

## **AN OVERVIEW OF RECENT TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN TURKISH POPULAR MEDIA**

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Turkish-American relations enjoyed a honeymoon period especially between 1945 and 1964. The Soviet threat forced Turkey to take sides with the US, which represented the Free World (and the “alternative West”) and was regarded as the sole protector of Turkey’s independence and freedom. Anti-communism was translated into Turks’ lives as unquestionable pro-Americanism.

The first rupture in the marriage emerged in mid 1960s with US President Johnson’s letter to Prime Minister Inonu on the issue of Cyprus, which dropped into Turkey’s agenda like a diplomatic atomic bomb. The Vietnam War, the anti-American propaganda of the Soviet Union, and the American arms embargo on Turkey in 1975 all added fuel to the anti-American sentiments that found life in anti-American songs. With the military takeover in 1980, Turkey underwent a transformation period and anti-American feelings ceased. The collapse of the Soviet Union made the US “the indispensable nation,” which Turks, too, regarded as the engine of globalization, champion of human rights, freedom and democracy. Turks were pleased with the notion of inter-connectedness.

Turks shunned 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, President Bush’s “either with us or against us” and “crusade” discourse and the Iraqi War once more alienated Turks, making Turkey the most anti-American country in 2005. What ensued was a flood of anti-American novels, blockbuster movies and anti-American songs that shunned especially America’s Iraqi policy. America’s “Broader Middle East and North Africa” project and Ralph Peters’ “New Map of the Middle East” infuriated Turks. Consequently, patriotism in Turkey rose almost equal to anti-Americanism. Many Turks felt disconnected to whatever the US represented.

However, Obama’s election to presidency almost overnight reversed the American image in Turkey and reconnected Turks to America. As a result of the Turkish Obama-mania, villagers sacrificed sheep to celebrate Obama’s presidency, a bank used an Obama-like American in its commercials, and a pop singer composed a song before Obama’s high profile visit to Turkey in April 2009.

The presentation will compare and contrast reception and representation of the US in Turkish popular culture in terms of US presidents George W. Bush and Barack Hussein Obama. It will be accompanied with a slide show.