Positioned in a dynamic part of the world, Turkey is notable for its unique identity which connects Europe and Asia and in many ways conflates the heritage and culture of the East with the modernity of the West. This unique identity has translated into a distinctive role for Turkey characterized by burgeoning influence in the region. The emergence of Turkey as a regional power can be explained by several components: the historical foundations of the Republic, the process of democratization, economic and political policies, and internal changes induced by interaction with Europe. None of these factors exclusively resulted in the emergence, but rather worked to reinforce one another over several decades to solidify Turkey’s position in the region.

The materialization of Turkey as a regional power has implications for relations with the United States. The military, political and economic alliance that has historically characterized relations has faced conflict in the last decade. Periodically, Turkish foreign policy has come in contention with US interests leading to strained relations. Nevertheless, the United States has strategic interest in Eurasia in which Turkey can serve as a vital partner. In pursuit of these interests, US relations with Turkey should be strengthened. In all, Turkey and the United States share common values and a commitment to secular republican democracy, in addition to political, military and economic interests that maintain the strategic partnership.