

THE POST 9/11 DIVERGENCE OF EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES

In the aftermath of 9/11, the issue of international security gained worldwide significance and the reasons behind it have been widely interrogated. The way Turkey and EU countries positioned themselves was very dependant on their relations with the United States, public opinion in their countries and the particular governments ruling them. This paper attempts to analyze transatlantic relations after September 11, tracing the policies each followed in the run up to and following the Iraq war.

Aylin Alpagut*

* Aylin Alpagut holds a B.A. degree on Political Science and International Relations. She currently continues her MSc studies on Development Management at London School of Economics and Political Science.

The overall climate in the international community shifted overnight due to the unexpected September 11 attacks. American people were in shock, and asked “Why did such a tragedy happen to us?” To address the rising security risk, a Federal Department of Homeland Security was established and an immediate Patriotic Act was introduced. The act aimed “to deter and punish terrorist acts in the United States (U.S.) and around the world, to enhance law enforcement investigatory tools, and for other purposes.”¹ The Act briefly included enhanced surveillance procedures, which later faced a major public reaction for violating individual privacy; strengthened criminal laws against terrorism; improved intelligence and increased border protection. Shaken by the incident, as a precaution against further attacks, the European Union (EU) countries have also taken certain legal measures. New anti-terrorism legislation has been enacted; Europol’s powers have been increased; border controls have been strengthened; a new “common arrest warrant” has been introduced; police and judicial cooperation have been increased.

The U.S. perceived the events of September 11th as an “act of war” and firmly stated that the people responsible would be found and punished. The European Union, agreeing with the U.S. definition of threats, highlighted the need to investigate the underlying reasons for the rise of terror and called for the search for solutions through peaceful means. Nicole Gnesotto argues that “Europeans do not share the same feeling of being openly and totally at war with an enemy that represents the greatest evil in history. The Europeans’ memory tends to situate evil in the past. Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure, nor so free.”²

As a reaction to the attack, the U.S. declared war against the terrorists and launched a joint military operation with the United Kingdom (UK) in Afghanistan to demolish the Taliban regime and the terrorist group Al-Qaeda, and to find Osama Bin Laden. In addition to the intelligence assistance and the logistical support from France, Germany, Australia, Canada and some other countries,³ Turkey also contributed additional military assistance to Afghanistan as a backup. The operation gained worldwide support, since it was seen as America’s right to self-defense preserved under UN Charter Article 51 and NATO Article 5. However, when the Bush administration came up with an ill-defined Middle East Project without seeking international consensus, divergence between the U.S. and its key allies in the European Union became inevitable. While France and Germany strongly opposed the American-led war on Iraq, other EU states like Spain, most notably the UK, Italy, Denmark, and the new member countries from Central Europe led by Poland supported the U.S.’s military intervention in Iraq.⁴

The contrary position of the Franco-German alliance (and several other EU states) with regard to U.S. military actions in Iraq caused a sharp division within the Union. Diplomatic relations between the White House and the countries in opposition to the U.S. government’s foreign policy were damaged. The UK offered unwavering support to

¹ *The Library of Congress*, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d107:HR03162:@@@T>

² Nicole Gnesotto, “EU, US: visions of the world, visions for the other” in EU Institute for Security Studies (ed), *Shift or Rift: Assessing US-EU Relations After Iraq*, (Paris: l’Alençonnaise d’Impressions, 2003), p. 25

³ “Bush announces opening of attacks”, *The CNN Website*, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/10/07/ret.attack.bush/>, 7 October 2001

⁴ Öniş and Yılmaz, “Turkey-EU-US Triangle in Perspective: Transformation or Continuity?”, *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 59, No.2, 2005, p. 12

Washington regarding the Iraq war; not only militarily but also diplomatically, articulating Saddam Hussein's overthrow in terms of the Iraqi people's right to democracy and freedom. Spain, under Prime Minister (PM) José Maria Aznar's government, backed the U.S. by sending 1,300 troops to Iraq despite objections from Spanish public; and in Italy, the Silvio Berlusconi government approved military presence in Iraq, in addition to its backup forces for ISAF in Afghanistan. France and Germany, on the other hand, who had agreed that Iraq should be disarmed through UNSC Resolution 1441, insisted on a peaceful process rather than a military intervention. French President Jacques Chirac argued that "A second war in the Gulf could lead to unintended consequences and destabilize the Middle East region."⁵ Germany's then PM Gerhard Schröder, on 14 January 2003, at a press conference in Berlin also stated: "We want resolution 1411 to be fully implemented, and we want to provide it without war. We do not want to join a possible war in Iraq. Our decision will reflect upon the related votings in international forums."⁶ A week later, French President Jacques Chirac stated the following: "France and Germany will do everything to avoid war in Iraq."⁷ These firm statements coming from the EU's two dominant and influential states caused disappointment on the U.S. side. France and Germany's determinant opposition caused tense dialogues with the White House to the extent that then U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, at a conference at the Foreign Press Center of the National Press Club in Washington in 2003, branded Germany and France as the "old" states of Europe.⁸

"Old Europe" has been widely accused of letting dictators, most notably Saddam Hussein, perpetuate their rule rather than promote democracy in the Middle East.⁹ Particularly, criticism from Washington regarding Germany was linked to Germany's ungratefulness for the U.S. assistance in rebuilding Germany after World War II. America has also provided defense for Germany against the Soviet Union. The unwillingness of these countries did not stop the U.S. from its Middle East plan.¹⁰ Then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, during his press conferences, consistently reiterated the White House's determination to intervene in Iraq with or without coalition forces, which eventually they did.

As a post-war reconstruction plan, the Middle East Initiative (MEI) - later to be known as the Greater Middle East Project, was not convincing for European states. Richard Youngs argues that the main concern for Europe was the suspicion that the U.S. would try to use "the EU's well-established presence in the region for its own ends or to assert control over EU initiative."¹¹ Moreover, partnership with the U.S. could also limit European options - as it had in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. However, the most specific complaint and criticism of all was that the MEI was not drawn up in consultation with governments or civil society organizations in the region. At the 2004 G8 Summit, four (attending) EU states, namely France, Germany, Italy and UK, in cases backed by Arab governments insisted upon minor changes regarding the initiative's name (to the Broader Middle East and North Africa); a narrower geographic area (excluding Pakistan and Afghanistan); and

⁵ The Office of the Prime Minister, Directorate General of Press and Information, (<http://www.byegm.gov.tr/yayinlarimiz/AyinTarihi/2003/ocak2003.htm>).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Outrage at 'Old Europe' Remarks", *BBC*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2687403.stm>

⁹ Richard Youngs, "Transatlantic Cooperation on Middle East Reform: A European Misjudgment?" in Foreign Policy Center, (London: the Foreign Policy Center, 2004)

¹⁰ David C. Gompert, "What does America want of Europe?" in EU Institute for Security Studies (ed), *Shift or Rift: Assessing US-EU relations after Iraq*, (Paris: l'Alençonnaise d'Impressions, 2003), p. 46

¹¹ Ibid.

required consultations with Arab states, so as to avoid “imposing change from [the] outside”. Five Middle East states joined the summit, and the U.S. agreed that political aid programs be managed by a common fund; Europeans, on the other hand, only approved information sharing co-sponsored by Turkey, Yemen, and Italy.¹²

Some European participants, in order to influence the direction of the MEI, decided to contribute with democratization policies too; yet the disputes with Washington over what procedure should be followed and the EU’s will to continue its bilateral relations with the region countries, particularly with Syria, Libya, and Iran, led to policy differentiation. Washington excluded those countries from economic and political aid projects.¹³

In Washington, there were proponents of a comprehensive and long term process in the Middle East at the State Department and USAID. Actually, not to mention the efforts of both the EU and the U.S. in funding several civil society organizations in the Middle East to speed up democratization process, primarily the U.S.’s earlier initiatives - back in the 1990s - before Europe decides to contribute later through MEI, would be unfair. Enormous amounts of money have been spent on both sides. And looking at the current situation, unfortunately there is not a lot of motivation, nor many resources left in EU member states and the U.S. governments for required political reforms in the region.¹⁴

Turkey’s Position following September 11

As an EU membership candidate and one of America’s key allies, Turkey’s reply to the U.S. Iraqi intervention was significant in terms of how it will position itself regarding the developments in the region in the near and far future. Having fought shoulder to shoulder with the U.S. in Korea back in 1950 and at the first Gulf War in 1991, having collaborated with NATO in providing security in Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia in the early 1990, and contributing to the establishment of peace in Afghanistan since 2003 under International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Turkey was expected by the U.S. to show its continuing support for America’s post-9/11 actions. Indeed it did, by approving additional military forces to be sent to Afghanistan. However, when the issue of setting up democracy in Iraq through military was proposed by the U.S., there started a wide discussion in Turkey on whether it should or should not assist the U.S. in Iraqi intervention, regarding the consequences of the first Gulf War to itself.

Turkey’s concern about another Gulf War was based on the political and economic burdens and the disappointment of unkept promises from the first Gulf War in 1990. Some circles believed that in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, the flow of thousands of refugees from Northern Iraq caused huge economic burdens for Turkey. And, more significantly, the political vacuum in Northern Iraq in the aftermath of the war provided a convenient space for the PKK (Kurdish Workers’ Party) terror organization to operate in. That period was quite problematic for Turkey in terms of dealing with additional national security problems right after getting out of the messy first Gulf war¹⁵

As the beginning of the Iraq War loomed, American support of Turkey on various critical foreign policy issues became more evident. Firstly, Turkey was displayed as a model to the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Middle East region for being a secular democratic state. Secondly, in the 2002 Copenhagen Summit, the U.S. attempted to back Turkey by implementing a pressure policy to EU leaders; however the policy backfired since, for EU, Turkey's domestic social and political reforms were the main criteria for its progress. Lastly, the Bush Administration declared its recognition of the PKK as a terrorist organization, a delicate issue for Turkey.¹⁶

The March 1 vote of the Turkish Parliament, not approving the deployment of U.S. troops in Turkish territories, however, was a blow to the more than half century partnership between Turkey and the U.S. The decision was interpreted either as "Turkey show[ing] that it is a state governed by rule of law,"¹⁷ "Bush has understood that Turkey was not a Banana Republic."¹⁸

What were the main reasons behind this unforeseeable decision? Looking at the policies followed by both countries before the Iraq war, it is not difficult to see that there was procedural mismanagement. On the Turkish side, the multiple heads within the government caused delays in the decision making process. Due to the current government being inexperienced, failures occurred. Neither the public nor MPs were well-informed about the developments in the negotiation process and this perpetuated an environment of ambiguity 'mysterious' state jargon.

Procedural mismanagement and *fiat accompli* approaches on the part of the U.S. contributed to a further set of incongruities. It is telling to compare U.S. protocol leading up to the Gulf War and the Iraq War. Leading up to the first Gulf War, former Secretary of State James Baker visited Turkey four times; however, before the Iraq War, Colin Powell made only one visit, and it was too late.¹⁹ What was the main reason behind this difference? Had relations between Turkey and the U.S. changed since the 1990s or did the U.S. take Turkey's support for granted in the Iraq War?

Another point is the U.S. government's persistent pressure and, from time to time, what was perceived as disregard of the principle of rule of law in Turkey. Abdullah Gül, the PM of Turkey at the time, reiterated that "Turkey is not a Royalty or an Emirate. We have to convince our parliament first."

Three months after the March 1 vote, the U.S. military's sudden "arrest" of Turkish soldiers in Sulaymaniya on 4 July 2003, in the name of preventing "an assassination attempt to the Kirkuk governor" led to further tension in Turkey-U.S. relations. The shocking incident was widely regarded as "unacceptable" and "ugly" by Turkish government officials.²⁰ The perception of inhuman treatment to the arrested Turks sharply increased the anti-American sentiments among the Turkish public.

Since, Turkey and the U.S. have tried to mend relations, with partial success. Military relations, once the most stable pillar, remain damaged, as does public opinion in Turkey.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The Chairman of Republican People's Party (CHP), Deniz Baykal's statement right after the March 1 voting had been concluded.

¹⁸ Baskin Oran, "Is a Kurdish state the end of the world?", *Bağımsız İletişim Ağı Online*
http://www.bianet.org/2003/07/08_eng/news17871.htm, 1 April 2003

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ "Turkey in 2003: Reflections of Iraq Operation in Turkey, *The Turkish Press Website*,
<http://www.turkishpress.com/specials/2003/yir/iraq.asp>, 7 November 2006

Reactions in Europe

The November 2003 Istanbul bombings, targeting the HSBC building and the UK Consulate, were the first Al-Qaeda related attacks to a metropolitan area after 9/11. Although the target points were specifically chosen as symbols of the UK, Turkey was deeply shaken by the incident. The Turkish public had difficulty in understanding, why their country had been chosen despite the fact that Ankara had jeopardized its relations with Washington by not authorizing the U.S. army to use Turkish territory for the Iraqi intervention.

The subsequent Madrid bombings in March 2004 created another shock for the coalition forces. José Maria Aznar's government misled the public by blaming ETA for the bombings in order to counter the arguments that Spain had paid the price of his policy of participating in the U.S. mission in Iraq. Aznar stated after the bombings that "there would be no change in the government's stance until it achieved the "complete and total" defeat of the terrorists."²¹ The Spanish electorate reacted to this in the national election three days later by voting in the young Socialist, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, who had a critical view of the U.S. intervention in Iraq. From the beginning, Zapatero had disapproved of an Iraqi intervention in the absence of a decision by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Soon after he took office, Zapatero announced the withdrawal of Spanish troops and stated that Spain would make a military contribution only if the United Nations (UN) were to take charge.²²

Italy, on the other hand, having 3,000 troops in Iraq, announced in March 2005 that they would begin to withdraw their troops in September 2005.²³ The timing of the statement is significant because it followed the killing of an Italian agent, Nicola Calipari, by U.S. troops in Baghdad. Following this incident, everyday, a new government official made a statement calling for the U.S. to investigate the case thoroughly and find out who was responsible for Calipari's mysterious death. Calipari's death was the first time the Italian people faced the Iraq War's reality and anti-war sentiments in the country galvanized it once more.

Widespread public opposition to the Iraqi intervention, Spain's withdrawal of soldiers a year earlier, Calipari's murder, and threats to Italy from Al Qaeda after the London bombings influenced Berlusconi's government's decision to withdraw forces.

By taking this decision, Italy, in a qualified sense, made it clear that the government's priority was to maintain the country's security before contributing to international peace and security efforts. Berlusconi's statements have also been interpreted as a strategic shift for the upcoming electoral campaign, since opinion polls showed that two-thirds of the public opposed the Italian army's presence in Iraq.

Germany's relations with the U.S., under Schröder's government, entered a rocky phase due to opposition to the Iraq war. However, after the September 2005 elections, the new

²¹ "Slaughter in the rush hour; terrorist attacks in Spain", *The Economist*, 12 March 2004

²² Phillip Gordon, "Madrid Bombings and U.S. Policy", *The Brookings Institution*, <http://www.brookings.edu/views/testimony/gordon20040331.htm>, 31 March 2004

²³ Meanwhile, Netherlands and Ukraine also started to withdraw their military forces from Iraq, *BBC*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4352259.stm>, 15 March 2005

Chancellor Angela Merkel, expressed her will “to get things off to a good start”²⁴ with the U.S. and her first visit to Washington in January 2006 was regarded as a crucial step. In her speech at the Munich Security Conference in February, she suggested that NATO be the “consultation body” and for NATO to have a primary role in facing international security challenges of 21st century. She mentioned Germany’s military presence in Sudan, the southern Caucasus and on the Horn of Africa, in addition to Kosovo, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina under ISAF; and newly in Rafah, a village in Gaza. Merkel also added that Germany’s support will be available as long as the financial scope for defense spending permits.

On the Iraqi issue, Merkel emphasized Germany’s support for training officials, university tutors, and engineers; establishing a free press and canceling debts up to 4.5 billion euros. However; sending troops to Iraq is not likely since there is wide public opposition to the Iraq war in Germany. With regard to Iran, the Chancellor stated their concern about its nuclear programs and emphasized that a solution must be found rapidly. To prevent any misinterpretations of her repeated reference to NATO in solving regional disputes, she stated that countries must have: “the mutual recognition that none of us can master the challenges of the 21st century alone” and added “I believe that we need to strengthen the transatlantic partnership” and added that “Germany, for its part, will do what it can to this end.”²⁵

Merkel’s reservations concerning EU enlargement seem to have become a diverging point while restructuring better relations with the U.S. who is a major supporter of European integration. Regarding Washington’s geo-strategic interests primarily with Turkey, the Balkans, the Black Sea, Ukraine, and the Caucasus, Merkel will likely be challenged to find a balanced policy between EU integration and a successful transatlantic relationship.²⁶

Conclusion

Different policies pursued in Iraq war led to disaccords among two sides of the Atlantic. EU states remained divided over whether to join the war in Iraq or not, and some of the ones who did join, could not maintain their presence in the region. Turkey, under the AKP government, misled Washington by ensuring the U.S. officials that Turkey will give the required support on Iraq intervention, but, later the parliament did not approve the U.S. deployment. And lastly, America failed to gain international legitimacy after deciding to bring “peace and democracy” to Iraq through unilateral military intervention, which led to a further turmoil in the region.

Bearing in mind the failure of unilateral action in terms of legitimacy, specifically the U.S. record in the Iraq war, the inhuman treatment of prisoners of war²⁷ and the increasing anti-war sentiments on a wide public scale, a multilateral response together with a well thought out political vision that can be implemented in a timely manner is highly required. As a matter of

²⁴ William Drozdiak, “Relations with Putin Likely a Major Item in Talks between Merkel and Bush”, *Council on Foreign Relations Website*, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9531>, 9 January 2006

²⁵ Dr Angela Merkel, “Germany’s Foreign and Security Policies in the face of Global Challenges”, *42nd Munich Security Conference Official Website*, <http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?sprache=en&id=170&>, 4 February 2006

²⁶ Dr Ulrike Guérot, “Merkel’s Fuzzy Foreign Policy Agenda”, *Europe’s World*, Spring 2006, p. 51-55

²⁷ The treatment to war criminals in Guantanamo Bay still rests to be a major diverging point between EU and the U.S.

fact, the UNSC, as the supranational body representing the 191 countries should be the main body in terms of collective action. However, its decision making structure, which is merely based on the consent of five permanent members, still leads to doubts as to whether the permanent members from post-World War II era are capable of protecting the rights of the rest objectively. And the additional ten non-permanent members, as a balancing factor in policy making, serve for two year terms. Yet, still “the great Power unanimity”, referred to as the "veto" power, yields the decisions on substantive matters require nine votes, including the votes of the all permanent members.²⁸

From a realistic point of view, in the international arena, states place priority in pursuing and protecting their interests. With regard to this perspective, expecting a group of states (15 in total) to make just or objective decisions on behalf of the other 176 member states would be rather optimistic. In the recent crisis in Lebanon, the UN’s incapability of giving an actual response to the deterioration of a state, and hesitating even to condemn the attacks or not, displayed once more that how this mechanism needs to reform.

Transatlantic powers, as having the largest income and the political power, are doubtless the most influential actors to set a more justified policy making structure. The timing could not be better to restore lost image and credibility caused by the Iraq war, especially for the U.S. and the UK. It would not be unrealistic to argue that the initiatives they will take will determine whether the international arena becomes a place of democratic, lasting peace with a functional rule of law, respect to pluralism and a liberal economy in cooperation with social justice as Kant argues; or a place where mistrust, brutality, self-interest driven sovereign states, which will inevitably lead to chaos as Hobbes asserts.

²⁸ Membership in UNSC, *The United Nations Official Website*, <http://www.un.org/sc/members.asp>