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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.

1945	Turkey declares war on Germany and Japan in February; becomes founding member of the United Nations
1946	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
1947	Congress designates Turkey (along with Greece) a special recipient of anti-Soviet aid under the Truman Doctrine
1950	Turkish troops join U.S.-U.N. forces in the Korean War
1952	Turkey becomes a member of NATO
1954	U.S. and Turkey agree to joint use of what becomes Incirlik Air Base ; U.S. and Turkey sign first status of forces agreement
1960	First military coup in Turkey; civilian rule returns with elections in 1961
1962	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

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.

1964	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
1971	Turkey's second military coup occurs with the government's resignation amid increasing street violence; elections resume in 1973
1974	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
1975	Congress freezes aid and imposes arms embargo on Turkey for its actions in Cyprus Turkey abrogates U.S. status of forces agreement; takes control of U.S. installations; U.S. forces performing NATO functions remain
1978	After intense lobbying by multiple presidential administrations and several votes to partially lift the embargo, Congress fully repeals it

Renewed Military Cooperation (1980-1991)

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.

1980	United States and Turkey sign Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement Turkey's third coup in response to social and political turmoil; elections resume in 1983
1984	Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) begins significant operations in its armed insurgency in southeastern Turkey
1991	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

Reassessment (1991-2002)

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.

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		Erdogan elected president
1992	PKK-led Kurdish insurgency intensifies in Turkey	2016	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
1994	Congress withholds military loans to Turkey until submission of executive branch report on alleged human rights violations in relations to Turkey-PKK violence	2017	U.S. begins directly arming PKK-linked Kurdish forces in Syria against Turkish wishes Constitutional changes expanding presidential powers narrowly approved by referendum
1997	Turkish military compels the removal of a government led by an Islamist prime minister U.S. designates the PKK as a foreign terrorist organization	2018	President Erdogan wins reelection In Syria's Afrin district, Turkey and allied Syrian opposition militias intervene directly against PKK-linked Syrian Kurdish forces
1999	Turkey captures PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan with U.S. assistance; PKK declares ceasefire	2019	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
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 <i>Mavi Marmara</i> (part of an activist-led flotilla seeking humanitarian relief for the Gaza Strip) leaves eight Turkish citizens dead	2020	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 Eastern 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
2011	Turkey agrees to U.S./NATO deployment of missile defense radar on its territory	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)
		2022	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
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		

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