Turkey (Türkiye)-U.S. Relations: Timeline and Brief Historical Context

This timeline tracks major developments from the beginning of close U.S.-Turkey (Türkiye) ties after World War II to the present. The information provides context for lawmakers assessing the tenor and trajectory of current bilateral relations on issues ranging from general strategic cooperation to timely regional concerns and domestic Turkish politics.

Early Cold War Partners (1945-1962)
Soviet pressure on the Turkish government to allow free passage through the Turkish straits (the Bosphorus and Dardanelles) and its territorial claims in eastern Anatolia threatened to precipitate hostilities between the two states, whose predecessors (the Russian and Ottoman Empires) had fought 12 wars over the preceding four centuries. Turkey turned to the United States for support. Mutual opposition to Soviet expansion would underpin Turkey-U.S. ties in the coming decades.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Turkey declares war on Germany and Japan in February; becomes founding member of the United Nations</td>
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<td>1946</td>
<td>In response to Soviet demands on Turkey for shared administration of the straits, the United States counters Soviet pressure by sending ships to Turkish waters</td>
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<td>1947</td>
<td>Congress designates Turkey (along with Greece) a special recipient of anti-Soviet aid under the Truman Doctrine</td>
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<td>1950</td>
<td>Turkish troops join U.S.-U.N. forces in the Korean War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Turkey becomes a member of NATO</td>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>U.S. and Turkey agree to joint use of what becomes Incirlik Air Base; U.S. and Turkey sign first status of forces agreement</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>First military coup in Turkey; civilian rule returns with elections in 1961</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>Resolution of Cuban Missile Crisis includes U.S. agreement to remove nuclear-armed Jupiter missiles (judged by the U.S. to be obsolete) from Turkey</td>
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Allies amid Challenges (1963-1978)
U.S.-Turkey relations were particularly challenged by Turkey’s frequent clashes with fellow NATO member Greece over the ethnically divided island of Cyprus. Anti-Americanism grew as Turks increasingly debated the benefits and drawbacks of the bilateral relationship.

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<td>1964</td>
<td>Letter from President Lyndon Johnson to Turkish Prime Minister Ismet Inonu communicates U.S. opposition to Turkish intervention in Cyprus after ethnic Greek-Turkish power sharing breaks down</td>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>Turkey’s second military coup occurs with the government’s resignation amid increasing street violence; elections resume in 1973</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Turkey, using U.S.-supplied equipment, occupies the northern third of the island of Cyprus (an occupation that has continued to the present) on behalf of Turkish Cypriot minority, following a coup that installed a more pro-Greek government on the island</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Congress freezes aid and imposes arms embargo on Turkey for its actions in Cyprus</td>
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<td>1978</td>
<td>After intense lobbying by multiple presidential administrations and several votes to partially lift the embargo, Congress fully repeals it</td>
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The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Iran’s Islamic Revolution heightened the strategic importance of the Turkey-U.S. relationship for American interests in the broader Middle East.

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<td>1980</td>
<td>United States and Turkey sign Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) begins significant operations in its armed insurgency in southeastern Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Turkey allows the use of its airspace and bases for U.S. and coalition aircraft participating in Gulf War and for the postwar patrolling of northern Iraq</td>
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</tbody>
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Turkey’s relative importance for U.S. policymakers declined in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, but focus remained on a number of regional developments involving Turkey.
Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine has led to a multi-faceted Turkish response: some military and political clout in Turkey; major U.S. military grant aid to Turkey discontinued in post-Cold War environment.

**1991-1992**
United States announces closure of 8 of its 12 military bases in Turkey; major U.S. military grant aid to Turkey discontinued in post-Cold War environment.

**1992**
PKK-led Kurdish insurgency intensifies in Turkey.

**1994**
Congress withholds military loans to Turkey until submission of executive branch report on alleged human rights violations in relations to Turkey-PKK violence.

**1997**
Turkish military compels the removal of a government led by an Islamist prime minister.

**1999**
Turkey captures PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan with U.S. assistance; PKK declares ceasefire.

**2001**
Turkey joins the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

**AKP and the Middle East (2003-2012)**
After the 2002 election of Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Justice and Development Party (known in Turkish as the AKP), and Erdogan’s election as prime minister in 2003, Turkey-U.S. relations were shaped by Turkey’s growing economic and political clout in the Middle East.

**2003**
Turkish parliamentary votes do not allow U.S. invasion of Iraq from Turkey, but permit U.S. use of Turkish bases for overflight of Iraq after U.S.-led occupation.

**2004**
PKK resumes insurgency and attacks against Turkey from safe havens in northern Iraq.

**2010**
Turkey downgrades ties with Israel after Israel’s raid on the Mavi Marmara (part of an activist-led flotilla seeking humanitarian relief for the Gaza Strip) leaves eight Turkish citizens dead.

**2011**
Turkey agrees to U.S./NATO deployment of missile defense radar on its territory.

**More Challenges to Cooperation (2013-Present)**
Factors driving U.S.-Turkey tensions include the conflict in Syria and Turkey’s purchase of a Russian S-400 air defense system. Domestic developments, including the July 2016 coup attempt and Erdogan’s increased consolidation of political control, have further challenged bilateral relations. Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine has made NATO considerations more central to U.S.-Turkey discussions.

**2013**
Nationwide protests and corruption allegations increase domestic and Western criticism of Erdogan and his government.

**2014**
U.S.-Turkey differences deepen in Syria over jihadists’ alleged use of Turkish territory and U.S. support for PKK-aligned Syrian Kurds.

**2016**
Erdogan elected president.

**2017**
After July coup attempt, Turkey requests that the U.S. extradite influential Turkish figure Fethullah Gulen, and begins direct military operations in Syria to counter the Islamic State and Kurdish-led forces.

**2017**
U.S. begins directly arming PKK-linked Kurdish forces in Syria against Turkish wishes.

**2018**
Constitutional changes expanding presidential powers narrowly approved by referendum.

**2019**
President Erdogan wins reelection.

**2020**
In Syria’s Afrin district, Turkey and allied Syrian opposition militias intervene directly against PKK-linked Syrian Kurdish forces.

**2021**
Turkey takes delivery of S-400 system from Russia; the U.S. removes Turkey from F-35 program; some Members of Congress reportedly place informal holds on major arms sales to Turkey.

**2022**
Turkey’s successful use of drone aircraft against Russian-origin equipment in Syria and elsewhere gains it greater global notoriety linked with its arms exports.

**Pacific Mediterranean** maritime border and energy disputes intensify between Turkey and some NATO countries and other U.S. partners.

The Trump Administration imposes sanctions on Turkey’s arms procurement agency and some of its officials for the S-400 acquisition.

**2021**
President Biden characterizes Ottoman Empire actions against Armenians during World War I as genocide. (The House and Senate passed resolutions of similar substance in 2019.)

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine leads to a multi-faceted Turkish response: some military and political support for Ukraine, and increased economic and energy ties with Russia; Turkey begins mediating between the warring parties.

President Biden publicly expresses support for a sale of F-16s to Turkey amid fresh Turkey-Greece tensions and uncertainty about congressional support for the sale.

Turkey demands extraditions and other actions from Sweden and Finland as a condition to its parliament ratifying their NATO accession

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