38%.

^{vii}It should be underlined that, at the beginning of XXI century, Turkey-Israel relations are worsening and have a falling trend. All this as a result of Israeli aggression on Palestinian people, especially after the attack of Israeli special forces of the Turkish humanitarian fleet in international waters, an act that caused serious turnover in their good mutual relations. After this event, the normalization of bilateral relations was conditioned by Turkey’s several requests, which in March 2013, through the initiative of American diplomacy, was fulfilled by the Israeli side. This act of Israel was commented by many as a Turkish diplomacy success.

^{viii} Naming of this new vision as **strategic** depth is because of the fact it’s inspired by the **civilization, historic and geographic** depth of Turkey. According to Davutoglu, Turkey’s position and location, which is a successor of the Ottoman Empire, can be compared only to countries like China, France, Japan, United Kingdom, Germany and Russia, who are successors of old empires. According to him, these countries possess vital **historic** and **geographic** depths and, just like we can’t imagine a country like Germany divided from central Europe, at the same time we can’t imagine Turkey distanced from the Balkan, Middle Eastern and Caucasian regions, with whom it shares common history. Similarly, he adds Turkey has **geographic width** which is an inseparable part from the **historic depth**, exactly because of the fact this country belongs at the same time to the Black Sea, Mediterranean, Balkan, Caucasian and Middle Eastern regions. In this context, we shouldn’t forget Turkey’s **civilization depth**. Namely, the geostrategic position of this country which is in **the center** of ancient civilizations like the Greek, Egyptian, Mediterranean, Persian and Mesopotamian, is an additional value that strengthens the vitality of this country on the international stage. All these three mentioned components (**historic, geographic, and civilization depths**) are depicting the strategic depth of Turkey, which should create regional, as well as global strategies and politics. Simultaneously, the **historic, geographic and civilization** depths have a vital role in the determination of **Turkey’s centrality** in her hinterland and the international stage, by which this country can turn into a regional factor, and after a longer period, into a global power. As the most vital principles of these strategies, we can name these: multidimensional diplomacy, bigger representation in international organizations, zero problems with neighbors and balance between security and freedom. See:: (www.2023.gen.tr [Accessed 25 December 2001]; Davutoglu, 2005, p. 205-206; Ali, 2010, p. 140-142; Atasoy, 2005, p.182; Davutoğlu, 2004).

^{ix}The countries that responded positively to the Turkish initiative were: Iran, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

^xThe population of this town consists of Turkmens, Kurds and Arabs.

^{xi}www.igeme.org.trArastirmalarulke_sekindex.cfmsec=ara/ [Accessed 21 January 2009]

^{xii} In 2008, Iraq decided to allow Turkish companies to take part in tenders and activities for finding oil. See: Erkmen, 2008; Ali, 2009, p. 100.

^{xiii}The mentioned factors, besides the bilateral economic relations, also have positive reflections on the cultural sphere. Namely, in recent years in Iraq, especially Northern Iraq is a center of Turkish cultural investments. In Northern Iraq, 10 schools and one university were built by Turkish entrepreneurs. Simultaneously, within the frames of Salahuddin University, a desk in Turkish language has been opened. See: Yenigün, 2010, p. 426.

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