

From Solid to Shaky: The Strained Alliance Between Turkey and NATO

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I. INTRODUCTION

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was formed in the aftermath of World War II, when it became clear that the Soviet Union was not interested in the notion of a united world rebuilding a sustainable peace after the war ended. Intended to present a united Western front against Soviet expansion and influence around the world, NATO was formed to be a military alliance that would serve as a deterrent to the Soviet Union and other enemies of freedom.

This paper addresses the relationship between Turkey and other members of the NATO alliance. Furthermore, it will assess how the history and structure of NATO, in addition to past NATO alliance actions in regional and global conflicts, have created the current environment in which Turkey's interests and the interests of its NATO allies are sometimes divergent and often strained. Starting with the conflict in Cyprus in the 1960s, a roller coaster relationship developed between Turkey and its NATO allies in which Turkey's interests often departed from those of the United States and other Western powers concerning the Middle East.

The current geopolitical landscape across the globe differs greatly from the Cold War atmosphere in which the battle of capitalism versus communism led to Turkey seeking support from the United States and seeking refuge in NATO against Soviet aggression. Today, there exists a radically different environment filled with threats ranging from the terrorist activities of ISIS and Hamas to Russia exerting more muscle. In this environment, Turkey's role as a reliable ally for the United States and NATO is more needed than ever before; however, with Turkish leadership striving to move from its secular roots towards a more Islamist foreign policy, Turkey's loyalty to NATO has never been more suspect.

II. OVERVIEW OF NATO OBLIGATIONS

The North Atlantic Treaty is, at its core, primarily concerned with securing the collective defence of its members.¹ Accordingly, as part of NATO membership, member states such as Turkey are required to maintain and develop their respective militaries against attack and pledge themselves to the principles of defence embodied within the Treaty's articles²—the three most significant of which are discussed here.

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¹See *Collective Defence*, NATO (Nov. 11, 2014, 10:15 AM), http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm?

²See North Atlantic Treaty, Apr. 4, 1949, 63 Stat. 2241, 34 U.N.T.S. 243.

Member states' most important obligation stems from Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states, "Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all."³ If Article 5 is invoked, members may provide any form of support they deem necessary, including military assistance involving ground troops, depending on the level of material resources that members have available.⁴ Article 5 was invoked for the first and only time in NATO's history following the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and United Flight 93.⁵

As part of Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, members are required to "maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack."⁶ At a 2002 summit in Prague, NATO determined that, as part of this commitment, members should strive to spend 2% of their respective GDPs on defence.⁷ In 2013, only four countries met this benchmark—the United States, the United Kingdom, Estonia, and Greece—with Turkey spending 1.8%.⁸ Since the end of the Cold War, military spending by NATO countries has declined,⁹ with European countries in NATO averaging only 1.6% of their GDP on defence in 2013.¹⁰

Looking to Article 4 of the Treaty, NATO members have an obligation to consult with any member that feels its "territorial integrity, political independence or security" is threatened.¹¹ Article 4 has only been invoked on four occasions, with three of these requests coming from Turkey—once in 2003 during the Iraq War, and twice in relation to the conflict in Syria.¹² In each of these instances, NATO responded by instituting appropriate defensive measures,¹³ and, by acting under Article 4, NATO has been able to support Turkey without triggering the more serious repercussions of Article 5.¹⁴ This shows how NATO has been helpful to Turkey when it faced security threats from a variety of sources over the last half century. The affiliation between Turkey and its NATO partners has been mutually beneficial for most of its duration as evidenced by the history of these two entities' relationship.

III. HISTORY

³*Id.* at art. 5.

⁴*Collective Defence*, supra note 1.

⁵Suzanne Daley, *After the Attacks: The Alliance; For First Time, NATO Invokes Joint Defense Pact With U.S.*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 13, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/13/us/after-attacks-alliance-for-first-time-nato-invokes-joint-defense-pact-with-us.html>.

⁶North Atlantic Treaty, supra note 2, at art. 3.

⁷Stephen Fidler, *NATO Leaders Vow to Lift Military Spending*, WALL ST. J., Sept. 4, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/nato-leaders-to-vow-to-lift-military-spending-1409832341>.

⁸Steven Erlanger, *Europe Begins to Rethink Cuts to Military Spending*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 26, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/27/world/europe/europe-begins-to-rethink-cuts.html?_r=0.

⁹*NATO's Military Decline*, WALL ST. J., Mar. 3, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303802104579449571957045910>.

¹⁰*See* Erlanger, supra note 8.

¹¹North Atlantic Treaty, supra note 2, at art. 4.

¹²*See The Consultation Process and Article 4*, NATO (Nov. 11, 2014, 10:19 AM), http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49187.htm.

¹³*See id.*

¹⁴Joe Parkinson & Stephen Fidler, *Turkey Asks NATO to Deploy Patriot Missiles*, WALL ST. J., Nov. 21, 2012, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323713104578132923864128016>.

A. NATO's Founding

The North Atlantic Treaty was signed on April 4, 1949 in order to combat Soviet expansion and establish a stabilising presence within Europe.¹⁵ Soon after NATO's founding, Turkey applied for membership and was eventually accepted in 1952.¹⁶

One of the initial catalysts for Turkey's admission into NATO occurred in July 1945 when the Soviet Union requested that Turkey return two Turkish border provinces previously held by Russia, and give the USSR joint control of the Bosphorus Straits.¹⁷ Per the Montreux Agreement of 1936, Turkey was granted the authority to police the Straits and ensure that only countries that bordered the Black Sea could access them.¹⁸ Following World War II, however, the Soviets—against Turkish protest—wished to revise this agreement in order to aggrandise their role in the Straits' function.¹⁹ By having greater access to the Straits, Soviet leadership could gain unfettered access to key trade routes linking the Black and Mediterranean Seas as well as expand the USSR's military influence in the region.²⁰ Fearing that Soviet control of the Bosphorus would set a negative precedent at other key trading areas such as the Panama and Suez Canals, the U.S. began to unofficially support Turkey and dispatched the *USS Missouri* to Istanbul in order to send a clear message to the USSR.²¹

In recognition of Turkey's key role in the Cold War landscape, President Harry S. Truman appeared before a joint session of Congress in 1947 and requested that Turkey and Greece receive \$400 million in aid as part of the "Truman Doctrine."²² Providing such assistance under the Truman Doctrine was essential to U.S. foreign policy as it allowed Turkey to increase its military capabilities and form a more effective bulwark against potential Soviet aggression in the Eastern Mediterranean.²³ U.S. officials were concerned that the USSR could easily overrun a weak Western Europe; therefore, Turkey was needed to provide a cushion to absorb an initial Soviet assault, giving the U.S. sufficient time to mobilise its forces for a counterattack.²⁴

In order for this strategy to be fully implemented, U.S. military officials initially believed that it was necessary to establish formal "strategic coordination" between Turkey and the United States.²⁵ With the founding of NATO in 1949, however, U.S. strategy shifted to buttressing Western Europe, consequently reducing the amount of attention being given to Turkey.²⁶ In fact, initial Turkish attempts to join NATO in April 1950 were rebuffed with Italy as the only

¹⁵*A Short History of NATO*, NATO, <http://www.nato.int/history/nato-history.html> (last visited Feb. 28, 2015).

¹⁶*Id.*

¹⁷See Jonathan Knight, *America's International Guarantees for the Straits: Prelude to the Truman Doctrine*, 13 MIDDLE E. STUD. 241, 243 (1977).

¹⁸*See id.*

¹⁹*See id.* at 246.

²⁰Chris Carter, *7 August 1946: Turkish Straits Crisis Reaches Its Climax*, MONEYWEEK (July 8, 2014), <http://moneyweek.com/7-august-1946-turkish-straits-crisis-reaches-its-climax/>.

²¹Cameron S. Brown, *The One Coalition They Craved to Join: Turkey in the Korean War*, 34 REV. OF INT'L STUD. 89, 99-100 (2008).

²²Leffler, Melvyn P., *Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945-1952*, 71 J. OF AM. HIST. 807, 807 (1985).

²³*Id.*

²⁴*Id.* at 814.

²⁵*See id.* at 819.

²⁶*See id.*

member to express support for Turkish membership.²⁷ Turkey, along with Greece, was ultimately only offered an associational role with NATO which caused Turkish officials to feel slighted that the alliance had not extended a bid for full membership.²⁸ Accordingly, Turkey refused to lease any of its air bases to the United States or its allies unless Turkey was fully admitted to NATO.²⁹ Realising that access to these bases was integral if the United States were to launch a successful counterattack, the U.S. officially proposed in May 1951 that Turkey, along with Greece, should be admitted as a full member.³⁰ Despite initial resistance from Great Britain, Turkey became part of NATO on February 18, 1952.³¹

B. Why Turkey Needed to Align With NATO

Turkey had many reasons to desire full membership as a NATO ally. As noted above, Turkey's primary interest in joining was fuelled by concerns of protecting itself against the growing threat posed by the USSR with its ambitions for greater control of the Bosphorus Straights and the Mediterranean region in general.³² Furthermore, Turkey witnessed first-hand how its neighbour, Greece, was severely threatened by Communist guerrillas in 1946.³³ In order to combat the potentiality of a hostile takeover, Turkish leadership determined that it needed to find allied power that was sufficiently muscular to deter Soviet ambitions given how inadequate Turkey's own military was to handle such an invasion.³⁴

In addition to wanting to bolster itself against Soviet expansion, Turkey also desired to cement its ideological ties to the West.³⁵ With an identity as a secular and liberal nation, Turkey wished to closely align with comparable Western political systems and distinguish itself from Communist ideology.³⁶ Accordingly, in the eyes of Turkish leaders, NATO did not merely represent a defence coalition but also advanced desirable cultural and political norms.³⁷ These aspirations to distinguish itself from eastern states and join the West can best explain Turkey's actions throughout the Cold War, specifically its decision to send troops to aid in the Korean conflict.³⁸

When forces from North Korea crossed the 38th parallel and set off the Korean War, Turkey was quick to both condemn the attack as well as offer to send ground forces to defend South Korea.³⁹ The country of Turkey was united in its opposition to Communism and there was significant public support in the decision to send troops to Korea and help check Soviet

²⁷D.J.K., *Greece, Turkey, and N.A.T.O.*, 8 WORLD TODAY 162, 162 (1952).

²⁸*See id.*

²⁹*Id.* at 163.

³⁰*Id.*

³¹*See* Nedim Yalansiz, *Turkey-Middle East Relations in the Cold War Era and the Great Powers*, 4 HIST. STUD.: INT'L J. OF HIST. 393, 394 (2012).

³²Brown, *supra* note 21, at 97-98.

³³D.J.K., *supra* note 27, at 162.

³⁴Brown, *supra* note 21, at 98.

³⁵*See* Eylem Yilmaz & Pinar Bilgin, *Constructing Turkey's "Western" Identity during the Cold War: Discourses of the Intellectuals of Statecraft*, 61 INT'L J. 39, 44-45 (2005).

³⁶*See id.* at 45.

³⁷*Id.*

³⁸Brown, *supra* note 21, at 97.

³⁹*Id.* at 94.

aggression.⁴⁰ Accordingly, Turkey sent a full brigade—about 4,500 troops—to the Korean peninsula which was more than any other country besides the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada.⁴¹ These troops fought throughout the war and some were even maintained as a peacekeeping force after the armistice was signed.⁴²

IV. TURKEY’S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATO AND INVOLVEMENT WITH NATO MISSIONS

A. Cyprus Conflict

Turkey’s relationship with NATO countries, particularly the United States, developed strongly throughout the 1950s and early 1960s until June 5, 1964, when President Lyndon B. Johnson wrote a letter to Turkish officials warning them against interfering with the island of Cyprus.⁴³ The Republic of Cyprus was formed on August 16, 1960 under an agreement signed by representatives of both the Greek and Turkish communities who resided on the island.⁴⁴ This ethnically-mixed government collapsed soon thereafter on December 21, 1963 as Turkish Cypriots claimed that their government officials were not being given adequate protection.⁴⁵ Johnson warned that should Turkey invade the island and trigger a Soviet attack, Turkey’s actions could nullify the applicability of NATO defence commitments.⁴⁶ Angered by this position, Turkey refused to increase its troop commitment to NATO and withdrew Turkish soldiers from South Korea.⁴⁷

Agitations between Turkey and Cyprus erupted once again in 1974 when Greek military leaders staged a coup against Greek Cypriot President Makarios and occupied the presidential palace.⁴⁸ Soon after, Turkish troops invaded the northern portion island in order to support the Turkish Cypriot minority and subsequently gained control of roughly forty percent of Cypriot territory.⁴⁹ Following these actions, Congress passed a series of resolutions to cut off arms sales to Turkey.⁵⁰ These resolutions triggered on February 5, 1975 and caused deliveries of over \$200 million worth of arms purchases and grants to be suspended.⁵¹ Turkey felt that such an embargo belied the important role that it played in defending NATO’s southern flank as well as the Persian Gulf from a Soviet attack.⁵² In response, Turkey placed all U.S. military personnel in the

⁴⁰*See id.* at 96.

⁴¹*Id.* at 95.

⁴²*Id.* at 97.

⁴³Zalmay Khalilzad, *The Superpowers and the Northern Tier*, 4 INT’L SECURITY 6, 13 (1979).

⁴⁴Cihat Göktepe, *The Cyprus Crisis of 1967 and Its Effects on Turkey’s Foreign Relations*, 41 MIDDLE E. STUD. 431, 431 (2005).

⁴⁵*See id.*

⁴⁶Khalilzad, *supra* note 43, at 13-14.

⁴⁷*Id.* at 14.

⁴⁸David Souter, *An Island Apart: A Review of the Cyprus Problem*, 6 THIRD WORLD Q. 657, 664 (1984).

⁴⁹*Id.*

⁵⁰NASUH USLU, *THE TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 1947 AND 2003: THE HISTORY OF A DISTINCTIVE ALLIANCE* 211 (Susan Boriotti & Donna Dennis eds. 2003).

⁵¹*Id.*

⁵²Khalilzad, *supra* note 43, at 15.

country under Turkish control and limited its air base at Incirlik to “purely NATO” functions.⁵³ These restrictions lasted until the embargo was completely lifted in September 1978.⁵⁴

B. First Gulf War

When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, NATO forces were deployed to Turkey to monitor the crisis.⁵⁵ Forty-two jets from Germany, Belgium, and Italy were stationed in eastern Turkey solely for defensive measures in case Iraq attempted to attack Turkey.⁵⁶ These jets were placed in Turkey at the request of its leaders out of concern for Turkish national security.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Turkish Air Forces assisted NATO pilots in enforcing a “no-fly zone” in northern Iraq meant to protect the Kurdish minority.⁵⁸ Under Turkish supervision, pilots from the U.S., U.K., and France patrolled the region regularly to ensure that there were no unauthorised flights.⁵⁹ British and U.S. pilots—taking off from Turkish territory⁶⁰—continually monitored this zone until 2003 when the Iraq Invasion began.⁶¹ Finally, in contrast to NATO’s traditional defensive purposes, Turkey allowed the U.S. to launch bombing raids out of its Incirlik air base throughout the Gulf War in order to eliminate Iraqi missile launchers.⁶² This reliance on Turkey by NATO allies revealed exactly how beneficial and crucial Turkey’s agreement would be in military action in the region. It also points to how tense the relationship can be within NATO when Turkey is not as compliant to the wishes of the U.S. and the rest of the alliance.

C. Conflict in the Balkans

Turkey was very outspoken against the violence occurring in Bosnia in the 1990s and urged military intervention—including the use of its own troops and aircraft—to stop Serbian aggression.⁶³ Turkish jets were part of the NATO coalition that patrolled the skies over Bosnia in Operation Deny Flight, which was authorised by the UN to enforce a no-fly zone and shoot

⁵³*Id.*

⁵⁴See Uslu, *supra* note 50, at 212.

⁵⁵ *NATO Operations and Missions*, NATO (Jan. 14, 2015, 2:56 PM), http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52060.htm.

⁵⁶Clyde Haberman, *War in the Gulf: Turkey; Turkey’s Role in Air Assault Sets Off Fear of Retaliation*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 19, 1991, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/20/world/war-in-the-gulf-turkey-turkey-s-role-in-air-assault-sets-off-fear-of-retaliation.html?>

⁵⁷*NATO Operations & Missions*, *supra* note 55.

⁵⁸Murat Yetkin, *Turkey to Bargain With US Over No-Fly Zone*, HÜRRİYET DAILY NEWS, Oct. 3, 2014, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-bargain-with-us-over-no-fly-zone.aspx?pageID=449&nID=72478&NewsCatID=409>.

⁵⁹*Id.*

⁶⁰Sharon Otterman, *Iraq: U.S.-Turkey Relations*, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (Mar. 31, 2003), <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-us-turkey-relations/p7795#p10>.

⁶¹Daniel Byman, *What the No-Fly Zone in Iraq Reveals About the Challenges in Libya*, WASH. POST, Mar. 25, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/what-the-no-fly-zone-in-iraq-should-have-taught-us-about-the-challenges-in-libya/2011/03/23/AFk2t9VB_story.html.

⁶²Haberman, *supra* note 56.

⁶³James Yuenger, *Turkey Urges Forces in Bosnia*, CHI. TRIB., Feb. 28, 1993, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-02-28/news/9303186058_1_demirel-turkish-intervention-balkan.

down aircraft that infringed upon it.⁶⁴ This operation resulted in the first live combat for NATO allies when U.S. fighter jets shot down four Serbian bombers on February 28, 1994.⁶⁵

During the summer of 1995, the situation in Bosnia worsened with Serb-launched mortars killing 37 Bosnians civilians in a market in Sarajevo.⁶⁶ This attack prompted NATO to begin bombing Bosnian Serb targets and initiated what would become known as Operation Deliberate Force.⁶⁷ Turkey participated in this operation and provided sixteen F-16 jets to assist in coalition strikes.⁶⁸ Following the conclusion of this action, Turkey provided troops to support NATO peace-keeping operations Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilisation Force (SFOR) and assisted in reconstructions efforts in Sarajevo and Zenica.⁶⁹

Finally, in an effort to compel Serbian forces to end hostilities once and for all, on March 24, 1999, NATO initiated cruise missile strikes on Serbian targets in the Kosovo capital of Pristina as well as Belgrade.⁷⁰ Turkish aircraft assisted in this operation for air defence but did not undertake any offensive role.⁷¹ The reason for limiting Turkey's participation in direct strikes was due to NATO's decision to not assign such roles to regional players.⁷² Turkey also provided 940 troops to NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) meant to maintain peace.⁷³

D. War in Afghanistan

The terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 prompted the first invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.⁷⁴ On October 4th, after NATO had confirmed that the attacks had been committed by Al-Qaeda, it agreed to support the U.S. with eight different measures.⁷⁵ Included within these measures was Operation Active Endeavour, in which NATO's standing navy was sent to the Eastern Mediterranean to patrol for potential terrorist activity.⁷⁶ The initial military campaign in Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom, was not run through NATO, and NATO did not collectively become involved with direct efforts in Afghanistan until August

⁶⁴Karl Mueller, *The Demise of Yugoslavia and the Destruction of Bosnia: Strategic Causes, Effects, and Responses*, in DELIBERATE FORCE: A CASE STUDY IN EFFECTIVE AIR CAMPAIGNING. FINAL REPORT OF THE AIR UNIVERSITY BALKANS AIR CAMPAIGN STUDY 1, 19 (Robert C. Owen ed. (2000)).

⁶⁵*Id.* at 21.

⁶⁶*Id.* at 28-29.

⁶⁷*Id.* at 29.

⁶⁸*See id.* at 53.

⁶⁹*See* Nathalie Tocci, *Turkey's Neighbourhood Policy and EU Membership: Squaring the Circle of Turkish Foreign Policy*, 67 INT'L J. 65, 69 (2011).

⁷⁰Dino Kritsiotis, *The Kosovo Crisis and NATO's Application of Armed Force Against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, 49 INT'L & COMP. L. Q. 330, 330 (2000).

⁷¹KAREN DONFRIED, CONG. RESEARCH SERV., KOSOVO: INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO NATO AIR STRIKES 6 (1999).

⁷²*Id.*

⁷³ERIK JONES & SASKIA VAN GENUGTEN, *The EU's Accession Negotiations with Turkey from a Foreign Policy Perspective*, in THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY 60, 69 (2009).

⁷⁴*Invocation of Article 5 Confirmed*, NATO (Oct. 3, 2001), <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2001/1001/e1002a.htm>.

⁷⁵*See Countering Terrorism*, NATO (Jan. 27, 2015, 1:56 PM), http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_77646.htm.

⁷⁶*Id.*

2003 when it took over the UN-approved peacekeeping force, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).⁷⁷

Turkey has been involved in Afghanistan since 2001, but it did not participate in Operation Enduring Freedom.⁷⁸ It refused to allow its troops to engage in direct counterterrorism activities and Turkish forces were instead only involved with providing logistical support to allied forces and training Afghan security personnel.⁷⁹ Turkey has taken command of the ISAF force twice (June 2002–February 2003 and February 2005–August 2005) and, during the latter phase, Turkey maintained its largest presence in Afghanistan with 1,450 Turkish personnel, commanding a total of 8,000 personnel from 30 different countries.⁸⁰ As of June 2013, Turkey had approximately 1,110 troops in Afghanistan, placing it 8th among the 50 nations involved with ISAF.⁸¹

The ISAF was under NATO leadership from August 2003 until December 2014, and on January 1, 2015 it was replaced by Operation Resolute Force which is a non-combat mission designed to provide support to Afghan security forces.⁸² On January 6, 2015, the Turkish Parliament authorised Turkish troops to participate in this mission for the next two years.⁸³ The motion passed by Turkish lawmakers also allowed foreign military personnel to be transported to Afghanistan through Turkish territory.⁸⁴

E. Iraq War

Shortly before the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Turkey invoked Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty, fearing for its security amid the potential armed conflict in Iraq.⁸⁵ As an organisation, NATO took no part in this conflict; however, it did work to bolster the defence of Turkey's southeastern border through surveillance aircraft and missile defences.⁸⁶ Specifically, both the Netherlands and United States provided defensive Patriot missile batteries.⁸⁷ These measures lasted from February–May 2003.⁸⁸

⁷⁷ James Sperling & Mark Webber, *NATO: From Kosovo to Kabul*, 85 INT'L AFF. (ROYAL INST. OF INT'L AFF. 1944) 491, 500-01 (2009).

⁷⁸ *Turkey*, U.S. CENT. COMMAND, <http://www.centcom.mil/en/about-centcom-en/coalition-countries-en/turkey-en> (last visited Mar. 2, 2015).

⁷⁹ Karen Kaya, *Turkey's Role in Afghanistan and Afghan Stabilization*, MIL. REV., 2013, at 23, 23.

⁸⁰ *See id.* at 24.

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² *NATO Operations and Missions*, *supra* note 55.

⁸³ *Turkey Approves Motion to Join New NATO Mission in Afghanistan*, HÜRRIYET DAILY NEWS, Jan. 7, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-approves-motion-to-join-new-nato-mission-in-afghanistan-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=76591&NewsCatID=359>.

⁸⁴ *Id.*

⁸⁵ *NATO and the 2003 Campaign Against Iraq*, NATO (Nov. 11, 2014, 10:33 AM), http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_51977.htm.

⁸⁶ *Id.*

⁸⁷ *Id.*

⁸⁸ *Id.*

Controversially, Turkey did not allow U.S. troops to operate out of Turkish bases and ports for the invasion in Iraq.⁸⁹ The vote to authorise such action failed in the Turkish Parliament by three votes.⁹⁰ This action denied the use of Turkish territory to approximately 62,000 American troops and drew much criticism from the U.S. concerning Turkey's status as an ally.⁹¹ As one U.S. commander commented, Turkey's refusal to allow U.S. access made it impossible "to have a credible ground campaign" in Northern Iraq at the onset of the war.⁹² The Turkish Parliament did, however, allow the coalition to use Turkish airspace to attack Saddam Hussein's regime.⁹³ This debate among allies would foreshadow tensions to come in the years ahead.

F. Syrian Conflict

Following the Arab Spring, in March 2011 protests erupted in Damascus and the southern city of Deraa demanding the release of political prisoners.⁹⁴ These events prompted a crackdown by Syrian government security forces that led to the deaths of multiple civilians.⁹⁵ Then-Prime Minister Erdogan was quick to denounce the government's handling of these protests and condemned Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's "inhumane" actions.⁹⁶ Prior to the uprisings, Turkey and Syria had been close allies;⁹⁷ however, al-Assad's actions prompted Turkey to shift its position and even allow members of the main government opposition group, the Free Syrian Army, to launch attacks from within the Turkish border.⁹⁸ As president, Erdogan has continued to undermine the al-Assad regime and views his departure as a top priority for stabilisation in the region.⁹⁹

On June 22, 2012, Syrian military forces shot down a Turkish military aircraft over the Mediterranean that was carrying two crew members.¹⁰⁰ Turkish officials claimed that the plane was shot down without warning from Syria, and that the aircraft was unarmed and clearly

⁸⁹ *Turkey Rejects U.S. Troop Proposal*, CNN.COM (Mar. 1, 2003, 9:49 PM), <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/01/sprj.irq.main/>.

⁹⁰ Doug Penhalegon, *The Story Behind Turkey's 'No' Vote on Iraq in 2003*, WASH. REV. OF TURKISH & EURASIAN AFF., June 2012, available at <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/the-story-behind-turkeys-no-vote-on-iraq-in-2003.html>.

⁹¹ Dexter Filkins & Joel Brinkley, *Turkish Lawmakers May Reconsider American Presence*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 2, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/02/international/worldspecial/02CND-POLI.html>.

⁹² Richard Boudreaux, *Turkey Grants Allies Airspace Rights*, L.A. TIMES, Mar. 21, 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/mar/21/news/war-turkey21>.

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ *See Syria Profile*, BBC NEWS (Feb. 18, 2015, 10:40 PM), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703995>.

⁹⁵ *Id.*

⁹⁶ *Turkish PM: Syria Crackdown Inhumane*, AL JAZEERA (June 10, 2011, 7:31 PM), <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2011/06/201161091735838652.html>.

⁹⁷ Marc Champion, *Turkey Takes Harder Line on Assad*, WALL ST. J., Aug. 1, 2011, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111903520204576481990885796976>

⁹⁸ Liam Stack, *In Slap at Syria, Turkey Shelters Anti-Assad Fighters*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 27, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/28/world/europe/turkey-is-sheltering-antigovernment-syrian-militia.html>.

⁹⁹ *See* Karen DeYoung, *Plan to expand bombing campaign in Syria stalls amid U.S.-Turkey disagreements*, WASH. POST, Jan. 18, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/plan-to-expand-bombing-campaign-in-syria-stalls-amid-us-turkey-disagreements/2015/01/18/ef319bb8-9e83-11e4-a7ee-526210d665b4_story.html.

¹⁰⁰ Dalal Mawad and Rick Gladstone, *Syria Shoots Down Turkish Warplane, Fraying Ties Further*, N.Y. TIMES, June 22, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/23/world/middleeast/mass-killing-reported-in-syria-apparently-a-rebel-ambush.html>.

identifiable as Turkish.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, while conceding that the aircraft had momentarily strayed into Syrian territory, Turkish leadership claimed that Syrian forces downed it over international rather than Syrian territorial waters.¹⁰² This incident prompted Turkey to consult with NATO allies under Article 4 in order to bolster its defence against potential Syrian aggression.¹⁰³ Per the requirements of Article 4, representatives from NATO countries met to discuss the occurrence and ultimately condemned Syria's actions "in the strongest terms."¹⁰⁴ NATO leaders did not promise any action in response as they did not believe that the situation between the two countries would escalate.¹⁰⁵

On October 3, 2012, a mortar shell launched from Syria landed in a Turkish border town and killed five civilians.¹⁰⁶ Turkey once again invoked Article 4 under the North Atlantic Treaty out of concern for its territorial security.¹⁰⁷ Turkey subsequently requested that NATO supply it with Patriot missile batteries as it had done in 2003 before the Iraq War.¹⁰⁸ In December 2012, NATO agreed to this request, and six Patriot missile batteries were provided by the U.S., Germany, and the Netherlands respectively.¹⁰⁹ At the beginning of 2015, the Dutch withdrew their batteries, which were subsequently replaced by Spanish Patriot missiles.¹¹⁰

G. Nuclear Sharing

As part of NATO's nuclear network, Turkey contains approximately 60-70 U.S. nuclear bombs at its Incirlik air base.¹¹¹ Turkey has hosted U.S. tactical nuclear bombs since the Cold War to serve as a deterrent against Soviet aggression.¹¹² The majority of these bombs are designed for U.S. aircraft; however, there is no American fighter wing based at Incirlik and

¹⁰¹Gül Tüysüz, *Syrian Downing of Turkish Plane Condemned; NATO to Meet*, CNN.COM (June 15, 2012, 7:02 AM), <http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/24/world/meast/turkey-syria-plane/>.

¹⁰²Eric Schmitt & Sebnem Arsu, *Backed by NATO, Turkey Steps up Warning to Syria*, N.Y. TIMES, June 26, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/27/world/middleeast/turkey-seeks-nato-backing-in-syria-dispute.html?pagewanted=all>.

¹⁰³ Joe Parkinson & Nour Malas, *Turkish-Syrian Tensions Rise*, WALL ST. J., June 25 2012, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304870304577486271303869602>.

¹⁰⁴ *Turkey Hardens Military Position After Syria Downs Jet*, CNN.COM (June 27, 2012, 12:12 AM), <http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/26/world/meast/turkey-syria-plane/>.

¹⁰⁵*Id.*

¹⁰⁶Liz Sly, *Turkey Strikes Back at Syria After Shell Kills at Least 5 Turkish Civilians*, WASH. POST, Oct. 3, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/aleppo-triple-bombing-kills-at-least-31/2012/10/03/616b0c8c-0d6d-11e2-ba6c-07bd866eb71a_story.html.

¹⁰⁷Adrian Croft, *NATO Demands Halt to Syria Aggression Against Turkey*, REUTERS (Oct. 3, 2012, 6:04 PM), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/03/us-syria-crisis-alliance-idUSBRE8921F220121003>.

¹⁰⁸Joe Parkinson & Stephen Fidler, *Turkey Asks NATO to Deploy Patriot Missiles*, WALL ST. J., Nov. 21, 2012, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323713104578132923864128016>.

¹⁰⁹*NATO Support to Turkey: Background and Timeline*, NATO (Feb. 19, 2013, 8:54 AM), http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_92555.htm?

¹¹⁰*Spain Aims to Ensure Turkey's Security: Spanish Minister*, HÜRRIYET DAILY NEWS, Jan. 16, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/spain-aims-to-ensure-turkeys-security-spanish-minister-----.aspx?pageID=238&nID=77056&NewsCatID=510>.

¹¹¹Robert S. Norris & Hans M. Kristensen, *U.S. Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe, 2011*, 67 BULL. OF THE ATOMIC SCIENTISTS, January/February 2011, 64, 69 (2010)

¹¹²Alexandra Bell & Benjamin Loehrke, *The Status of U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Turkey*, BULL. OF THE ATOMIC SCIENTISTS (Nov. 11, 2009, 12:47 PM), <http://thebulletin.org/status-us-nuclear-weapons-turkey>.

Turkey has turned down requests to establish one.¹¹³ If the weapons ever needed to be deployed, U.S. air craft would have to arrive from other bases to pick up the bombs.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the Turkish Air Force, while nuclear capable, is not certified to conduct NATO nuclear missions for the few bombs that are allocated for delivery by Turkish aircraft.¹¹⁵ Starting in 2015, Turkey's F-16s are scheduled to be replaced over the next ten years by F-35 Joint Strike Fighters that are nuclear-capable.¹¹⁶ Presently, however, the nuclear bombs at Incirlik are limited in their military significance; thus, Turkey's nuclear posture within NATO is unique and represents more of a symbolic measure in the post-Cold War era.¹¹⁷

V. TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS POTENTIALLY ADVERSE TO NATO

A. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

President Erdogan has created controversy for various comments he made to Vladimir Putin about his interest in joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).¹¹⁸ The SCO was created as a counterweight to NATO and is seen by many as an “anti-American bulwark.”¹¹⁹ Currently, there are six member states: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.¹²⁰ On June 7, 2012, Turkey was accepted as a “dialogue partner,” giving it a greater symbolic connection with the SCO.¹²¹ Turkey is the first NATO member to reach such status with the SCO, and the U.S. Department has commented that were Turkey to be accepted as a full member of SCO, it could make for an “interesting” situation.¹²² Turkish leaders have previously commented that seeking membership with the SCO is not mutually exclusive to membership with NATO.¹²³

B. Russia

Beyond the SCO, and, in spite of a tumultuous history between Russia and Turkey that includes fundamental disputes about President Bashar al-Assad's future in Syria and aggression towards Ukraine, Russia and Turkey have developed momentum towards improved relations. Before Russia invaded and annexed Crimea, Russian-Turkish relations had drastically improved in a number of ways. Trade between the two reached \$32 billion in 2013 (mostly Turkish

¹¹³Norris & Kristensen, *supra* note 111, at 69-70.

¹¹⁴*Id.* at 70.

¹¹⁵*See* Bell & Loehrke, *supra* note 112.

¹¹⁶Norris & Kristensen, *supra* note 111, at 70.

¹¹⁷*See id.*

¹¹⁸*Turkish PM Erdoğan to Putin: Take Us to Shanghai*, HÜRRIYET DAILY NEWS, Nov. 22, 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-pm-erdogan-to-putin-take-us-to-shanghai.aspx?pageID=238&nID=58348&NewsCatID=359>.

¹¹⁹Harvey Morris, *Turkey Hints at a Breakup with Europe*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 6, 2013, 9:00 AM), <http://rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/06/turkey-hints-at-a-breakup-with-europe/>

¹²⁰*See* SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORG., <http://www.sectsc.org/EN123/> (last visited Mar. 20, 2015).

¹²¹*SCO Accepts Afghanistan as Observer, Turkey as Dialogue Partner*, CHINADAILY.COM (June 7, 2012, 5:17 PM), http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013xivisitcenterasia/2012-06/07/content_16933128.htm.

¹²²Ariel Cohen, *Mr. Erdogan Goes to Shanghai*, HERITAGE FOUND. (Feb. 18, 2013), <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2013/2/mr-erdogan-goes-to-shanghai>.

¹²³Enis Berberoğlu, *EU Not a Must for Turkey: PM Erdoğan*, HÜRRIYET DAILY NEWS, Feb. 6, 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/PrintNews.aspx?PageID=383&NID=40567>.

imports of Russian energy), making Russia Turkey's second-biggest trading partner behind Germany.¹²⁴ In the trading of services, Turkey became Russia's number one trading partner, according to Russian Central Bank statistics.¹²⁵ Turkey also became the number one destination for Russian tourists, with an estimated four million tourists in 2013.¹²⁶

Politically, Russia and Turkey established the High Level Cooperation Council in 2010, which has led to regular consultation on regional issues between the countries' officials.¹²⁷ Despite Turkey's strained relations with Russia dating back to the end of World War II, communications between Turkey and Vladimir Putin "appear to be far more regular and substantive than Putin's exchanges with any other NATO member, especially after the alliance shut down the NATO-Russia Council" in 2014.¹²⁸ Vladimir Putin stated to Turkish media ahead of his visit in December 2014:

"Turkey-Russia relations remain stable, maintaining continuity and not depending on the current situation. Naturally our positions on some issues may not be exactly the same or even differ. This is natural for states carrying out an independent foreign policy."¹²⁹

What does this mean for the relationship between NATO and Turkey? Increased tensions and more and more questions about the sustainability of the over half-century-long alliance. Although Turkish President Erdogan presses Putin on Crimea, Turkey has refused to join Western efforts to punish the Russians over their actions in Ukraine.¹³⁰ This more moderate approach is radically different from the other governments close to these tensions—e.g. Central European NATO members—who have tried to push NATO and the United States to do more, including U.S. and/or NATO troop deployments in their territory.¹³¹ This is a classic example, however, of how Turkey's role in NATO as a non-EU member changes the dynamic. Because the U.S. and EU have thus far dealt with Putin and Russia in a primarily economic manner instead of through military action, there is not significant desire or need from the West to push Turkey into confronting Moscow.¹³²

This is good news for Russia, but potentially problematic for a long-term, sustainable role for Turkey in NATO. Politically and symbolically on the world stage, Turkey's reluctant role allows Russia to present NATO as non-unified in its resistance to Russian actions in Ukraine.¹³³ Since the founding of NATO, Russia has tried to create tension and division within the alliance

¹²⁴Paul J. Saunders, *Russia, Turkey Inch Toward Improved Relations*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REP. (Nov. 17, 2014, 4:51 PM), <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/11/17/russia-turkey-inch-toward-improved-relations>.

¹²⁵*Id.*

¹²⁶*See id.* This increase in tourism is largely due to Russia and Turkey agreeing on visa-free travel for their citizens, allowing stays of one to three months. In the alternate, the EU and Turkey have attempted and planned out visa-free travel but have yet to finalise an agreement. *Id.*

¹²⁷*Id.*

¹²⁸*Id.*

¹²⁹*Erdogan Hosts Putin to Tighten Turkey-Russia Alliance*, BUS. INSIDER (Dec. 1, 2014, 7:23 AM), <http://www.businessinsider.com/afp-erdogan-hosts-putin-to-tighten-turkey-russia-alliance-2014-11>.

¹³⁰*See* Saunders, *supra* note 124.

¹³¹*Id.*

¹³²*Id.*

¹³³*Id.*

to further its own interests and influence.¹³⁴ This current situation proves why this is so beneficial to Russia and its exertion of influence in the region—if NATO were to ever consider military action to restore Crimea to Ukraine or otherwise engaged Russia, Turkey’s geographical position would pose the greatest threat to Russia’s naval base at Sevastopol in addition to being key given its control of access to the Black Sea.¹³⁵ In short, “[a] Turkey unwilling to participate in such a confrontation could sharply limit NATO’s options.”¹³⁶

If any of these high-stakes scenarios occurred, and Turkey’s reluctance forced the United States and NATO to avoid their preferred military action, Turkey’s place as a part of the NATO alliance could hang in the balance.

C. Iran

Similar to its relationship with Russia, Turkey has taken strides to shore up political and economic ties with Iran, notwithstanding its differing foreign policy positions.¹³⁷ Although President Erdogan recently criticized Iran for attempting to “dominate” the Middle East,¹³⁸ he has been willing to put aside his differences with Iran in order to capitalise on potential trade benefits.¹³⁹ Assuming the Iran nuclear deal is finalised and sanctions are lifted, Turkey is aiming to increase bilateral trade between the two nations from \$14 billion to \$30 billion by the end of 2016.¹⁴⁰

This recent stint of cooperation is just another chapter in Turkey’s complicated relationship with Iran as both countries attempt to gain greater influence in the Middle East.¹⁴¹ Although Turkey wholly opposes Iran’s position on Syria and its support for President Bashar al-Assad,¹⁴² it also, as a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council in 2010, voted against a U.S.-backed resolution that would have placed further sanctions on Iran for its nuclear program.¹⁴³ It allowed the U.S. to install a sophisticated radar system in 2011 to protect against potential Iranian missile attacks,¹⁴⁴ and then subsequently entered into a “gas-for-gold” scheme with Iran whereby Turkey exported nearly \$13 billion of gold to Tehran in exchange for Iranian

¹³⁴*Id.*

¹³⁵*Id.*

¹³⁶*Id.*

¹³⁷See Khashayar Joneidi, *Turkey and Iran Opt to Shelve Mutual Suspicions*, BBC NEWS (Apr. 10, 2015), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32210257>.

¹³⁸*Turkish President Erdoğan Says Can't Tolerate Iran Bid to Dominate Middle East*, HÜRRIYET DAILY NEWS, Mar. 27, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-president-erdogan-says-cant-tolerate-iran-bid-to-dominate-middle-east.aspx?PageID=238&NID=80252&NewsCatID=510>.

¹³⁹Joneidi, *supra* note 137.

¹⁴⁰*Id.*

¹⁴¹See Yigal Schleifer, *Turkey vs. Iran: The Rivalry for Dominance of the Middle East*, ATLANTIC MONTHLY (Feb. 26, 2012), <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/02/turkey-vs-iran-the-rivalry-for-dominance-of-the-middle-east/253567/>.

¹⁴²Ceren Kenar, *Mr. Erdogan Goes to Tehran*, FOREIGN POL’Y (Apr. 10, 2015), <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/10/is-turkey-friends-with-iran-or-at-war/>.

¹⁴³*Id.* Turkey’s vote against the sanctions came after the U.S. rejected a deal that it, along with Brazil, had brokered with Iran over its nuclear program. The U.S. dismissed the deal because it allowed Iran to continue with its uranium enrichment. See *Text: Powers Dismiss Iran Fuel Offer Before U.N. Vote*, REUTERS (June 9, 2010, 10:02 AM), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/06/09/us-nuclear-iran-response-text-idUSTRE6582W120100609>.

¹⁴⁴Thom Shanker, *U.S. Hails Deal With Turkey on Missile Shield*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 15, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/16/world/europe/turkey-accepts-missile-radar-for-nato-defense-against-iran.html>.

natural gas and oil.¹⁴⁵ This behaviour continued despite the fact that the Obama administration explicitly tightened sanctions on Iran's trade of precious metals in 2012.¹⁴⁶

Although Turkey has stated that it opposes Iran's development of a nuclear weapon,¹⁴⁷ it also has much to gain economically if the sanctions against Iran are lifted.¹⁴⁸ Turkey's conflicted relationship with Iran once again poses an interesting challenge to NATO and undermines Turkey's reliability as an ally. Turkey's actions toward Iran show that it is willing to put its own interests above those of the West, even while it is all too eager to accept NATO's military prowess when Iran makes Turkey feel threatened. Rather than take a firm stance against Iran and its problematic nuclear program, Turkey has instead chosen to partner with Iran to fill its coffers. Accordingly, Turkey appears to be playing a dangerous game that will ultimately undermine NATO's goal of a non-nuclear Iran.

D. The Syrian Conflict and Turkey's Relationship with the Kurdistan Worker's Party

Before discussing Turkish foreign policy decisions relating to ISIS and how that impacts Turkey's role in NATO, it is vitally important to understand Turkey's relationship with the Kurdish people groups in Iraq and the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK).

The PKK was founded by Abdullah Öcalan in late 1978 with the stated goal of improving Kurdish rights.¹⁴⁹ To further this aim, Öcalan and his followers called for an independent Kurdish state and subsequently launched an armed attack in one of Turkey's southeastern provinces in August 1984.¹⁵⁰ This attack spurred a conflict that has run for the last three decades and claimed approximately 40,000 lives.¹⁵¹ In 2013, Öcalan called for a ceasefire between the PKK and the Turkish government which paved the way for a tentative peace between the two entities.¹⁵² This agreement was recently strained, however, when Turkish warplanes bombed PKK camps in southeastern Turkey in November 2014 after PKK affiliates engaged in "harassment fire" of Turkish military outposts.¹⁵³ The PKK is currently listed as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the U.S., and the European Union.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁵ Jonathan Schanzer & Mark Dubowitz, *Iran's Turkish Gold Rush*, FOREIGN POL'Y (Dec. 26, 2013), <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/26/irans-turkish-gold-rush/>.

¹⁴⁶*Id.*

¹⁴⁷ Gül: *Turkey Will Not Accept Iran Possessing Nuclear Weapons*, TODAY'S ZAMAN (Jan. 3, 2013, 12:31 PM), http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_gul-turkey-will-not-accept-iran-possessing-nuclear-weapons_302965.html.

¹⁴⁸ Joneidi, *supra* note 137.

¹⁴⁹ Sevim Songün, *History of PKK in Turkey*, HÜRRIYET DAILY NEWS, Sept. 14, 2009, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=history-for-the-pkk-in-turkey-2009-09-14>.

¹⁵⁰*Id.*

¹⁵¹ Joe Parkinson, *Growing Kurdish Unity Helps West, Worries Turkey*, WALL ST. J., Oct. 22, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/iraqs-kurdish-regional-government-set-to-approve-kobani-reinforcement-plan-1413978673>.

¹⁵² Constanze Letsch, *Kurds Dare to Hope as PKK Fighters' Ceasefire With Turkey Takes Hold*, GUARDIAN, May 7, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/07/kurds-pkk-turkey-peace-talks>.

¹⁵³ Emre Peker, *Turkish Warplanes Bomb Kurdish PKK in Turkey*, WALL ST. J., Oct. 14, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/turkish-warplanes-bomb-kurdish-pkk-in-turkey-1413296160>.

¹⁵⁴*Id.*

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In 2013, as the Syrian conflict accelerated, the United States and the West's stated goal was to remove President al-Assad from power, insisting that the succeeding government guarantee ethnic and religious pluralism.¹⁵⁵ As in many other conflicts in the region, the United States leaned heavily upon Turkey to usher in this solution. But Turkey's ongoing conflict with Kurds in the region, who are part of the diverse coalition of anti-Assad forces, creates more sectarian strife during a time when the West is trying to create a peaceful and pluralistic society.¹⁵⁶ Turkey, instead, supports the Muslim Brotherhood-controlled Syrian National Council, thwarting U.S. efforts to empower non-Islamist alternatives to President al-Assad.¹⁵⁷ During this time period, Turkey provided military aid and shelter to Sunni rebels while also doing very little about the jihadists in the region who were fighting al-Assad and targeting Turkey's Kurdish enemies.¹⁵⁸

As a NATO ally, Turkey should have been aiding Western efforts to combat radical jihadists and supporting NATO allies in their efforts to oust President al-Assad. But strange bedfellows combatting the Syrian government have caused strained relationships between Turkey and its NATO allies, as Turkey has attempted to leverage sectarian violence to enhance its own power.¹⁵⁹ This leaves the United States and other NATO allies blaming Turkey's lax border control for the increasing number of radical jihadists who join ISIS by traveling through Turkey into Syria.¹⁶⁰

In the fall of 2014, Turkey finally authorised its military to conduct operations into Syria and Iraq in addition to allowing foreign troops combating ISIS to operate out of Turkish bases.¹⁶¹ Western allies such as the United States and other members of NATO welcomed this resolution as a sign that Turkey was finally willing to work in conjunction with the rest of the anti-ISIS coalition.¹⁶² Despite this optimism, Turkey's changed policies could have less to do with the defeat of ISIS and more to do with its long-established foreign policy goals of toppling the al-Assad regime in Syria and defeating Kurdish separatists closely linked with the PKK.¹⁶³ One sign of this can be found in the resolution passed by Turkish Parliament, which stated "the terrorist elements of the outlawed PKK still exist in northern Iraq."¹⁶⁴ This resolution gave no indication that Turkey itself would institute any anti-ISIS operations, but instead would cooperate with the campaign in hopes that the U.S. would agree to a no-fly zone in Syria.¹⁶⁵ Turkey believes that a no-fly zone would undercut al-Assad's air force, boosting rebels to

¹⁵⁵ Halil M. Karaveli, *Turkey, the Unhelpful Ally*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 27, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/27/opinion/turkey-the-unhelpful-ally.html>.

¹⁵⁶ *Id.*

¹⁵⁷ *Id.*

¹⁵⁸ *Id.*

¹⁵⁹ *Id.*

¹⁶⁰ Tim Arango, *Killings Deepen Rift as Turks Accuse Netanyahu of 'Crimes Against Humanity'*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 15, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/16/world/middleeast/netanyahu-charlie-hebdo-rally-appearance-prompts-turkey-dispute.html>.

¹⁶¹ Gönül Tol, *Turkey's Tough Choice: Take on ISIS or the PKK?*, CNN.COM (Oct. 9, 2014, 8:34 AM), <http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/07/opinion/turkey-isis-pkk/>.

¹⁶² *Id.*

¹⁶³ *Id.*

¹⁶⁴ *Id.*

¹⁶⁵ *Id.*

potentially defeat him while also allowing a Turkish military presence that could defeat Kurdish fighters in northern Syria linked to the PKK.¹⁶⁶

Turkish military action against the PKK would directly contradict the United States' goal of defeating ISIS. The PKK, the Peshmerga, and the People's Protection Unit (the PKK-linked Kurdish militia in Syria) have stood united against ISIS, providing "the West's best hope for on-the-ground troops," and leading multiple Western powers to discuss removing the PKK from terror lists.¹⁶⁷ Concerned that weapons sent to the Peshmerga could end up in the hands of the PKK, President Erdogan continues to view the PKK as potentially becoming empowered as the rest of the world looks for local fighters against ISIS.¹⁶⁸ Erdogan stated in early October 2014, "While the ISIS terror organization is causing turmoil in the Middle East, there has been ongoing PKK terror in my country for the last 32 years, and yet the world was never troubled by it. Why? Because this terror organization did not carry the name 'Islam.'"¹⁶⁹

E. ISIS

Because of Turkey's varied interests relating to the Syrian government and certain segments of the anti-Assad coalition, Turkey has proved quite frustrating to members of the United States-led coalition against ISIS. As part of its overarching strategy, members of ISIS have been trying to amass territory for their caliphate within both Syria (against President al-Assad's government) and Iraq (against the Iraqi government), targeting Christians and Kurds along the way.¹⁷⁰

For Turkey, this means that radical jihadist extremists are fighting against its enemies. But as an ally of the United States and NATO, anti-ISIS forces need Turkey to shift its focus and actively work to thwart the ambitions of the Islamic State. Therefore, Turkey's position in NATO is strained due to its reluctance to fully commit to fighting ISIS due to Turkey's goals of bringing down Assad's regime in Syria and the PKK. In late November 2014, Turkey's main Kurdish party accused the government of being partially complicit with ISIS militants within Turkey's borders.¹⁷¹ Despite the Turkish government refuting such claims, many activists within Turkey think otherwise:

Mustafa Bali, a Kobani-based activist, told the Associated Press that ISIS fighters have taken positions in the grain silos on the Turkish side of the border and to coordinate and launch attacks along the border near the crossing point. "It is now clear that Turkey is openly cooperating with Daesh," said Bali, using the Arabic acronym [for] ISIS.

¹⁶⁶*Id.*

¹⁶⁷*Id.*

¹⁶⁸*Id.*

¹⁶⁹*Id.*

¹⁷⁰ Graeme Wood, *What ISIS Really Wants*, ATLANTIC MONTHLY (Mar. 2015), available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

¹⁷¹ Allen McDuffee, *Activists: ISIS Is Now Launching Attacks From Inside Turkey*, ATLANTIC MONTHLY (Nov. 29, 2014), available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/11/turkey-denies-isis-is-operating-from-its-side-of-the-border/383264/>.

“As we have been pointing out for months, this once more proves that Islamic State is being supported (from within Turkey),” Turkey’s pro-Kurdish HDP party said in a statement.¹⁷²

There are good reasons for the scepticism surrounding Turkey’s relationship with ISIS. In September 2014, after three months in captivity, Turkish intelligence agents brought dozens of hostages abducted by ISIS back to Turkey.¹⁷³ In the aftermath of this suspicious occurrence, Turkey seemed reluctant to condemn the actions of ISIS, which subsequently raised questions about whether Turkey had negotiated a deal with the terrorist organisation.¹⁷⁴

This is problematic for a variety of reasons now, as well as for some potentially dangerous, alliance-altering reasons in the future. Although Turkey’s border with the ISIS-run region of Syria is formally closed, smugglers use thousands of open roads within Turkish territory, charging only \$20 dollars per person.¹⁷⁵ This porous border problem made headlines when Hayat Boumeddiene, the partner of an ISIS-supporting terrorist linked to the Charlie Hebdo shootings, used this route to escape from Turkey into ISIS-controlled territory in Syria.¹⁷⁶ Additionally, the three men arrested in New York City trying to join ISIS were planning on traveling through Turkey as well. This border has been porous and open since the conflict began in Syria, and Turkey wanted to allow the rebels easy access in and out of Turkey.¹⁷⁷ Unfortunately, some of those rebels include ISIS affiliates.

More recently, as Turkey has tried to make efforts to help the United States and the coalition fighting ISIS, they have deported 1,100 foreigners suspected of trying to join ISIS.¹⁷⁸ Western officials say that Turkish officials now usually act on information and detain suspects; however, many jihadists still make it through.¹⁷⁹ Smugglers talk about ISIS spies and killers inside Turkey, creating an environment where the Turks do not wish to make problems for ISIS because they fear the repercussions the Islamic State might bring.¹⁸⁰ In addition, Turkish officials estimate that at least 1,000 Turks have joined ISIS.¹⁸¹

F. Israel

The diplomatic relationship between the West’s two largest allies in the Middle East, Turkey and Israel, has been stalled since 2010 when Israeli mistakes resulted in a deadly raid on an aid ship sailing from Turkey to Gaza.¹⁸² Nine activists—eight Turks and one American of Turkish descent—were killed in that 2010 raid on the aid ship trying to run the naval blockade

¹⁷²*Id.*

¹⁷³*Id.*

¹⁷⁴*Id.*

¹⁷⁵*Id.*

¹⁷⁶Yaroslav Trofimov, *Porous Syria-Turkey Border Poses Challenge in Fight Against Islamic State*, WALL ST. J., Feb. 19, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/porous-syria-turkey-border-poses-challenge-in-fight-against-islamic-state-1424334057>.

¹⁷⁷*Id.*

¹⁷⁸*Id.*

¹⁷⁹*Id.*

¹⁸⁰*Id.*

¹⁸¹Ceylan Yeginsu, *ISIS Draws a Steady Stream of Recruits From Turkey*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 15, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/16/world/europe/turkey-is-a-steady-source-of-isis-recruits.html>.

¹⁸²See Arango, *supra* note 160.

on supplies to Gaza.¹⁸³ This action exacerbated already icy relations between the two nations stemming from the 2008 Gaza war.¹⁸⁴

In 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry began working with Turkey to normalise relations with Israel.¹⁸⁵ This followed upon the work of President Obama brokering an agreement earlier in 2013 to restore ties.¹⁸⁶ Contrary to the spirit of this agreement, however, then-Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan followed up the settlement by boasting of Turkish power and influence in the region.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, Turkish officials behind the scenes of these negotiations insisted on preconditions for restoring full diplomatic ties with Israel, including the “lifting” of the Israeli embargo on Gaza for civilian goods, and the settling of compensation for the 2010 incident.¹⁸⁸

More recent events have only aggrandised the tensions between Turkey and Israel, placing the United States and other NATO powers in a difficult position at a time when conflicts require what few Middle East allies they have to be reliable and supportive. In the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attacks, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu compared the jihadist gunmen in Paris with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying both were guilty of “crimes against humanity.”¹⁸⁹ Turkish President Erdogan also criticised Netanyahu for marching alongside other world leaders in Paris the weekend after the attacks, accusing Israel of “waging state terror” in Gaza.¹⁹⁰ Erdogan stated, “I, of course, find it hard to understand how he dared to go there. First, give an account of the children, the women that you have massacred.”¹⁹¹

These escalating tensions are not surprising given the past few years, during which Erdogan has “further distanced himself from Turkey’s secular past, seeking to burnish his Islamist credentials and put Turkey forward as an exemplar for the Muslim world, . . . increasingly cast[ing] Turkey as a defender of the Palestinians and a supporter of Hamas.”¹⁹² During a time in which Hamas has been delegitimised and distanced from many supporters in the Middle East, Turkey continues to defend Hamas publicly and provide financial assistance privately.¹⁹³ Furthermore, Saleh al-Aroui, the founder of the Qassam Brigades—Hamas’s armed wing in the West Bank—lives in Turkey and is reported to have been involved in financing and planning extreme militant activity in the region.¹⁹⁴

VI. THE FUTURE FOR TURKEY & NATO

When NATO was formed, the United States and the Western powers in Europe had many reasons to want Turkey as a full-fledged NATO member. With the Soviet Union showing

¹⁸³Michael R. Gordon & Isabel Kershner, *Kerry Asks Turkey to Act on Relations With Israel*, N.Y. TIMES, April 7, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/08/world/europe/kerry-urges-turkey-and-israel-to-restore-ties.html>.

¹⁸⁴See Arango, supra note 160.

¹⁸⁵Gordan & Kershner, supra note 183.

¹⁸⁶*Id.*

¹⁸⁷*Id.*

¹⁸⁸*Id.*

¹⁸⁹See Arango, supra note 160.

¹⁹⁰*Id.*

¹⁹¹*Id.*

¹⁹²*Id.*

¹⁹³Mirren Gidda, *Hamas Still Has Some Friends Left*, TIME.COM (July 25, 2014), <http://time.com/3033681/hamas-gaza-palestine-israel-egypt/>.

¹⁹⁴*Id.*

aggression anywhere and in any way that it could, Turkey served as a rare ally whose geopolitical positioning proved helpful for any number of offensive and defensive operations against communist activity. Over the past six decades, Turkey has received numerous benefits of its NATO membership, including protection of its sovereign integrity against Soviet threats and conflicts arising in the Middle East. During the first Gulf War, Turkey's role in NATO proved how helpful it could be while also revealing how non-compliance could severely complicate the alliance in the future.

In the post-9/11 world in which we now live, where Russia once again feels emboldened to defy the West and radical jihadists complicate the centuries-long sectarian rivalries in the Middle East, Turkey's interests continue to slowly diverge away from those of the United States and the other NATO powers—whether it relates to Israeli-Palestinian affairs, the Syrian conflict, or stopping ISIS.

At this stage, however, both Turkey and NATO still mutually benefit from the alliance, even as it is strained and tested. Barring a NATO-led military conflict with Russia or the need for NATO ground troops to battle ISIS, Turkey and NATO will likely stay allied because Turkey still gains much-needed security, and the U.S. and NATO can still use Turkey's bases and airspace in case of an emergency. But what happens if the U.S.-led coalition wants to send ground troops to Syria to battle ISIS, or tensions with Russia escalate? What would happen if NATO agreed to send in troops and Turkey refused to acquiesce to the plan?

These drastic events could spell the end of Turkey's place in NATO. While not probable, there are numerous events that could occur that would result in a complete break. More likely, however, is a continued ebb and flow of tensions in the alliance. Even though there are many current foreign policy issues that cause strain in the alliance, Turkey and the rest of NATO still benefit greatly from a positive relationship. Although the global geopolitical environment differs, one thing has not changed: while Turkey and the West do not always agree, they still have much to lose if they abandoned their alliance altogether. The threats in the world, though different, are simply still too large to ignore.