



TURKEY'S NATO FUTURE

Between alliance dependency, Russia,
and strategic autonomy



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INTRODUCTION

Turkey's NATO membership is surrounded by polemic, often shot through with emotion. Recent events and developments have given rise to ever more questions from both outside and within Turkey about Turkey's NATO future. What ramifications will Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 surface-to-air anti-missile (SAM) system have for Turkey's NATO future? Have developments in the Syrian conflict exposed a divergence between Turkish long-term security interests and those of other NATO members? What do rising tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean between NATO members Turkey and Greece over access to hydrocarbons mean for Turkey's NATO future? And finally, to what extent have relations between Turkey and other NATO members been further strained by differences over the failed 15 July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, over the Gülen movement and about the perceived rollback of Turkey's democratic credentials?

In response to such polemics, observers, professionals and researchers have cautioned that the – often high-pitched – debate on centrifugal forces that appear to drive Turkey and NATO further apart fails to appreciate at least three key centripetal forces that pull Turkey and NATO together and will likely contribute to keeping the relationship on track. One such is the claim that Turkey and NATO are caught up in an 'alliance dependency' at a structural level. This claim has two aspects. On the one hand, each party simply provides the other with indispensable security benefits that run deep and act as key centripetal forces against centrifugal forces of the day.¹ On the other, each party is convinced that they are too important for the other to seriously consider a break.² According to this view, both parties see more benefits than costs in NATO, which will help contain and channel recent areas of disagreement.

A second key note of caution often voiced by practitioners is that Turkey's apparent alignment with Russia is not deep and is merely meant to work as a Turkish hedging strategy, born out of a transactional logic, namely to extract concessions from its Western NATO partners.³ This second note of caution claims that there is no substantial Turkish pivot towards Russia that could seriously harm Turkey-NATO relations. The third note of caution takes the form of a reminder from history as well as from professionals close to everyday interaction with Turkey within a Turkey-NATO context, that differences between Turkey and NATO are not new, and that mechanisms have been established over time to deal with such differences.

Add to these three caveats the fact that there is no clause in the North Atlantic Treaty for the eviction of members and that there is a general recognition that the alternative to Turkey's continued NATO membership is simply worse, and sufficient centripetal forces emerge to dampen the shrill voices of the day.

Based on a series of semi-structured interviews with practitioners and researchers in the field, this DIIS report argues that elements of such centripetal forces are likely to remain in place to keep Turkey's NATO future on track. Barring wild card developments, Turkey-NATO relations will not be pushed beyond the brink. That said, the report also argues, firstly, that key elements of the centripetal forces are losing their strength, and secondly that at least four independent centrifugal forces are gaining strength and salience to increase the likelihood of further troubles ahead in Turkey's NATO future. In brief, these four independent centrifugal forces are: growing Turkish frustration with NATO's perceived foot-dragging in response to Turkish requests for support; domestic developments in Turkey; an increasing relevance of what this report will call Turkey's quest for 'strategic autonomy' in international relations; and finally, American retrenchment from the Middle East. These four centrifugal forces all add up to further complicate Turkey's NATO future.

Methodologically, this report draws on the most recent literature and press reports as well as data retrieved from semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted throughout 2019 with policy observers, Turkey watchers, and government officials at NATO and elsewhere.

The report proceeds as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the four cases of recent developments that have given rise to a series of new questions on Turkey's NATO future, namely the S-400 case, tensions over Syria, new frictions in the Eastern Mediterranean, and repercussions of the 2016 coup attempt case. This part will explore why the question of Turkey's NATO future has attracted such interest of late.

Chapter 2 introduces and discusses the three notes of caution outlined above to unfold the centripetal forces that are likely to remain in place for Turkey-NATO relations, but also to show how some elements of these centripetal forces are losing strength. Chapter 3 then examines the four independent centrifugal forces that have gained strength of late, partially counterbalancing the centripetal forces and further complicating Turkey's NATO future. The report concludes with a summary and brief outlook.



CHAPTER 1

FOUR CASES THAT HAVE RAISED THE QUESTION OF TURKEY'S NATO FUTURE



This section develops in a bit more detail the four most prominent cases that have given rise to a series of questions about Turkey's NATO future. Worthy of note, perhaps, is the fact that none of these cases pertain directly to Turkey-NATO relations. Rather, they are cases of bilateral tensions between Turkey and other NATO members, but with various degrees of spill-over ramifications for Turkey's NATO future.


THE S-400 CASE

The first and most prominent case that has strained relations between Turkey and other NATO members and generated a flurry of headlines across the world is the bilateral US-Turkish spat over Turkey's purchase and taking delivery, in the summer of 2019, of the Russian S-400 SAM system (Tol & Taşpınar, 2019). Already in April 2019, the US halted the delivery of equipment for the F-35 fighter aircraft to Turkey in response to Turkey's purchase of the S-400. Turkey had taken an active part in the development of the F-35 and had already at least 100 aircraft on order.

There are a number of technical challenges at the heart of this case. It opens up the possibility that Russian S-400 missile system radar could learn how to track the F-35. This would be particularly damaging news, as the F-35 is claimed to be a stealth fighter. Data collected via software used by the S-400 system, it was feared, could therefore compromise the jet's operational effectiveness (Kasapoğlu & Ülgen, 2018). Even if, as one NATO professional interviewee for this report noted, this could be seen as an isolated Turkey-US bilateral issue, the S-400 case is exemplary for the ramifications this bilateral issue has for Turkey-NATO relations.⁴ Moreover, the S-400 would not be 'interoperable' with other NATO systems and, in the best case scenario, adds nothing to NATO's layered AEGIS Ashore ballistic missile defence system. Finally, as another NATO professional interviewee inferred, even if attempts are made to isolate it as a bilateral Turkey-US issue, 'it will entail that operations and operational exercises will be conducted in parallel, not jointly'.⁵ Turkey's S-400 purchase would thus have direct implications for NATO's operational integration.

Technical challenges aside, the S-400 purchase also has a number of potentially damaging political consequences. As a September 2017 Anadolu Agency infographic recalled, the S-400 is designed to shoot down US and NATO airplanes and missiles (Anadolu Agency, 2017). In Soli Özel's words: 'The purchase of the S-400s was a fairly major act of defiance to the alliance'.⁶ Reflecting a pronounced sense of Turkish frustration with both the US and NATO—to which the report will return in Chapter 3

below—Turkey's S-400 purchase has also helped create an almost complete bipartisan consensus against Turkey in both chambers of the US Congress. The year 2019 has seen a flurry of legislative activity aimed not only at cutting Turkey from the F-35 program, but also at sanctioning Turkey for the S-400 purchase.



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Acting defence secretary Patrick Shanahan also emphasised the message on 6 June 2019 in a forcefully worded letter sent to the Turkish defence ministry. He explicitly warned Turkey that the S-400 purchase risked undermining its ties to NATO partners, hurting the Turkish economy and creating over-dependence on Russia, and that the US would discontinue Turkey's participation in the F-35 programme. 'You still have the option to change course on the S-400', Shanahan (2019) wrote.

The US willingness to punish Turkey for the purchase seems to have stopped with President Trump, however. Having punished Turkey with sanctions in August 2018 over a Turkish-US spat about the jailing in Turkey of the US pastor Andrew Brunson, Trump has since been the lone US official to block the implementation of sanctions on Turkey for the S-400 purchase. As one example, Trump made remarks on the sidelines of the June 2019 G20 summit in Osaka that were music to the ears of the Turkish delegation. Stating that Turkey had 'paid a tremendous amount of money upfront to Lockheed', and therefore expects delivery of F-35 fighters, Trump was also sympathetic to Turkey's case for the S-400 purchase, arguing that 'it's not really Erdoğan's fault' as, he alleged, Erdoğan had been treated unfairly by the preceding Obama administration over the attempted purchase of US Patriot missiles (Koc & Talev, 2019). Despite a further congressional push to sanction Turkey in December 2019, the US has still not implemented S-400 sanctions on Turkey as at the end of March 2020.⁷

Turkey has reacted defiantly throughout, joining in with Trump's criticism of the Obama administration. At best, attempts have been made to ameliorate the implications of the purchase by offering to set up a joint commission to investigate the technical implications of the purchase as well as suggesting, as Turkey's defence minister Hulusi Akar did in one instance, that the S-400 and F-35 could be deployed in different parts of Turkey (Rozen, 2019). More troublesome also for Turkey-NATO relations, Turkish foreign minister Çavuşoğlu and President Erdoğan in December

TURKEY'S S-400 PURCHASE AND US CONGRESSIONAL SANCTIONS BILLS

In March 2019, thirty-one US lawmakers sent a letter to the leader of the House Appropriations Committee, advocating for US legislation (suggestively labelled 'Protecting NATO Skies Act of 2019') that would block US federal funds from being used in the transfer of F-35s to Turkey unless the US president provides written certification to Congress that Turkey is not pursuing the S-400 purchase. The rhetoric shifted gear on April 9 when ranking members of the US Senate Armed Forces Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in an op-ed penned for the New York Times, wrote that the US would impose sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) should Turkey purchase the S-400.

A bill introduced into the House of Representatives on 10 May 2019 underlined this sentiment. Reiterating that Section 231 of CAATSA 'requires the President to impose sanctions on any individual or entity that engages in a significant transaction with the Russian defence or intelligence sector', the bill called on the Turkish government to cancel the planned acquisition of the S-400 and urged the imposition of sanctions under CAATSA as well as the termination of Turkey's participation in the F-35 production programme if Turkey went ahead with the purchase.

The bill was one of a number of separate bills introduced in Congress: on 3 June a defence department as well as a state department spending bill was passed in the House of Representatives, cutting off funding to transfer F-35s to Turkey without exception; on 11 June a Senate defence authorisation bill was passed, cutting off funding to transfer F-35s and F-35 technical capability to Turkey unless the secretary of defence and secretary of state jointly certified that Ankara would not accept Russia's S-400 missile system; and a house defence authorisation bill, introduced earlier (on 2 May), was reported with amendments on 19 June in the Armed Services Committee, again cutting off funding to transfer F-35s and F-35 technical capability to Turkey unless the secretaries of defence and state jointly certified that Ankara would not deploy Russia's S-400 missile.

2019 suggested that Turkey would consider closing down two key NATO bases in Turkey (Incirlik and Kürecik), were the US to sanction Turkey over the S-400s (Vandiver, 2019a).

At the time of writing, the US-Turkish S-400 controversy remains unresolved, with Turkey having received its first battery from Russia in July 2019, and two new batteries scheduled to be delivered and the system to be activated in 2020. The fact that US sanctions have not been imposed so far is read as a confirmation of Erdoğan's rationale that he can test the resolve of key NATO partners with major acts of defiance—so far with impunity—thereby enlarging his own room for manoeuvre and foreign policy options.⁸ The US's moving of red lines (warning against the purchase, then the delivery, then the commissioning of further batteries) suggests weakness on the part of the US in the eyes of Turkish officials. The S-400 is primarily a bilateral dispute, but besides its technical implications highlighted above, it has raised question marks over Turkey's long-term strategic orientation and view of its NATO membership. As Galip Dalay put it in his April 2019 piece entitled 'The Sick Man of NATO', due to Turkey's unique history, geostrategic position and domestic politics, the country has long been a source of friction within NATO, but by pursuing a perceived alignment with Russia, as illustrated by the S-400 purchase, Turkey is now 'testing its allies' tolerance like never before'.

SYRIA

As the 9 October 2019 Turkish 'Operation Peace Spring' into Kurdish-held areas of north-eastern Syria has made clear, the Syrian civil war has come to both create and highlight more differences than alignments between Turkey and other NATO members. Here, Turkey and other NATO members have been standing at opposite ends of preferred policy options since the inception of the conflict in 2011, but especially since 2016. Initially on opposite sides of the conflict in Syria, Russia and Turkey have ended up fostering deeper ties, thereby narrowing the divide between Turkey and the primary foes of the US and NATO in the region: Russia and Iran.

In the early years of the conflict, between 2011 and 2015, Turkey was frustrated with the Obama administration's unwillingness to join Turkey in toppling the Assad regime (Phillips, 2012; Tisdall, 2012; Tol, 2013). Conversely, the US and other Western countries were frustrated with what they perceived to be more or less active Turkish support for militant Islamist groups in Syria (Landler, Barnard, & Schmitt, 2014). As the US and other Western countries rallied behind the Kurdish YPG against the surging ISIS threat in 2014–15, Turkey was further isolated on Syria. Coinciding with

a domestic shift in Turkey – to be explored further in Chapter 3 below – from a historic outreach to, and an open settlement process with the PKK, to a hard crackdown on the PKK from the summer of 2015, Turkey changed its priorities in Syria from toppling Assad to targeting the YPG–PKK’s Syrian affiliate and the US and other Western partners’ new best ally against ISIS in Syria.


In August 2016 Turkey’s then-prime minister Binali Yıldırım introduced a three-step Turkish road map for Syria, focussing on countering Kurdish independence and supporting Syrian national sovereignty and unity (Hurriyet Daily News, 2016). Following the November 2015 Turkish shooting-down of a Russian jet over the Turkish-Syrian border, the subsequent Turkish apology in May 2016 and Putin’s quick support of Erdoğan during the 15 July 2016 coup attempt meant the autumn of 2016 also saw a warming up of Turkey-Russia relations on Syria. Russia thus allowed Turkey entry into Syria for the August 2016 Turkish Operation Euphrates’ Shield with the declared intention of fighting ISIS, although at least as important was undoubtedly the objective of driving a wedge into the Kurdish dream of an extended autonomous Kurdish zone along most of the Syrian border with Turkey. In return, Turkey apparently withdrew its support of the Aleppo opposition groups.

This led to further alignment between Turkey and Russia in the trilateral ‘Astana format’ where, together with Iran, they tried to find common ground on the Syrian conflict. Talks between Russia, Iran and Turkey to negotiate a ceasefire in Syria were convened in Moscow in December 2016, paving the way for further talks in Astana in February 2017 and the creation of ‘de-escalation zones’ in the summer of 2017 (MID, 2017). The ‘guarantors’ of the Astana process (Russia, Iran and Turkey) met again in November 2017 in Sochi to discuss a post-conflict political settlement for Syria. For Turkey, this alignment not only manifested a noticeable policy shift away from its anti-Assad stance at the outbreak of the conflict in 2011, it also gave Turkey first a military role in Syria and then a political role at the table for decisions on Syria’s future. Aligning more closely with the West in the early years of the conflict had denied Turkey both of these roles.

Being a less unequal partner than in its relationship with the US, Turkey also presumably convinced Russia to withdraw its support for the YPG in Afrin to allow for the second Turkish incursion into Syria—Operation Olive Branch—in January 2018. It also seems that Turkey managed to convince Russia to renege on its promise to the PYD (the political wing of the YPG) that it would be included in the Sochi negotiations on Syria held at the end of January 2018. Also, Turkey was able to negotiate deals with Russia on the recalcitrant Idlib region through the 17

September 2018 Sochi MoU, and on the Syrian north-east through the 22 October 2019 Sochi MoU. As the Trump administration twice in one year (18 December 2018 and 6 October 2019) announced its withdrawal from Syria, and only remains in very limited areas along the border with Iraq, Russia and Iran are poised to be Turkey's primary partners on Syria in the near future, irrespective of outstanding differences between Turkey and Russia as the February 2020 conflict over Idlib made manifest.

NATO has largely remained a bystander to the conflict in Syria. But the ramifications are clear: NATO member Turkey has coordinated policies closely with Russia and Iran in the Astana format between 2016 and 2019, and also did not shy away from ordering unilateral military invasions at odds with security policies of European NATO members. It is in the context of Turkey's invasion of north-eastern Syria without prior consultation among NATO members that French president Macron's interview with *The Economist* is to be read, in which he criticised missing political consultations within NATO, famously culminating in his formulation that NATO is 'brain dead' (*Economist*, 2019). The alliance, according to Macron's reading, is ineffective and dysfunctional in the face of drastic US foreign policy shifts that create margins of license for aggressive Turkish military policies (even though both countries are NATO members), which ultimately endangers European security.



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On the other side, Turkish beliefs that NATO members have supported a terror organisation in Syria to Turkey's dismay led Erdoğan to openly threaten that Turkey would veto NATO's defence plans for the Baltic ahead of the 4–5 December 2019 NATO summit in London (*Al Jazeera*, 2019). Turkey's frustration with NATO's unwillingness to count the YPG as a terror organisation seems to have led Turkey to adopt a practice of holding other NATO initiatives and plans hostage in response, as was also made clear by four NATO employees who talked to Reuters on the issue (Emmott, 2019), and one interviewee for this report.⁹

TENSIONS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Another set of mounting bilateral tensions between Turkey and a NATO member that has raised questions about Turkey's NATO future is the Turkish-Greek/Cypriot spat over access to drilling for hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean.

This issue also added to the already strained Turkey-EU relations. After Turkey began drilling and exploring hydrocarbons off the coast of Cyprus, the EU reacted by imposing sanctions on Turkey for what it considered illegal gas and oil drilling activities. The area, it was argued, belongs to Cyprus' exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Turkish activities thus constituted a violation of Cypriot sovereignty. Sanctions imposed included the suspension of negotiations on the Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement and the calling off of high-level dialogues. Pre-accession assistance to Turkey for 2020 was also reduced, and the EU reserved the right to impose further restrictive measures, should Turkey continue its drilling activities in the EEZ of an EU member state (Baczynska, 2019).



Ankara seems to speculate that EU sanctions will be largely symbolic for as long as EU governments react with restraint to Turkish activities in the Eastern Mediterranean out of a tacit recognition of Turkish leverage regarding the delicate issue of refugee control.

Escalating matters further, Turkey then signed a memorandum with Libya at the end of November 2019 on maritime 'spheres of influence' for joint extraction of resources in the Mediterranean (Financial Times, 2019). This was surprising as Libya and Turkey do not even have a shared maritime border. Between the two countries, in addition, lie Greek islands such as Rhodes, Lesbos and Crete. Greece expelled the Libyan ambassador in mid-December as a result of this perceived sign of disrespect for Greek sovereignty (Wintour, 2019). Meanwhile, Turkey announced the purchase of an additional drilling vessel. In response, the EU agreed to a further set of sanctions on companies and individuals involved in the Turkish explorations off Cyprus, albeit treading carefully by postponing the actual naming of the companies and individuals targeted (AP, 2019; Reuters, 2019a).

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issue of refugee control. Towards the end of January 2020, Turkey moved to issue contracts for exploring for gas in the area set out by the Turkish-Libyan MoU (Gurcan, 2020).


This case has a bearing on Turkey-US relations as well. In October 2019 the US and Greece signed a defence cooperation agreement under which the US gains access to three strategic airbases on mainland Greece and an upgrade of the US naval base on Crete (Taylor, 2020). Seen as part of the Turkish-US disagreements over Syria and a US fallback in case Turkey decides to carry through its threats to shut down Incirlik and Kürecik, this also increases the chance that the US could get drawn into this conflict on Greece's side. In December 2019 the US Congress passed two bills siding with Cyprus against Turkey on this issue (Harris, 2019). Another US ally in the region, Israel, is also party to this conflict. On 2 January 2020 Israel signed a gas pipeline deal with Cyprus and Greece,¹⁰ partly as an offensive response to Turkey's November agreement with Libya. More forcefully, Israel, Cyprus and Greece also joined forces with Egypt and Lebanon against Turkey in the increasingly tense battle for ownership of the hydrocarbons of the Eastern Mediterranean, excluding Turkey when they established the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) in January 2019 (Shama, 2019; The New Arab, 2019).

Turkey-NATO relations are only indirectly affected by this heightening of tensions in the East Med. But developments in this area in 2019 have made it clear that Turkey does not shy away from confrontational moves towards other NATO members. Such developments complicate working level dialogues within the alliance and raise questions about Turkey's long-term strategic thinking. In early December 2019, Greece's new prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis stated that Greece would ask for NATO support in the maritime dispute with Turkey. Also, there are allegedly frequent Turkish breaches of Greek air space by Turkish fighter jets, with one day in December 2019 reporting forty such breaches, triggering mock dogfights between the two NATO allies (Vandiver, 2019b). Tensions between Turkey and Greece hold the potential to further fan the already heated debate on Turkey's NATO future.

REPERCUSSIONS OF THE 2016 COUP ATTEMPT

The fourth and final case that has given rise to new questions about Turkey's NATO future is the failed coup attempt against Erdoğan's AKP government in July 2016. High-ranking members of the AKP government openly stated their suspicion that the US and other Western countries not merely failed to offer their swift and unequivocal support for Erdoğan, but actively conspired with the coup plotters against Erdoğan

and the AKP government (Kotsev & Dyer, 2016; Toksabay, 2017). This view had widespread support from an otherwise divided Turkish population (Arango & Yeginsu, 2016). Quoting Erdoğan's statement on the third anniversary of the coup attempt—'Despite our political and military pacts with the Western alliance, the fact is that once again the biggest threats we face are from them' (Haberturk, 2019). Nicolas Danforth explains this rising tendency in Turkey to believe that the US in particular, but also the West more broadly, is set on destroying Turkey. He links it to how many in Turkey believe the West acted historically, in the wake of WW1 (Danforth, 2019). The failed coup attempt heightened the sense that the West is increasingly out to undermine Turkey. And when Erdoğan speaks of Turkey's 'political and military pacts with the Western alliance', this clearly entails NATO as well.



Looking at Turkey from the US and Europe, the fallout of the coup attempt in Turkey has been an accelerated deterioration of Turkey's democratic credentials.

More concretely, the Erdoğan government is frustrated that many Western countries provide safe havens to the members of the Gülen organisation, the organisation that the AKP believes to be the mastermind behind the coup attempt. The Gülen organisation was labelled a terror organisation in Turkey already in May 2016, under the acronym FETÖ. The coup attempt was thus pitched as a terror attack and all members of the evasive and loosely-knit Gülen organisation deemed to be members of a terror group. As the marriage of convenience between the AKP and Gülen has disintegrated into a state of open conflict, and Erdoğan's AKP has joined forces with the Turkish nationalists against Gülen, the perception in Turkey has grown more prominent that the US and Europe are supporting not merely the 'PKK terrorists' against Turkey, but also the 'FETÖ terrorists', to use Turkey's official designation. The failed coup attempt has only sharpened this perception.

Looking at Turkey from the US and Europe, the fallout of the coup attempt in Turkey has been an accelerated deterioration of Turkey's democratic credentials. The extensive purge of alleged coup plotters, including individuals who – in the eyes of most outsiders – are merely political opponents, has added to the severe crackdown on the Gezi demonstrators of 2013 and Kurdish demonstrators in south-east Turkey of the autumn of 2015 to paint a general picture of a Turkey that no longer shares the basic value set at the base of the NATO alliance. Add to this that Putin was swift to support Erdoğan in the wake of the coup attempt, and it is not difficult to imagine

why pundits in the West have seen a further opportunity to question Turkey's NATO future in the fallout of the coup attempt.

Several of the interviewees for this report who are close observers of Turkey's daily working-level coordination within NATO noted that pro-NATO officers now seemed to be sidelined within the Turkish army, in favour of so-called 'Eurasianists'.¹¹ Moreover, the Turkish military officers now deployed to NATO are perceived to be less proficient in NATO ways as well as at English than was previously the case. There is a perception in Turkey that many previous, highly qualified, Turkish NATO officers who had received training in the US or other NATO countries were Gülenists, making it virtually impossible for career-minded military officers today to openly pursue a pro-US, pro-NATO trajectory. This also adds a piece to the puzzle about Turkey's NATO future.

WE ARE ALLIES
WE ARE UNITED



CHAPTER 2
THREE STRONG, IF WEAKENING,
CENTRIPETAL FORCES AT PLAY




The cases outlined above might appear to indicate that Turkey and NATO are increasingly growing apart. However, a number of observers have cautioned that the, often high-pitched, debate fails to appreciate at least three key centripetal forces that will likely continue to keep the relationship on track. In this chapter, the report outlines these three caveats. It will argue that elements of these centripetal factors, while indeed still functioning, are losing strength and cannot be taken as a guarantee that Turkey's security policy will remain firmly anchored within NATO.

ALLIANCE DEPENDENCE

The first note of moderation is that Turkey and NATO are caught up in an 'alliance dependence' at a structural level. This assumption holds that Turkey and NATO provide each other with security benefits that run deep and will act as a key centripetal force against any recurring centrifugal forces.

For Turkey, an obvious benefit of NATO is deterrence against difficult neighbours. The 'nuclear umbrella' factors into the weight that Turkey enjoys when dealing with states like Iran or Russia, and Article 4 (consultations amongst Member States) and Article 5 (collective defence) serve as useful insurance guarantees in this regard. US extended deterrents, according to interviewees within NATO circles, are important factors entering into potential adversaries' calculus.¹² Even as Turkey's relations with both Russia and Iran have warmed in recent years, NATO is still an important card for Ankara to have in its deck when travelling to Moscow and Teheran. NATO is also useful for Turkey as far as complicated Greek-Turkish relations are concerned: it is better to be part of a common organisation in order to channel policy differences than to be left without institutional dialogue platforms (Yegin, 2019).



Even as Turkey's relations with both Russia and Iran have warmed in recent years, NATO is still an important card for Ankara to have in its deck when travelling to Moscow and Teheran.

NATO, likewise, sees benefits in Turkish membership in light of the conceivable alternatives: it is better to have Turkey as a member than a potential adversary in the Black Sea, the Aegean or the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkish territory can also function as an important base for military operations in the Middle East (and the Kürecik X-band radar is deployed there). And finally, the fact that Turkey is a

predominantly Muslim country adds political legitimacy to any NATO missions in the region, or further afield (like Afghanistan). The latter is a civilisational identity argument that should not be discarded when thinking of the public diplomacy aspect of NATO's military operations.¹³

Against the background of these arguments in favour of mutual benefits, it was telling that, with a view to the toxic S-400 case outlined above, NATO secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg tried to mend fences on his visit to Ankara of 6 May 2019 on the occasion of a meeting of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue partners. Speaking at a joint press conference with Turkish foreign minister Çavuşoğlu, Stoltenberg alluded to the possible reading that Turkey's S-400 purchase is not categorically incompatible with NATO structures, but added that he was 'concerned about the potential consequences of the decision to buy S-400 [...] because the US has made it clear that they will impose sanctions' (Hurriyet Daily News, 2019).

At a foreign ministers' session of the North Atlantic Council in early April 2019, NATO secretary-general Stoltenberg emphasised that defence procurement decisions of NATO members are national decisions, and that the S-400 controversy was not on the agenda of the ministerial meeting. He also highlighted that there is ongoing dialogue between Turkey and other NATO members such as Italy, France and Spain about augmenting air defence systems in Turkey (NATO, 2019).

Aside from being actively engaged in internal NATO conflict resolution, Stoltenberg and most NATO members are mindful of the alliance dependency that is likely to remain in place to counterbalance the centrifugal forces of the day. That said, the centripetal forces of alliance dependency have been losing strength of late. As Nicolas Danforth noted in an interview for this report, 'my concern [is that] as relations worsen, Turkey will stop feeling it's getting the benefits'.¹⁴ When it comes to Turkey's primary security concerns that have gained salience in recent years, such as the PKK (and PYD/YPG in Syria), FETÖ, and Greece, Turkey at best does not perceive of NATO as a guarantor of Turkish security. Turkey is also working hard to develop its own defence on the grounds of the perception in Turkey that NATO has been reluctant to heed Turkey's calls for help in recent years.¹⁵ The fact that Turkey is ready at the highest levels to threaten the closure of the NATO bases at Incirlik and Kürecik is also at least a sign that the current Turkish Government possibly fails to acknowledge the power of the alliance dependency.


NATO will likely seek to mend fences with Turkey, as indicated by Stoltenberg's repeated attempts at mediation. However, increasing paralysis and loss of internal cohesion within NATO could begin to chip away at NATO's dependency on Turkey. In

this context the US-Greek agreement to expand US military presence in Greece could be seen as a hedging strategy.

If still in place as a key centripetal force, it seems to be the case that alliance dependency cannot be taken for granted in the same way as was the case during the bipolar times of the Cold War or the unipolar moment immediately afterwards.

TURKISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS ARE NOT DEEP

The second note of caution against overreacting in light of the four recent cases outlined in Chapter 1 holds that in spite of Turkey's S-400 purchase and other appearances to the contrary, Turkey and Russia are not aligned in a deep way that guards them from a return to the animosity on display around the time of the November 2015 Turkish downing of a Russian fighter jet on the Syrian-Turkish border.



The fact that Russia was able and willing to escalate retaliatory policies towards Turkey so quickly speaks to the reading that Turkish-Russian relations, despite the public fanfare, are not structurally deep.

The above-mentioned 'Russian jet crisis' is a helpful reminder. Russia immediately imposed sanctions on Turkey that saw the total Russian-Turkish trade volume drop to some USD 16.7 billion in 2016 (while it had exceeded USD 30 billion in the years 2011–2014).¹⁶ Russia stopped charter flights to Turkey, suspended the 2014 TurkStream gas project linking Russia to north-west Turkey via the Black Sea, imposed restrictions on imports from Turkey and re-introduced visa requirements, which had been waived for up to 30 days by mutual agreement in April 2011. The fact that Russia was able and willing to escalate retaliatory policies towards Turkey so quickly speaks to the reading that Turkish-Russian relations, despite the public fanfare, are not structurally deep.

For example, a report by Timur Akhmetov, published by the Russian International Affairs Council in April 2019, speculates that this 'fighter jet crisis' rebuts the notion that former and current military officers with a 'Eurasianist' political leaning can influence Turkish foreign policy in a (however defined) pro-Russian direction. If such

groups did indeed exist within the Turkish military, they had not been able to prevent the quickly escalating crisis between Turkey and Russia in the wake of the 'jet crisis'. Turkey's cooperation with Russia, Akhmetov argues, is tactically motivated in light of worsening Turkish-Western relations. The fact that the 'jet crisis' spiralled out of control was an indication of a fundamental mistrust between Turkey and Russia at governmental level, or at least of a lack of influence of pro-Russian leaning groups within Turkey.

Russia and Turkey also do not see eye-to-eye on the Middle East. The Russia unit at NATO headquarters saw developing relations between Turkey and Russia in Syria as nothing more than a reaction to US support for the YPG.¹⁷ Russian-Turkish alignments of position are durable for as long as both governments are united in the objective to oppose US policies in Syria, but their long-term plans differ. Russia's Syria endgame is to support the pro-Russian Assad regime, hardly a Turkish desideratum, despite the earlier-mentioned 2015/16 change in Turkey's Syria strategy. Also, Russia and Turkey are directly at odds over the last parts of the rebel-held Idlib region of Syria. Moreover, Russia has shown a clear interest in reducing Turkish influence in northern Syria. Libya is another example of Turkey and Russia supporting opposing warring parties in the Middle East. The Turkish-Libyan agreement over maritime cooperation in November 2019 and Turkey's position in the Libyan civil war is a case in point: Moscow actively supports General Haftar (and his LNA army) in the ongoing war, while Turkey delivers drones to prime minister Sarraj (and his GNA army) for use as defence against the military advances of General Haftar and has offered further military support in the first days of 2020. In an interview for this report Galip Dalay reflected that Turkey had learnt that aligning its foreign policy more closely with Russia in many cases works better for Turkey than seeking compromises with the West, and that Turkey has realised that it can gain concessions from the West by 'going rogue' and partnering with countries like Russia.¹⁸ But that still does not change the fact that, as the title of Dalay's 28 May 2019 piece for Foreign Policy reveals, 'Turkey and Russia are bitter frenemies' (Dalay, 2019b).

Added to this are a number of 'frozen conflicts' in their shared neighbourhood, with Turkey and Russia supporting opposite sides. Gönül Tol and Ömer Taşpınar (2019) make a strong case for this point. In spite of a series of signs of a warm-up of relations between Russia and Turkey – a warm-up that has historical roots as well – Tol and Taşpınar warn that the relation is fragile. This is, not least, due to ongoing frozen conflicts with the two countries supporting opposing sides on Ukraine and Crimea, on the Balkans, in the Caucasus, on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, and on the Black Sea more generally (Tol, 2019; Tol & Taşpınar, 2019). In response to questions

for this report, Lars Haugom seconds this line of argument: 'Turkey and Russia have differing strategic interests in their neighbourhood and have found themselves on opposite sides of almost every regional conflict since the end of the Cold War'.¹⁹

As Soner Çağaptay and Andy Taylor put it in their June 2019 joint piece, 'Turkey and Russia are not friends, despite appearances' (Çagaptay & Taylor, 2019). For example, Russia has shown reservations about sharing sensitive technology with Turkey, as the Russian daily Kommersant (2017) has reported. Even if Turkey were to install and use the S-400, Turkish air defence personnel would have to be trained by Russia, and Moscow would not share codes (Kasapoğlu & Ülgen, 2018, p. 11). Trust between Russia and NATO member Turkey does not run deep. Regardless of the difficulties Turkish-NATO relations are facing at the time of writing, the level of distrust between Russia and Turkey over long-term security perspectives allows for tactical (and transactional) approximations of positions at best, as Lars Haugom said in an interview for this report.²⁰


Lisel Hintz writes, 'NATO membership remains the best form of defence against Moscow's aggression in the region and is a collective security guarantee decision-makers in Ankara will likely be unwilling to sacrifice' (Hintz, 2019, p. 14). It cannot be excluded that new regional fronts between Russia and Turkey may emerge in the future. One also needs to consider a deep history of Turkish-Russian conflict (the two precursor empires fought some twelve wars between them), several 'frozen conflicts' in their shared neighbourhood, remaining tensions in Syria, and overall divergent strategic security interests to understand that the relationship is not deep. Also, Russia's foreign policy in the Middle East aims to keep channels with all interlocutors open, and it is precisely this communication that has earned Russia leverage in the region in recent years (Ben-Ami, 2019). This observation serves to further temper any reading of a deep Russian-Turkish alignment.

That said, research for the present report has also shown that the cautionary power of these centripetal forces could be perceived to be losing strength. Partly in response to the received view that Turkey and Russia share a history of imperial conflict, Soli Özel for instance has framed Turkey and Russia's developing relations thus:

There are periods in the history of Turkish-Russian relations that were close. Even at the height of the Cold War, the two sides maintained some degree of collaboration [...] Ultimately their interests are divergent, but without an amelioration in Turkey's relations with allies, the Russian contact will remain in place and may even get stronger.²¹

Another interviewee seconded this balanced observation, agreeing that Turkey-Russia relations are not deep 'in the sense that it is a quite recent phenomenon', but that they are nevertheless 'getting stronger by the day'.²²

Both Putin and Erdoğan share a sense of resentment towards the West, as both have made attempts at early outreaches to Europe and the West only to meet what was felt to be a very cool reception if not outright rejection. Both have come to embrace strong nationalism at home and the pursuit of a multipolar world order in the international arena. Both have had to bolster their increasingly authoritarian rulerships to fend off growing opposition movements at home, and both have sought to preserve regime retention in the region against Western attempts at democratic revisionism. Also, both opposed the 2003 US-led war on Iraq. As Mehmet Yegin framed it in response to a question for this report, Erdoğan 'decided to "bring in Russia" in order to diversify foreign policy options and make Turkey less centred on "Western" strategic culture in order to bolster his domestic regime stability'.²³ As the failed coup attempt made clear to Erdoğan, Putin has no interest in seeing Erdoğan gone. The same cannot be said about US and European leaderships. Erdoğan and Putin also talk to each other more than to any other ruler in the world.



The Astana format illustrated the possibility of cooperation between Russia, Turkey and Iran to jointly achieve regional outcomes despite disagreements and differences of interest.

Russia handed Turkey a prominent place both on the Syrian battlefield and – as a consequence of that – at the Syrian negotiating table. This has allowed Turkey to pursue its main security interest in Syria since 2015/16, namely curbing the separatist ambitions of PYD/YPG. Turkey's participation in the Astana process arguably allowed for Russia and Assad to finally win the war by regaining territorial control over one de-escalation and de-militarisation zone at a time. The Astana format illustrated the possibility of cooperation between Russia, Turkey and Iran to jointly achieve regional outcomes despite disagreements and differences of interest.

Add to this the strategically durable agreements on TurkStream and the Akkuyu nuclear power plant and Turkey's purchase of the S-400 SAMs, along with talk of further Turkish-Russian cooperation in the defence industry, and we are left with a picture of Turkey-Russia relations that might not be deep, but which could be becoming sufficiently strong to slowly loosen its potential as a strong centripetal force for Turkey-NATO relations.

TURKEY-NATO DIFFERENCES ARE NOT NEW

A more historically-founded note of caution considers how differences between Turkey and NATO are nothing new and mechanisms have been put in place to address them. As one interviewee for this report noted, NATO's history consists of one challenge after the other.²⁴ The run-up to the recent 3–4 December 2019 NATO London summit also bore witness to that (New York Times, 2019).

The point made here is that in a historical context, the present-day Turkey-NATO differences appear less challenging. Even during the Cold War, Turkey had quite a few disagreements with NATO, some of them serious. Military coups occurred in Turkey in 1960, 1971 and 1980. NATO also had to manage the conflict that erupted over the withdrawal of US Jupiter nuclear warheads from Turkey in 1962 as part of the solution to the Cuban Missile Crisis. Lyndon B. Johnson's scathing 1964 letter to Turkey over Cyprus, letting Turkey know that it might not be able to rely on US support – and by implication a comprehensive NATO §5 support – in the case of a Soviet attack, if Turkey were to pursue its perceived aggressive stance on Cyprus also challenged Turkey-NATO relations. The US 1974–78 weapons embargo on Turkey over the 1974 Turkish invasion of Northern Cyprus further added to the challenges. The rise of the PKK and the Turkish response to it, especially during the bloody 1990s in Turkey, also contributed, as did differences over how to address the challenges in the Balkans in the 1990s. Turkey did not see eye-to-eye with the US in 2003, as Turkey denied US armed forces access to Iraq through Turkey, and issues over Cyprus reappeared between Turkey and NATO's EU members in 2004, as the Greek Republic of Cyprus was admitted into the EU.

Thus, divergences between Turkey and other NATO members are not new. Several of the interviewees for this report noted that NATO working-level mechanisms are in place to address the issues.²⁵

As has been the case throughout Turkey's soon-to-be 70 years of NATO history, NATO has established mechanisms to resolve the conflicts that have arisen along the way. The same is true today. But, as one interviewee framed it: '[t]his time the issues are more fundamental than usual'.²⁶ This third centripetal force, if still at work, is also experiencing some erosion and cannot be taken for granted with the same level of confidence as before, as we will argue below.



CHAPTER 3 FOUR CENTRIFUGAL FORCES TO COUNTER THE CENTRIPETAL



Summing up the findings of Chapter 2, the report has presented three caveats introduced by a series of observers and academics in the field of Turkey-NATO relations to the effect that centripetal forces of Turkey-NATO relations are still present and sufficiently powerful to keep Turkey's NATO future from the brink. To a certain extent, this report endorses these notes of caution. Turkey and NATO operate in the framework of an alliance dependence, within which the mutual benefits outweigh the costs of a potential breakup. Also, Turkey's relationship with Russia is still sufficiently fragile to warrant a disintegration of Turkey-NATO relations. Finally, challenges to Turkey and NATO are not new, and mechanisms have been put in place within NATO to address them. But as Chapter 2 has also outlined, the strength of these forces is being eroded and the relation cannot be taken for granted with the same level of confidence as in the recent past.

The present chapter turns to four centrifugal forces for Turkey's NATO future that together contribute to the partial erosion of the centripetal forces listed above, and independently act to further trouble Turkey's NATO future.

TURKISH FRUSTRATIONS WITH NATO


The first of these centrifugal forces is a palpable – and according to some interviewees understandable – feeling of frustration in Turkey that whilst being a frontline NATO state it is still being confronted with a significant amount of foot-dragging from other NATO members when it asks for help (BBC, 2012, 2015; Neilan, 2003; Oliver, 2003). This frustration has been particularly pronounced when Turkey has called the so-called §4 meetings in NATO to seek help against a perceived threat to Turkey. This was the case in 2003 against Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction, in 2012 against Bashar al-Assad's missiles and in 2015 in the wake of the Turkish downing of a Russian jet on the Turkish-Syrian border.²⁷ Two things are worthy of note here: first, these Turkish requests all pertain to Turkey's relative lack of own air defence capabilities. This relative deficiency has become even more pronounced with the comprehensive purges of Turkish fighter pilots following the July 2016 coup attempt (Peck, 2019). Secondly, the experience of NATO foot-dragging adds to a strongly felt need in Turkey going right back to the early years of the Republic, but more recently in the wake of the US arms embargo on Turkey over Cyprus in 1974, that Turkey needs to produce its own arms.

As a consequence of the perceived lack of NATO reciprocity, Turkey has begun to pursue both the purchase of its own SAM systems and, as a key part of this procurement process, demanded co-production and transfer of technology for the

purposes of developing Turkey's own arms industry. It has been an added frustration for Turkey that the US RAYTHEON producers of the PATRIOT missile system and the French-Italian EUROSAM producers of the SAMP-T NT SAM systems have been unwilling to grant Turkey the requested co-production and technology transfer as part of the procurement deals. This adds to the perception in Turkey that NATO members are not sufficiently committed to Turkey's defence.

As a Turkish representative to NATO framed it, Turkey is a frontline ally and expects alliance solidarity in its fight against terrorism and the multiple crises in its neighbourhood. Experiencing that NATO allies have not met these expectations, Turkey articulated a desire to have a 'strong indigenous defence industry' and to develop its own high-end defence capabilities.²⁸ The S-400 purchase is to a large degree a reflection of the stated disappointment with NATO partners, both on the S4 issue and on the unwillingness of the US and French-Italian SAM producers to meet Turkish requests for co-production and tech transfer.

But the Turkish frustration with both NATO and NATO members also acts as a centrifugal force in other areas of Turkey-NATO relations. Only 10–25% of the Turkish population think favourably of NATO in recent years (GMF-Bilgi, 2019, p. 37; Halpin, Werz, Makovsky, & Hoffman, 2018). Reflecting this popular attitude, Aaron Stein notes that the 'Turkish political elites do not see NATO as anything other than an insurance policy, and view Turkish defence policy as more narrowly built around Turkish interests'.²⁹ Granted, the idea of an 'insurance policy' has a centripetal component as well. A majority of Turks still want to remain in NATO (GMF-Bilgi, 2019). The idea of NATO as an 'insurance policy' for Turkey ties in with the idea of 'Alliance dependency' outlined in Chapter 2 above and dampens the centrifugal nature of the Turkish frustration with NATO. Yet the level of frustration that emerges from such surveys also figures as an independent centrifugal force for Turkey's NATO future in its own right.



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As an expert in NATO-EU relations noted, Turkey has blocked high-level NATO-EU cooperation since 2004 over the admittance of the Greek Republic of Cyprus into the EU, rendering the December 2002 Berlin Plus agreement on NATO-EU cooperation practically void.³⁰ Since then any NATO-EU cooperation has been ad hoc on a staff-

to-staff level only. Turkey even blocked Mogherini and Stoltenberg's 2016 attempt at reviving Berlin Plus. Even if interests in exploring opportunities for joint projects under the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) mechanism have loosened Turkey's hold on some levels below the political level, especially on the part of the Turkish arms industry, meetings between NATO and EU staff continue to take place only unofficially, and without the participation of Turkish NATO representatives.

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As a NATO employee also noted, Turkey has blocked further NATO cooperation with Austria; another country with which Turkey has strained bilateral relations.³¹ As bilateral relations between Turkey and other NATO members as well as with, especially, the EU have grown increasingly tense, NATO's room for manoeuvre seems to have shrunk.

'Terrorism' encompasses another set of issues that have gained both width and depth in recent years and have ramifications not merely for NATO's external relations, but also for its internal workings. Since at least 2015, as the current Turkish AKP government turned from open peace negotiations with the jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan to a hard crackdown on the PKK and its affiliated groups in Turkey and the region, the issue of 'terrorism' has been increasingly invoked by Turkey to block a series of otherwise non-related processes within NATO.³² The US, UK, France and other NATO members' support for the YPG in Syria as outlined in Chapter 1 is front and centre here. As an example, one interviewee noted that Turkey demanded that the YPG be recognised by NATO as a terror group and threatened to otherwise not support the Graduated Response Plan (GRP) for NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in the Baltics.³³ This was also made public recently when four anonymous NATO officials talked to Reuters (Emmott, 2019), and Erdoğan then voiced it himself as he was leaving Turkey for the 3–4 December 2019 NATO summit in London (Reuters, 2019b).

The falling out between the AKP government and the Gülen movement, Turkey's designation of the Gülen movement as a terror group under the acronym FETÖ in May 2016, and the AKP's vocal rhetoric on the movement in the wake of the failed coup attempt of July 2016 have further hardened Turkey's position. This adds to rifts between Turkey and other NATO members.

Other issues have added both breadth and depth to Turkey's frustrations with NATO in recent years. As several interviewees noted, the Turkish military personnel in NATO have changed from being highly professional, pro-NATO officers, often trained in the US or Europe, to a group of more NATO-sceptical officers with a reduced understanding of NATO processes and less proficiency in English.³⁴ More interviewees also noted that the highly centralised and more hierarchical Turkish leadership not only increasingly complicated working-level cooperation within NATO,³⁵ it has also meant that Turkey's NATO representatives have to consult with Ankara before agreeing to almost anything, even at a low level of decision-making.

Nicholas Danforth draws attention to a significant change of the larger framework. He notes that 'these tensions look a lot different now that the Cold War is over ... the changing geopolitical framework makes them much more serious now'.³⁶ A former NATO official noted that during the Cold War Turkey 'needed NATO due to the fear of Communism', but that Turkey today is a more pronounced challenge to NATO because Turkey today 'is not fully tied to Western structures' including the EU.³⁷ Soli Özel echoed these points, and tied this in with Turkey's pronounced quest for 'strategic autonomy' to be unfolded below, when he noted:

One difference between the Cold War period and now is that Turkey did not have ambitions of becoming a regional power then and its desire for autonomy was not as strong since its room for manoeuvre and for extension of its interests was limited.³⁸


The sources of Turkey's frustration with NATO are multifaceted. Collectively they do, however, create an independent centrifugal force for Turkey's NATO future.

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS IN TURKEY

Domestic developments in Turkey also seem to add further centrifugal forces to Turkey-NATO relations. While at times difficult to disentangle from Turkey's developing international relations, the drivers of Turkish domestic developments also have a bearing on Turkey-NATO relations.³⁹

To properly appreciate the bearing that Turkish domestic developments have on Turkey-NATO relations, this report holds that one must understand a set of key developments since at least 2011 that have had a decisive impact on the AKP government's policies. For Erdoğan and his AKP government, the period from 2011 to 2019 has been marked by a trajectory from an experience of almost complete success and power in 2011 to one of mounting domestic threats and losses since then. This has led to marked shifts in the ideology of and the methods invoked by the AKP government, with ensuing problematic consequences for Turkey-NATO relations.

2011 was a successful year for Erdoğan and the AKP in at least three respects. It achieved its best-ever electoral result in the June general elections. It was heralded from all sides as a role model for the Arab Spring. And it had managed – along with the Gülen movement – to significantly weaken the power of the old secularist nationalist establishment embedded in the formerly independently powerful military, judiciary, and bureaucracy.




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But the falling-out with the Gülen movement was already on the horizon, as Gülen had criticised the Mavi Marmara flotilla incident of 2010 in the Wall Street Journal (Lauria, 2010). In February 2012 Gülenist members in the public prosecution subpoenaed the Erdoğan confidante, MIT chief Hakan Fidan, over his role in alleged negotiation with the terrorist organisation PKK (Watson & Comert, 2012). These were the first signs of what was to become a bloody breakup of the marriage of convenience between the AKP and the Gülen movement, a breakup that became a real threat to Erdoğan through the December 2013 graft probe against members of Erdoğan's inner circle and ultimately through the July 2016 coup attempt.

The AKP government's outreach to the PKK through an open peace process in December 2012 – the so-called 'settlement process' – also grew to become an electoral threat for Erdoğan and the AKP leading to losses in the June 2015 general elections. As the Kurdish HDP leader Selahattin Demirtaş made the already unpopular AKP outreach to the Kurds even more costly by denying Erdoğan HDP support for his plans for a super presidency, during the summer of 2015 Erdoğan turned away from outreach to the Kurds to co-opting the rising anti-Kurdish Turkish nationalist sentiments in Turkey and had initiated a crackdown on the PKK and its affiliates in Turkey and the region by the autumn of 2015. This saw the AKP return to its previous majority in the November 2015 re-election.

Other perceived threats to the AKP government during these years included the summer 2013 Gezi demonstrations and a growing isolation in the region, as the increasingly assertive neo-Ottoman ideology of Ahmet Davutoğlu alienated Turkey. Erdoğan's top aide, Ibrahim Kalın, framed it in 2014 as 'precious loneliness' (Gursel, 2014).



The July 2016 coup attempt galvanised another component of this nationalism, a deeply felt distrust and resentment towards the West.

This experience of being embattled internationally, as well as at the ballot box, and challenged by former domestic allies has led the AKP government to embrace a former AKP foe: nationalism and the nationalists. The neo-Ottomanism of Ahmet Davutoğlu was consequently relegated to a secondary position. 'Nationalism is the new ideology of Turkey' as one interviewee bluntly put it.⁴⁰ The nationalists had previously been displeased both with the AKP government's outreach to the Kurds and the early, welcoming, attitude to the Syrian Arab refugees – framed by the AKP early on as 'our Sunni Muslim brothers and sisters' – as well as with the joint AKP-Gülen power struggle against the nationalists in the military, judiciary and bureaucracy. But as the AKP clashed with the Gülen movement at the end of 2013, Erdoğan – to many observers' surprise – chose in January 2014 to pardon many of the core nationalist cadres jailed as part of two large court cases allegedly run by Gülen members in the police and judiciary (and supported by the AKP) (Arango, 2014).

The July 2016 coup attempt galvanised another component of this nationalism, a deeply felt distrust and resentment towards the West. Resentful of the perceived

wavering of Western responses to the coup attempt, the struggle against the coup was pitched in Turkey as a 'War of Independence 2.0' vis-à-vis Western attempts, as framed in one survey, to 'divide and conquer' Turkey, as had been the case in the wake of World War One (GMF-Bilgi, 2019). Popularly referred to as the 'Sèvres syndrome', this reflects a widely shared fear in Turkey that the West is set on undermining the sovereignty and unity of Turkey, as was perceived to be the case with the 1920 Sèvres Treaty.⁴¹ In the above-referenced 2018 survey 87.5% of the surveyed Turkish population shared this scepticism of Western intentions and 87.6% believed that the West helps terrorist organisations towards this purpose.

A relative loss of domestic power has seen the AKP turn to embrace a Turkish nationalist agenda that is not merely more anti-Kurdish and anti-Greek than the neo-Ottomanist agenda of the recent past, but also more outspokenly anti-Western.

In an otherwise polarised country, the AKP government can tap into a wide agreement across classic Islamist-Secular divides to gain support for a staunch scepticism of (1) Kurdish separatism, (2) Syrian Arab refugees and, as noted by more interviewees for this report,⁴² (3) a dogged, anti-Western resentment. In addition, there is a further aspect of this set of domestic developments: more interviewees noted the tendency, also highly publicised since at least 2013 in the Western press, towards a more autocratic and personalised leadership in Turkey.⁴³ As Mehmet Yegin highlighted, this domestic development might strengthen Erdoğan's relationship with Putin: 'His rulership is shaking, and aligning with Russia may be one way of pre-empting overexposure to Western forces that are interested in seeing Erdoğan go, and authoritarianism with him'.⁴⁴

This, according to Yegin, could lead Erdoğan to 'make Turkey less centred on its "Western" strategic culture in order to bolster his domestic regime stability'.


In sum, domestic developments in Turkey since at least 2011 seem to have enhanced independent centrifugal forces for Turkey's NATO future. A relative loss of domestic power has seen the AKP turn to embrace a Turkish nationalist agenda that is not merely more anti-Kurdish and anti-Greek than the neo-Ottomanist agenda of the recent past, but also more outspokenly anti-Western. As this more assertive nationalist agenda seems to enjoy widespread support across Turkey's otherwise polarised landscape, it is likely that domestic developments will continue to count as an independent centrifugal force for Turkey-NATO relations in the near future.

TURKEY'S QUEST FOR STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

There is an inextricable international dimension to the domestic developments outlined above as well. The most common denominator for this international dimension across several of the interviews for this report is 'strategic autonomy'.⁴⁵ This apparent Turkish quest for strategic autonomy is also likely to act as an independent centrifugal force for Turkey-NATO relations in the near future.

Strategic autonomy has several aspects. First, it has developed alongside the domestic developments from 2011 outlined above from an outward-looking and proactive neo-Ottoman dream of resuscitating Turkey's historical and geographical 'strategic depth' through ideas of 'zero problems with neighbours' and soft power more generally, to a more recent defensive and reactive nationalist struggle for independence coupled with a proven willingness to deploy hard power since 2015. Turkey is not turning eastward, as is often speculated, neither towards the Islamic world nor towards Russia. If anything, it has turned inward.

Secondly, this turn inward has come with a sense of frustration with a perceived lack of recognition from its Western allies, and a sense of being 'a second-class ally', as one NATO official put it.⁴⁶ Turkey's permanent representative to NATO, ambassador Basat Öztürk framed it as follows: 'Turkey is a "frontline ally", and expects Alliance solidarity'.⁴⁷ There is an increasing sense in Turkey that Turkey is not getting the solidarity it should. Examples include Western support for the YPG in Syria, the unwillingness of US and European partners to sell Turkey the much-needed SAMs, and the relative absence of Western support against the 2016 coup attempt. Further, there is a growing perception in Turkey that the US and Europe constitute a threat. In surveys of recent years, between 54–72% of Turks consider the US to be the primary security threat against Turkey (GMF-Bilgi, 2019). Also, it is increasingly common to come across claims, even amongst high-ranking AKP officials, that the US and other Western countries directly supported the coup attempt against the AKP government in 2016.



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A significant proportion of this alarmism is, of course, primarily for domestic consumption. And popular perceptions of Western countries as a security threat

could be susceptible to change were the political leadership to change its posturing. But this narrative has sufficient momentum at present – and this is a third aspect of this international angle to recent developments in Turkey – to push for strategic autonomy in relation to Turkey's NATO allies. In the words of Aaron Stein:


Ankara is willing to go it alone and follow an independent foreign policy that ascribes to its own interests. Those interests, at least in the Middle East, are divergent from those of the United States and much of the West. This is the so-called 'root cause' of the tensions with the West. It also frames how Turkey has executed foreign policy closer to home, in Cyprus and on the border with Syria.⁴⁸

It is within this context that Turkey has flirted with the idea of joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the past (most recently in November 2016) – an organisation which Turkey signed up to as a 'dialogue partner' in 2013 (Reuters, 2016). Since 2003, the SCO members have held annual joint military exercises. However, unlike the Russian-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), the SCO lacks a legal basis for collective defence against external aggression. With its twin threats of 'terrorism' and 'external aggression', the CSTO is more akin to a NATO-style security organisation than the SCO. Interpretations of the SCO as an Eastern counterpart to NATO (Felgenhauer, 2011; Stakelbeck Jr., 2005) are therefore off the mark.⁴⁹ Irrespective of the viability of SCO and CSTO as alternative frameworks for Turkey, Lars Haugom conceives of the Turkish flirtation with them as follows:

Rather than joining a regional organisation as an alternative to NATO, it is more likely that Turkey will continue its quest for strategic autonomy, forming flexible alliances with various states to obtain specific foreign policy goals, but without cutting its anchorage in the transatlantic community through NATO.⁵⁰

Erdoğan's public remarks that Turkey should have its own nuclear weapons is another indication of this quest for strategic autonomy.⁵¹ Despite public avowals time and again of the unshakable bond between Turkey and NATO, there is a simmering quest for strategic optionality within Turkish security policy circles, a certain 'non-aligned impetus', as Ian Lesser from the German Marshall Fund puts it.⁵² A certain independence posturing in security policies has been part of Turkey's longer-term alliance thinking since the foundation of the republic, but may have resurfaced again more strongly after the end of the East-West conflict, in which Turkey was a geopolitical bridgehead state in immediate proximity to NATO's clearly-defined enemy. As NATO's purpose became blurred in a post-Cold War environment,

Turkey's perceived relegation to the status of a 'second-class ally' may have contributed to a growing frustration in Turkish-NATO relations. Arguably, Turkey sees an interest in pushing international affairs beyond the unipolar moment following the Cold War into a supposedly multipolar world order where Turkey can gain independence through nurturing relations with partners from all sides of former fault lines; what Haugom has termed, 'flexible alliances'.



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There is a fourth and ideological aspect to this flirtation with SCO or any alternative organisation. As mentioned both by a few interviewees and in the more recent literature on Turkey, 'Eurasianism' is being posited as an alternative to the pro-NATO 'Atlanticism' of others. As formulated by one interviewee:

Eurasianists in Turkey argue that ... the re-emergence of an irredentist Russia together with the rise of China heralds new paradigms of change. For those, a new world order is being established or the current one is being amended, and Turkey is redefining its role and position in this 'new world'.⁵³

Eurasianism – understood here in a Turkish context – is a Russophile movement that historically united socialists and secular nationalists against both Europe and the US. But the AKP has arguably also embraced elements of Eurasianism in recent years, promoting ideologues such as the elusive Doğu Perinçek, once jailed under the anti-nationalist trials staged by the AKP and the Gülen movement before their falling out in 2013–14.⁵⁴ Perinçek is also both staunchly anti-Kurdish and a dedicated Turkish nationalist; both stances that have been adopted by the AKP since at least 2015. However, as one NATO officer also noted,⁵⁵ it is a pertinent question to ask how deep this Eurasianist orientation goes within the AKP inner circles, and if it will have a lasting impact on Turkey's foreign policy orientation.

The point made here, however, is that this does not necessarily reflect a Turkish turn 'eastward'. It should rather be understood as a way for Turkey to exercise a more strategically autonomous position in a multipolar world with more ad hoc options for

cooperation. The world is 'bigger than five', as Erdoğan has repeatedly stated in reference to the permanent members of the UN Security Council. And it is a world, as it is often put in Turkish media today, where the West is no longer a cohesive entity,⁵⁶ and where the EU is no longer as economically attractive as it used to be before the 2008 financial crisis. In one interviewee's words, 'there is a widespread belief that the EU has been crumbling, is not functioning'.⁵⁷ A perception of a declining West adds to the belief in a changing world where Turkey can articulate more varied, multi-vector policies with different actors rather than aligning with one camp or the other.

Turkey seems to have dropped both Atatürk's 'peace at home, peace in the world' and Davutoğlu's 'zero problems with neighbours' slogans as the current AKP government has found that it gains from invoking and deploying both military force and coercive diplomacy as an element of its engagements with others.

The final aspect of this quest for strategic autonomy is a new and more assertive Turkish modus operandi in pursuit of its own particular interests on the international stage. Turkey has proven a readiness to push an already assertive and offensive negotiating strategy that is also backed up by a declared preparedness to use hard power. As one interviewee put it:

Erdoğan is ... more willing to use force than most Turkish leaders that came before him, so the alliance has to contend with Turkey involving itself in foreign conflicts in ways that are not always in the best interests of the West.⁵⁸

-Aaron Stein

Of course, this need not involve the use of violence. Within a NATO context, Turkey for instance seems to be 'willing to push it further than has been the case before to pursue independent goals',⁵⁹ as made apparent through both the S-400 case and the widely publicised Turkish blockade of a NATO defence plan for Poland and the Baltics as part of a bargaining strategy. But Turkey seems to have dropped both Atatürk's 'peace at home, peace in the world' and Davutoğlu's 'zero problems with neighbours' slogans as the current AKP government has found that it gains from invoking and deploying both military force and coercive diplomacy as an element of its engagements with others.

The invocation of force as part of a solution to international issues also brings Turkey into disagreements with an actor like Russia. Turkey has mobilised militarily in the rebel-controlled Idlib province in northwestern Syria following pressure from Russia and Iran at a 7 September 2018 Astana group meeting in Teheran. This served to demonstrate to Russia that Turkey was not ready to give up on Idlib, forging the 17 September 2018 Sochi MoU with Russia. This all came to a head in early 2020. Turkey has also mobilised in support of the GNA government in Libya, allowing the GNA Tripoli government to fend off an attack by General Khaliffa Haftar's LNA-forces, supported by Russia, as outlined above.

This new Turkish coercive negotiating strategy has had implications for Turkey's relation with other NATO members as well. Turkey staged its largest-ever naval exercise 'Mavi Vatan' (Blue Homeland) in late February 2019 as a show of force, not least vis-à-vis Greece in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean (Maritime Herald, 2019). Turkey also sent a navy vessel to stop an Italian drilling vessel on its way to drill for gas in the Cyprus Exclusive Economic Zone in February 2018 (National Herald, 2018), and has subsequently sent navy vessels to escort Turkish exploration ships in the same area. These are but a few examples of the use of hard power to forge Turkey's position; in these cases against other NATO members.


Such use of hard power is an extension of threats, such as that of opening the gates for Syrian refugees in Turkey to freely travel to Europe, as was the case especially in 2015–16 (Timur & Nordland, 2016), in the wake of mounting European criticism of Operation Peace Spring in October 2019 (Oliphant, 2019), and in the spring of 2020 also in light of developments in Idlib, Syria (al-Aswad, 2020; Ozsoy & Dendrinou, 2020). The lesson learned for Turkey is that it gets more from the use of hard power and threats than it gets from engaging its interlocutors with more cordial and peaceful means.

In sum, all these aspects of Turkey's quest for strategic autonomy do seem to constitute a fairly strong centrifugal force for Turkey-NATO relations. Turkey is likely to gain more autonomy from playing all sides. On the one hand, Turkey can use Russia as a bargaining chip against the West. But on the other, Turkey also benefits from its NATO membership in its negotiations with Russia on the many conflictual issues those two countries have between themselves. What 'strategic autonomy' does seem to entail, however, is a more assertive pursuit of Turkish independent foreign policy goals, and these goals will more often than not diverge from those of NATO.

AMERICAN RETRENCHMENT FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

This leaves the fourth and final centrifugal force that seems to counterbalance the centripetal forces still in place. This fourth force springs from the fact that the US, under both Obama and Trump, has had a clear intention of pivoting away, or even retreating from the Middle East. With US retrenchment from the Middle East – and Europe’s notable absence in the same region – Turkey feels all but compelled to look for alternative security partners.

Particularly evident in Syria, US retrenchment from the Middle East has pushed Turkey to seek out new partnerships. This also brings it back from its erstwhile regional isolation. With the return of Russia to the region, Moscow is an obvious partner to pursue. Turkey’s relations with Russia were warming up significantly during the early 2000s. The shooting down of a Russian jet over Syria in November 2015 put an end to that. Yet, the relationship has deepened again since 2016, albeit with uncertainties over the longevity and preconditions for the perceived alignment, as the report has argued above. Turkey has gone through similar motions with Iran and pro-Iranian governments in the region: from a historic warm-up with Iran – as well as with pro-Iranian leaders Maliki in Iraq and Assad in Syria – during the first years of the AKP government to a steep deterioration in 2011 over Syria.⁶⁰ But relations between Turkey and Iran have also strengthened again in recent years with joint support of Qatar vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia in the summer of 2017, with mutual pressure on Kurdish hopes for independence in Northern Iraq in the autumn of 2017, with a shared animosity towards Israel in the region, and arguably with a joint interest in fending off US sanctions (Pierson, 2017).




With US retrenchment from the Middle East—and Europe’s notable absence in the same region—Turkey feels all but compelled to look for alternative security partners.

Regional politics in the Middle East have a complex dynamic of their own, but it already appears clear that US retrenchment from the region will leave a power vacuum, and that Turkey will be forced to seek out partners to address the challenges and opportunities that this entails. In this context, the sustainability of a NATO deterrence guarantee and consultation mechanisms will be tested against the evolution of Turkish foreign policy in a changing geopolitical landscape.

SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

This DIIS report has aimed to add background and analysis to the re-emerged debate about Turkey's NATO future. Chapter 1 opened with four cases and developments that have given rise to a fresh set of questions critically probing Turkey's NATO future. In response, observers and analysts have cautioned that at least three sets of centripetal forces are still in place to keep Turkey-NATO relations on track. Chapter 2 of the report outlined these three lines of argument supporting that centripetal forces are likely to both keep Turkey within NATO and prevent a public falling out at the working level. Acknowledging the power of these centripetal forces, Chapter 2 also argued that the centripetal forces are losing their strength to the degree that they cannot be taken for granted in the same sense as they could be in the recent past. The final chapter argued that four independent centrifugal forces have been gaining strength and salience to counterbalance the existing centripetal forces and that they increase the likelihood of further troubles ahead in Turkey's NATO future.




Observers and analysts have cautioned that at least three sets of centripetal forces are still in place to keep Turkey-NATO relations on track.

To spell it out in a bit more detail, Chapter 1 first outlined four recent cases that have hardened the debate on whether Turkey's future still lies in NATO, or whether NATO and Turkey are likely to part ways at some point in the future. The first case discussed was the controversy surrounding Turkey's purchase of the Russian surface-to-air S-400 missile defence system. The S-400 controversy is primarily a bilateral US-Turkish dispute, but with clear spill-over implications for Turkey-NATO relations,

both in terms of interoperability and long-term strategic orientation, and of the Turkish views of its NATO membership. The second case discussed was Turkey's conduct in Syria's armed conflict, where NATO partners and Turkey have been increasingly at odds. Syria has both exposed and increased Turkey's different security interests from those of its NATO partners. Moreover, Syria has brought Turkey closer to NATO's adversaries Russia and Iran, even if this development has also been fraught with challenges for Turkey. The third case that has highlighted differences within the alliance has been the rising level of tension in the Eastern Mediterranean over access to drilling for hydrocarbons. Turkey's drilling activities in the EEZ of Cyprus and maritime agreement with Libya have demonstrated complicated relations between Turkey and the EU first and foremost but have also added to the overall perception that Turkey's foreign policy does not shy away from confrontational moves towards other NATO members. Fourth, the attempted coup of July 2016 has contributed its share to alienating Turkey from other NATO partners even further. Turkey noted that Western governments were restrained in their reactions, while Russia was amongst the first states to side with President Erdoğan and express political solidarity. The ensuing purges amongst the Turkish ruling elites and military further marginalised pro-Western officials and decisively complicated Turkey's working-level relations with other NATO partners.

In Chapter 2 the report presented three cases made by a number of seasoned observers of the field to the effect that centripetal forces remain in place to keep the relationship on track—heated debates surrounding the cases outlined in Chapter 1 notwithstanding. First, there is a strong argument to the effect that both parties understand that they are too dependent on the alliance to sever ties. Irrespective of the mounting differences and public statements to the contrary, both sides recognise the 'alliance dependency' that will keep the relationship on track. The alternative is simply deemed to be worse. Secondly, the depth of Turkey's claimed pivot towards Russia and the implied challenges for Turkey-NATO relations is questioned. Third, most observers remind us that conflicts in Turkey-NATO relations are nothing new, and that the history of Turkey-NATO relations is fraught with cases of conflict resolution. Mechanisms are in place within NATO to address these more recent challenges. Both NATO and Turkey continue to see more benefits in each other than burdens. Chapter 2 acknowledges the power and relevance of these notes of caution, but also argues that these centripetal forces, although still in place, are losing their strength in a way that means that they cannot be taken blindly for granted in the same sense as they have been in the recent past.

Chapter 3 examined four independent centrifugal forces claimed to be gaining strength that will act to counterbalance the existing centripetal forces, even if they are unlikely to cause a complete breakup. These relate to Turkey's growing frustration with NATO's perceived lack of solidarity with Turkey in a turbulent regional environment; Turkey's domestic arena that imposes significant challenges to Turkey-NATO relations; Turkey's reinvigorated quest for strategic autonomy in the international arena; and America's retrenchment from the Middle East. This mix of factors makes it more likely that Turkey's view of NATO will continue to be ambivalent, if not somewhat confrontational, towards some NATO members. Turkey sees itself as a pivotal and autonomous foreign policy actor in a multipolar world, in which multiple centres of authority demand a dexterous approach to alliance thinking, transnational security coordination to contain terrorism, and a temporary convergence with actors like Russia or Iran, despite tensions with them in other issue areas.



Turkey sees itself as a pivotal and autonomous foreign policy actor in a multipolar world, in which multiple centres of authority demand a dexterous approach to alliance thinking, transnational security coordination to contain terrorism.

As is the case for most other developments in both the Middle East and in international politics at large, predictions or realistic foresight scenarios are difficult to make, even in the short term. All things considered, however, this DIIS report concludes that the existing centripetal forces are likely to keep Turkey-NATO relations on track, even if these centripetal forces are both losing strength and have come up against significant and accelerating centrifugal forces of late. In sum, Turkey's NATO future is likely to see further complications ahead.

NOTES

- 1 For the most coherent presentation of this view, see Yegin (2019).
- 2 Interview with Nicholas Danforth on 2 December 2019.
- 3 For most sophisticated versions, see Dalay (2019b), Tol (2019) & Tol and Taspinar (2019).
- 4 Interview with member of staff of the German representation to NATO, 27 May 2019.
- 5 Interview with NATO official, 30 September 2019.
- 6 Interview with Soli Özel, 28 October 2019.
- 7 The expected activation of the S-400 in the spring of 2020 is likely to see the debate in the US re-emerge.
- 8 Interview with Soli Özel, 28 October 2019.
- 9 Interview with NATO official, 30 September 2019.
- 10 <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2020/01/02/business/ap-eu-greece-israel-cyprus-pipeline.html?auth=login-google&login=google>
- 11 Interviews with one NATO official on 30 September 2019, two anonymous interviewees on 29 October and 12 November 2019, and one official from the Russia unit at NATO headquarters, Brussels, 29 May 2019.
- 12 Interview with NATO official, 30 September 2019.
- 13 Interview with NATO official, 30 September 2019.
- 14 Interview with Danforth on 2 December 2019.
- 15 For more on this, see the first section of Chapter 3 below. Also, one anonymous interviewee [S] noted that the markets for Turkey's ambitious defence industry are not NATO member countries, and that the Turkish defence industry would seek to avoid the constraints on sales to third countries that cooperation with NATO partners often entails. Another anonymous interviewee, however, noted that the Turkish defence industry is still dependent on cooperation with NATO partners for developing the required technology for modern weapons. It is not the purpose of the present report to assess this aspect of the debate, but it is worthy of note here that this is a further possible aspect that could contribute to the erosion of the power of alliance dependency.
- 16 See UN trade statistics, available at: <http://comtrade.un.org/data/>
- 17 Interview, NATO headquarters, Brussels, 29 May 2019.
- 18 Interview with Galip Dalay, 7 October 2019.
- 19 Interview with Lars Haugom, 18 September 2019.
- 20 Interview with Lars Haugom, 18 September 2019.
- 21 Interview with Soli Özel, 28 October 2019.
- 22 Interview with anonymous respondent, 12 November 2019.
- 23 Interview with Mehmet Yegin, 19 September 2019.
- 24 Interview with Peter Viggo Jakobsen, 5 September 2019.
- 25 For instance, a member of a European representation to NATO noted that NATO is very good at keeping controversial issues off the agenda at the working level, especially insofar the issues are deemed to be of a bilateral nature. Author interview at NATO headquarters, Brussels, 27 May 2019.
- 26 Interview with Peter Viggo Jakobsen, 5 September 2019.

- 27 In their recent article 'Turkey's Russian Roulette', Gönül Tol and Ömer Taşpınar (2019: p. 113) highlight how the US and German decision to go ahead with the withdrawal of their Patriot SAM batteries from Turkey in the autumn of 2015, in spite of Turkey's requests, strengthened the view in Ankara that NATO is not committed to Turkey's defence.
- 28 High-ranking Turkish representative to NATO in Brussels on 27 May 2019. SETA event, attended by one of the authors
- 29 Interview with Aaron Stein, 21 October 2019.
- 30 Interview with DIIS researcher, 6 June 2019.
- 31 Interview with NATO official, 30 September 2019.
- 32 Several interviewees have noted this as well. The interviewees privy to internal NATO workings speaking to the authors of this report on condition of anonymity in particular, highlighted issues over the PKK's Syrian affiliate, the YPG, and the Gülen movement—officially designated a terror group by the Turkish state in the spring of 2016 under the acronym FETÖ—as recurrent topics of discussion in NATO.
- See Chapter 3 below for an independent outline of the context and implications of the 2015–16 shifts in Turkey for Turkey's cooperation with NATO.
- 33 Interview with NATO official, 30 September 2019.
- 34 In one instance an interviewee remarked that NATO relations had become an impediment to a career within the Turkish armed forces. Interview with anonymous NATO professional, 12 November 2019.
- 35 Interview at NATO headquarters, Brussels, 27 May 2019.
- 36 Interview with Nicholas Danforth, 2 December 2019.
- 37 Interview with anonymous NATO official, 29 October 2019. Lars Haugom made similar points.
- 38 Interview with Soli Özel, 28 October 2019.
- 39 Turkey analysts often complain that domestic developments are the most important, and that international observers fail to appreciate their depth and impact. The present report does, to a large extent, share that view but pursues a line whereby domestic developments cannot be disentangled from Turkey's international relations, in particular developments in Syria.
- 40 Interview with anonymous interviewee on 29 October 2019.
- 41 For more on this 'Sèvres syndrome', see e.g. Tol & Taşpınar (2019) and Lindgaard (2018).
- 42 Interviews with Mehmet Yegin on 19 September 2019, Soli Özel on 28 October 2019 and two anonymous interviewees on 29 October and 12 November 2019.
- 43 Interviews for this Report with Mehmet Yegin on 19 September 2019 and two anonymous interviewees on 29 October and 12 November 2019.
- 44 Interview with Mehmet Yegin on 19 September 2019.
- 45 Soli Özel on 28 October 2019, Lars Haugom on 8 September 2019 and one anonymous interviewee on 12 November 2019 all mentioned this verbatim.
- 46 Interview with German NATO official, Brussels, 29 May 2019.
- 47 Presentation by Öztürk at SETA event in Brussels, 27 May 2019, attended by one of the authors.
- 48 Interview with Aaron Stein, 21 October 2019.
- 49 Comparing security policy coordination through the SCO and CSTO, Roy Allison also notes a geographical variation in that the CSTO focuses on the CIS Central Asian region and a 'CSTO zone of responsibility' as an implicit reference to Russian regional influence, while the SCO 'is heavily concerned with Central Asia (including the Xinjiang autonomous region) but reflects wider Chinese concerns in Asia and even aspects of global policy'. See Allison (2018, pp. 299, 322).

- 50 Interview with Lars Haugom on 8 September 2019.
- 51 For a deeper analysis hereof, see Tanchum (2019) and Spyer (2019).
- 52 Dr Ian Lesser, panel discussion at SETA office, Brussels, 27 May 2019.
- 53 Interview with anonymous interviewee, 12 November 2019.
- 54 For more on 'Eurasianism', see Tol & Taşpınar (2019), Aktürk (2015) and Kiniklioğlu & Morkva (2007).
- 55 Interview with Russia unit at NATO headquarters, Brussels, 29 May 2019.
- 56 Soli Özel highlights this point in the interview for this report on 28 October 2019.
- 57 Interview with anonymous interviewee, 29 October 2019.
- 58 Interview with Aaron Stein, 21 October 2019.
- 59 Interview with NATO official on 30 September 2019.
- 60 See e.g. Lindgaard (2017) for a brief overview of this development.

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