

Turkey in NATO and towards CSDP

In recent years, international partners have become more accustomed to an assertive Turkey, especially in relation to important security issues. Hence, Turkey has duly acquired the nickname “Enfant Terrible,” both in NATO and with regards to Turkey’s approach to CSDP. In NATO, Turkey’s assertiveness has occasionally undermined the consensus until allies have acceded to Turkish demands. Regarding the EU, Turkey, although unable to influence decisions directly, has indirectly blocked cooperation with NATO since 2004. Although Turkey’s policy is perhaps not surprising as disputes have occurred in the past, the number of instances in which Turkey has politically been at odds with the majority of NATO allies as well as involved in EU-related disputes, has nonetheless increased dramatically since 2009. As a result, analysts have questioned whether Turkey is moving away from Euro-Atlantic security structures and seeking new, as yet undefined, frameworks for international action.

Although Turkey is redefining its role in NATO, there is no reason to believe that Turkey will stop being a reliable and committed ally. Regarding the EU, especially CSDP, Turkey will continue to adopt an unconstructive approach, which will be exacerbated by the rigidity of the EU’s position. As a consequence, EU-NATO relations will continue to be adversely affected and will remain in a state of deadlock in the coming years, at least at the political level.

A Reliable Ally, but Unwanted European

Turkey joined NATO in 1952. The decision enjoyed strong political and public support at the time and throughout the Cold War. NATO, by way of U.S. power, underpinned Turkey’s security, which at the time, was under threat from the Soviet Union on account of a troubled history and Soviet claims to Turkish territory.¹ Located to the south of the Soviet Union, Turkey was of equal benefit to the Alliance and acted as a bulwark against the expansion of Soviet influence

¹ R. Menon, S.E. Wimbush, “The U.S. and Turkey: End of an Alliance,” *Survival*, vol. 49, no. 2, Summer 2007, p.136; and F.S. Larrabee, *Troubled Partnership: U.S.-Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change*, Rand, 2010, p. 3, www.rand.org.

into the Middle East. In addition, Turkey supplied important bases and facilities for the forward deployment of U.S. short and medium range (“tactical”) nuclear weapons along with the monitoring of Soviet compliance with arms control agreements. Thus, from a security standpoint, Turkey’s focus on NATO membership as a lynchpin of its security policy was a logical choice. Membership also furthered Turkey’s ambitions to be seen as an equal partner by western Europe and stood to symbolise Turkey’s connection to the “West.” In return, Turkey remained for NATO a “special” member, whose strategic importance has always been recognised. Political, military and economic support followed. The allies pursued various efforts to ensure that the situation in Turkey excluded the possibility of Soviet involvement in Turkey’s internal affairs.

After 1989, Turkey’s policy towards NATO remained essentially unchanged. Turkey continued to host U.S. “tactical” nuclear weapons and retained key elements of NATO’s command structure (Allied Air Command in Izmir) despite a deep reform, which limited the number of Allied command cells. Nonetheless, there were still some frictions during the 1990s. Turkey initially had reservations regarding NATO enlargement. Turkey stressed that NATO’s “open door” policy should not restore tensions with Russia, which may have provoked the latter to increase its military presence in the South Caucasus.² Still, Turkey ultimately agreed to expand NATO to include Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in 1999 and has since supported every round of NATO enlargement. In particular, Turkey has championed membership for the countries of the Balkans, but has been more reserved regarding Georgian and Ukrainian membership, mainly for fear of antagonising Russia.³

Turkey also had reservations regarding the expansion of NATO’s core tasks beyond that of territorial defence, which was the Alliance’s main function during the Cold War. Turkey, attached to NATO’s role as a guarantor of territorial sovereignty and security, appeared reluctant to see the Alliance undertake additional ‘out of area’ tasks. Turkey felt that such tasks may undermine the Alliance’s ability to carry out territorial defence by drawing NATO forces and resources away from its main function, namely to defend NATO member states against possible aggression. The Turkish position was not at all surprising. At

² Z. Khalilzad, I.O. Lesser, F.S. Larrabee, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Towards a Strategic Plan*, Rand, 2000, p. 42, www.rand.org.

³ B. Górka-Winter, M. Madej, *NATO Member States and the New Strategic Concept: An Overview*, PISM, 2010, p. 109, www.pism.pl.

the time, Turkey bordered countries such as Syria, Iraq and Iran, which had openly declared their hostility towards both the U.S. and NATO, and with whom Turkey had a troubled past. At the same time, the strategic debate within the Alliance intensified and as summed up by the famous statement of U.S. Senator Richard Lugar, “NATO go out of area, or out of business,” it became clear that Turkey’s traditional role in the Alliance belonged to the past. In the new post-Cold War geopolitical realities, Turkey’s strategic location on the southern “soft underbelly” of the Soviet Union lost its importance, and the Allies, feeling safer than ever before, were not prepared to recognise Turkish concerns about the future stability of its neighbourhood.

Nonetheless, Turkey was fully committed to the Alliance’s first stabilisation missions in the Balkans (especially IFOR and KFOR operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina). This stemmed in part from Turkey’s desire to continue to be seen as a reliable ally, and partly from its traditional interest in the Balkans as a region of Turkish political and economic influence. Turkey has also made a valuable contribution to NATO’s first truly “out-of-area” operation in Afghanistan. Turkish troops have participated in ISAF since 2002, at a time when many allies were not at all interested in supporting the mission, and twice took rotational command of the whole operation.⁴ Further, Turkey did not question the adoption of expeditionary tasks by NATO and the direction of force transformation, which followed.⁵

The importance of NATO to Turkish security policy has strongly influenced Turkey’s position towards attempts to develop an autonomous European security structure. In the 1980s, Turkey had already criticised the idea of constructing a European security identity outside NATO, following the decision to reactivate the Western European Union (WEU) and give it an operational role (the Petersburg Declaration of the WEU Council, 1992). On the one hand, Turkey faced the prospect of the Alliance’s reduced interest in territorial defence, and on the other, a shift in European allies’ focus from investment in NATO to the WEU. For this reason, Turkey aimed to engage in the development of the WEU to ensure its subordination to NATO. The Turkish position was in line with the U.S., the UK and the Danish stance among others, which equally viewed the

⁴ First between July 2002 and February 2003, and secondly between February and June 2005; the Turkish contingent was at the time 1300 strong.

⁵ B. Górka-Winter, M. Madej, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

WEU as a potential threat to the future of NATO and the transatlantic relationship in general.

This problem was ultimately solved in a manner acceptable to Turkey. In 1992, the WEU granted non-WEU NATO members (i.e. Turkey plus Iceland and Norway) the status of an “associate member.” As a result, Turkey gained the right to speak and make proposals in all WEU bodies and on all issues, but did not have the right to vote. Turkey was also able to take part in all potential WEU military missions, including the planning and preparation phase. This meant that although Turkey did not possess the formal powers to block a WEU decision, it could exert considerable influence during debates. In addition, Turkey was also allowed to fully participate in the activities of the Western European Armaments Organisation (WEAO), which was responsible for coordinating the development of weapons systems and common defence equipment programmes.⁶ In addition, NATO approved a mechanism in 1996, which allowed the WEU to conduct independent military operations with recourse to NATO resources, but only in instances in which the Alliance chose not to respond.⁷ This meant that the WEU was unable to take military action without Turkey’s consent. This was particularly important in the context of the Balkans, a region in which Turkey has always viewed Western European involvement with skepticism. Turkey’s strong position in the WEU underscored the country’s European ambitions and allowed for greater involvement in the process of European integration in the security and defense domain which was then gaining momentum.

It soon became clear however, that the WEU was little more than a “paper tiger” and thus, Turkey’s associate membership meant very little in practice. The main reason for this, was the EU’s decision to establish its own security and defence policy and assume the tasks and resources of the WEU accordingly. The EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP as it is now known) failed to account for non-EU NATO member states such as Turkey, but also Iceland and Norway. As a result, Turkey yet again felt excluded from a European security framework, and thus, adopted a critical stance. With no formal capacity for action in the EU, Turkey began blocking a NATO-EU agreement which, as in the

⁶ M. Cebeci, “A Delicate Process of Participation: The Question of Participation of WEU Associate Members in Decision-Making For EU-led Petersberg Operations, with Special Reference to Turkey,” Occasional Papers, Western European Union Institute of Security Studies Occasional Paper, no. 10, November 1999.

⁷ M.A. Laborie Iglesias, “NATO-EU Cooperation in the Atlantic Alliance’s Future Strategic Concept,” *Real Institute Elcano (ARI)*, 12 April 2010, p. 2.

case of the WEU, would allow the EU recourse to Alliance resources. Turkey's veto effectively prevented the two organisations from establishing cooperation for almost two years when in December 2002 EU member states decided to grant Turkey limited power in CSDP. It was agreed that in all EU operations using NATO assets, non-EU NATO members such as Turkey, together with NATO partnership for peace countries, would be allowed to participate in the planning phase of the operation, as well as participate in the operation itself. The EU also declared that CSDP will never be used against a NATO member and in circumstances whereby the EU launched an operation in Turkey's neighbourhood, it would inform as well as include Turkey in the planning and preparatory phase. The above decisions were taken in response to objections to several scenarios perceived by Turkey as a threat. For instance, as an EU member state, Cyprus, with whom Turkey has a longstanding territorial dispute could, through EU-NATO cooperation mechanisms, gain access to sensitive information regarding Turkey's military capabilities. In addition, Turkey feared that Cyprus could pursue its own interests in the event of a mission being launched in Turkey's neighbourhood, for example in the Balkans. Finally, not entirely sure at the time of the future evolution of the ESDP, Turkey was aware of the possibility of an EU operation in Cyprus, for example, in the event of a conflict between Greek and Turkish communities; in such a scenario, Turkish interests would be directly undermined. Having secured its interests, Turkey removed its objections and unblocked EU-NATO negotiations, which ultimately led to the establishment of the Berlin Plus formula. Turkey also used its privileges to participate in the first Berlin Plus missions in Macedonia (2003) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2004). After securing its interests in the Berlin Plus agreement, the mechanism became quickly obsolete as the EU began to focus on autonomous missions in which it was not obliged to consult Turkey.

At the EU's invitation, Turkey supported the mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo through the provision of airlift. Turkey has also participated, though to a lesser extent, in other, smaller EU operations. Apart from these exceptions however, Turkey has been completely excluded from CSDP. For example, the EU has thus far refused to grant Turkey membership of the European Defence Agency (EDA), the successor to the WEAO, despite having already granted it to Norway, also a former associate member of the WEU. Once again, Turkey has been excluded from European security cooperation. The main reason for this is Cyprus, which Turkey does not formally recognise as a state owing to its dispute. Since Cyprus acceded to the EU in May 2004, it has consistently blocked Turkey's accessions negotiations with the EU, as well as

vetoed greater Turkish involvement in CSDP. Another factor has been the attitude of a number of EU member states, led by France and Germany, which have generally been skeptical about Turkey's deeper integration with the EU and future membership.

Tensions and Conflicts

In recent years, Turkey's stance on a number of issues has increasingly diverged from that of many NATO allies. The result has been a string of high-profile disputes at the highest political level, which have undermined Alliance cohesion and prompted analysts to question whether Turkey's security policy is being re-orientated.

One of the first major disputes between Turkey and a large majority of NATO allies related to the appointment of a new Secretary General, which was scheduled to be announced at the Alliance's 2009 anniversary summit in Strasbourg-Kehl. Turkey opposed the candidacy of the then, Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, despite strong support from many allies, including Germany, the UK and the U.S. Turkish opposition which seemed to underscore Turkey's role as the defender of Muslim dignity related to Rasmussen's mishandling of the "cartoon crisis" of 2006 (in which a Danish newspaper published a cartoon depicting the Prophet Mohammad with a bomb in his turban).⁸ At the time, The Danish Prime Minister refused to apologise for the nature of the cartoon and defended freedom of expression. His refusal sparked riots and attacks on Danish embassies in several Muslim countries. Turkish opposition also related to Denmark's alleged support for the activities of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has been fighting the Turkish authorities and the military for decades. Again, Rasmussen refused to block the broadcast of "Roj TV," which was suspected of having links to the PKK, on the grounds of freedom of speech despite insistent calls from Turkey. Turkey's strong stance ultimately prolonged the Summit, until it eventually dropped its opposition after the personal intervention of the U.S. President, Barack Obama and the promise of several, top NATO posts, including that of Deputy Secretary General.⁹

⁸ S. Kardas, "Ankara Debates Rasmussen's Candidacy for NATO Secretary General," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, no. 58, 2009, www.jamestown.org.

⁹ I. Traynor, "Bitter Turkey Finally Lifts Veto on Danish PM as NATO Chief," *The Observer*, 5 April 2009.

A further dispute between Turkey and NATO allies emerged during the preparation of the new Strategic Concept, scheduled to be unveiled in autumn 2010 at the Summit in Lisbon. Prior to the Summit, speculation was widespread over whether Turkey would block the adoption of the new document if several conditions were not met, most of which related to the decision to develop a common missile defence system. The main reason related to Turkey's objection to naming Iran as the specific threat envisaged by the system. This was not due to the fact that Turkey did not perceive Iran as a threat. On the contrary, by naming Iran, Turkey feared that it would provide the regime in Tehran with justification to redouble its nuclear efforts as well as acquire more advanced missile capabilities.¹⁰ Turkey also insisted that the system should be a NATO and not U.S. project and that it should cover every single square inch of Turkish territory.¹¹ Although Turkey's position seems justified, given the particularly high threat from neighbouring Iran and developed trade relations with the country, the Turkish veto once again attracted the attention of media and experts. Ultimately, Turkey achieved its main objective. The new Strategic Concept does not name Iran as the specific threat behind the Alliance's missile defence plans whilst essential elements of the NATO system will be located in Turkey and all Turkish territory will be covered.

The most recent case of Turkish-NATO discord relates to Turkey's initial opposition to NATO's intervention in Libya. In February 2011, when the crisis in Libya began to unfold, the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan flatly rejected NATO involvement, warning that a military intervention by NATO would be "counter-productive" and may have "dangerous consequences."¹² The Turkish President, Abdullah Gul, was of the same view. Turkey thus found itself at odds with France and the UK, which openly called for military intervention in Libya. What's more, Turkey's image in the Muslim world suffered, as the media intensively covering crimes committed by the Libyan regime. The official reason for Turkey's opposition was insufficient regional support for intervention, especially within the Arab League and individual Arab countries.¹³ One could argue that Turkey was using its Arab and Muslim card again. Turkey's trade

¹⁰ S. Ozel, "NATO Summit: Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy," *GMFUS*, 6 December 2010.

¹¹ M. Kibaroglu, "The 'missile Shield' and Turkey's Position in the Debate," *Today's Zaman*, 1 November 2010.

¹² "Turkey Opposes NATO Libya intervention: PM," *Defense News*, 14 March 2011.

¹³ J. Head, "Libya: Turkey's FM Ahmet Davutoglu Outlines Policy," *The BBC*, 29 March 2011.

links with Libya, which have expanded considerably in recent years, may have also been a considerable factor. When regional support eventually came, culminating in the attainment of UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1973, supported by the Arab League, Turkey made a complete “u-turn” by openly supporting the intervention and called on NATO to assume full command and control of all three elements of UN SCR 1973 (i.e. the arms embargo, the no-fly zone and actions to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under the threat of attack). Part of the reason why Ankara began calling for full NATO command and control was to preclude any unilateral action by individual allies, specifically France, and to ensure that it had a voice in setting more restrictive rules of engagement for fear of civilian casualties. This brought Ankara in direct, even bitter, confrontation with Paris and led to a lengthy political standoff before the U.S. intervened and made it possible for NATO to assume unified command over the operation. Turkey ultimately contributed five navy ships and a submarine to help enforce the arms embargo. The Turkish parliament also approved sending more forces, including troops, if necessary. The air component of the NATO operation was commanded from Turkish soil in the form of Allied Air Command Izmir.

While recent disputes within NATO may look serious, Turkey’s relations with the EU have fared much worse in recent years. A major source of tension, at least in the security and defence sphere, has been Turkey’s exclusion from the EU’s CSDP, which has also undermined EU-NATO cooperation. Since 2004, only a year after the Berlin plus framework was agreed (providing a basis for EU-NATO collaboration in operations, capability development and political consultations), Turkey, unable to completely block the agreed framework for cooperation, began a policy of vetoing any attempt to develop Berlin plus and to adjust it to the changing needs of both organisations. The Turkish veto has become a constant element of all EU-NATO meetings, limiting them to a narrow scope of outdated and increasingly irrelevant problems which were established in 2003, when the original agreement was negotiated. As a result, parallel NATO and EU operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan and in the waters of the western Indian Ocean were unable to kick-start formal cooperation, with both organisations running duplicate capability projects (as there is still neither a political nor technical agreement, which could regulate cooperation of the EDA and the Allied Command Transformation). They were also prevented from holding regular consultations on general security issues and from finding ways to broaden the cooperation (which has been particularly damaging since there are multiple areas in which both structures could collaborate—e.g. the EU has

civilian expertise, which NATO lacks, whilst the latter has developed robust planning and command capacity, incomparable to the EU's modest, at best, command and control system). As the Turkish veto in the EU has been mirrored by Cyprus, both organisations have ended up in a destructive deadlock, sustained by a vicious circle of Turkish-Cypriot cross-vetoing (Turkey does not agree to a new EU-NATO agreement since Cyprus, whom it does not recognise, would be one of its parties; Cyprus does not let the EU bring Turkey closer to the CSDP, because it wants to be recognised first). In fact, neither Turkish opposition to developing cooperation with NATO, nor Cyprus's blocking of EU attempts to build CSDP-NATO partnership, have much to do with general security issues and more with the future of the disputed island.

An awareness of the costs of the EU-NATO deadlock has led to an initiative to overcome, or at the very least, to circumvent the consequences. New political momentum in 2009–2010 allowed for a practical proposal to be tabled. The appointment of a new NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, in 2009, certainly helped the situation. Rasmussen heavily endorsed the idea of reviving EU-NATO relations, and in early 2010 proposed a dual-track approach to break the stalemate. The idea, often referred to as the “Rasmussen initiative,” proposed that the EU should re-consider signing a Security Agreement with Turkey, as well as an administrative accord between Turkey and the EDA. This step would be subject to Cypriot consent, and would thus require EU members to approach Cyprus with some concrete proposals to enable more Turkish participation in CSDP, both at the political and technical level. In return, NATO would approach Turkey in an effort to persuade the country to finally allow Cypriot participation in NATO actions, possibly by granting Cyprus the status of a formal partner (i.e. membership in the Partnership for Peace program), or finding a similar solution that would allow Cyprus to be officially represented in NATO.

Nonetheless, Turkey flatly rejected the proposal in September 2010, on the grounds that it runs contrary to the Turkish policy of “not recognising Cyprus.”¹⁴ Turkey's rejection came as a surprise to many experts. As a result, some began to question whether Turkey had in fact lost interest in CSDP and the development

¹⁴ The proposal won little enthusiasm both in the EEAS and among EU members, which were reluctant to seriously discuss the matter with Cyprus. In addition, Cyprus itself has not shown any attempt to rethink its policy towards EU-Turkey cooperation.

of relations with the EU more broadly, including accession. The subsequent announcement, that Turkey will suspend diplomatic relations with the EU during the Cypriot presidency of the EU Council in the latter half of 2012, has only served to fuel speculation. Nonetheless, it should be added that between 2010 and 2011, Turkey agreed to sign several technical agreements governing cooperation between EU and NATO operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan and the Indian Ocean, which finally enabled their staff to work together (though still at a modest level).

An Assertive Ally and Disillusioned European: The Future of Turkish Security Policy

NATO continues to occupy a central role in Turkey's security. The political elite continue to view the Alliance as the basis of the country's security and defence policy, the linchpin of transatlantic ties and the institution of first choice in countering risks and threats in the Euro-Atlantic region.¹⁵ NATO's continued importance for the Turkish political elite is reflected in a number of recent developments. Turkey is keen to retain U.S. tactical nuclear weapons, unlike fellow allies Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands.¹⁶ Turkey also fought hard to retain key elements of the NATO command structure during a recent reshuffle. Under new plans, the NATO airbase at Izmir will most likely be transformed into a land command. In addition, Turkey has recently agreed to host an early-warning radar at a military installation in Kuroki as part of NATO's missile defence system, albeit after much wrangling. In the context of relations with neighboring Iran, the decision to host the radar illustrates Turkey's continued commitment to the cohesion and effectiveness of the Alliance. It should also be added that Turkey currently participates in three of the four ongoing NATO operations (Turkey has more than 1,800 troops in Afghanistan as part of the ISAF mission, making it the ninth largest troop contributor, excluding the U.S.) and is part of a select group of allies, which have traditionally met the political commitment of spending 2% or more of GDP on defence.¹⁷

¹⁵ "Turkey's Security Perspectives and Its Relations with NATO," *Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, www.mfa.gov.tr.

¹⁶ M. Kibaroglu, "Reassessing the Role of U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Turkey," *Arms Control Today*, June 2011.

¹⁷ In 2010, defence spending admittedly fell below the 2% mark to 1.9% of GDP. However, experts claim that this was more likely the result of strong economic growth in recent years, rather than dwindling interest in the Alliance. Indeed, Turkey was one of only a few NATO member states to announce an increase in its defence budget for 2011.

Many experts agree, that Turkey has been one of the main benefactors of the “Arab Spring” (a wave of popular protests in Arab countries, which have led to the fall of several autocratic governments).¹⁸ The subsequent democratisation process in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt offers Turkey, which is one of the world’s few democratic Muslim republics, an opportunity to increase its political and economic influence on these countries. Recent developments in North Africa and the Middle East also underscore NATO’s value for Turkey. For one, the “Arab Spring” has the potential to stir regional competition between Turkey and Iran, especially as the latter will view developments as a further opportunity to spread its revolutionary ideals and build its own influence in the region. The growing civil conflict in Syria also has potential consequences for Turkey. Turkey has openly criticized the policies of President Bashar al-Assad, and demanded that he leave office. This will test the Turkish-Syrian relationship, one which has improved markedly in recent years. There is also the possibility of civil unrest spilling over the Turkish border. Still, for Turkey, the most serious problem would be an escalation of tensions between Iran and the “West” with the possibility of a preemptive strike on Iran’s burgeoning nuclear facilities. The likelihood of this scenario has increased of late, following the publication of a special UN report by the International Atomic Energy Agency, highlighting recent progress in Iran’s nuclear programme. In the event of an attack, Turkey, a member of NATO, which is viewed as an instrument of U.S. and Israeli policy, may be subject to Iranian retaliation, including terrorist activities.¹⁹ There is also the Kurdish issue to consider. Tensions between the Turkish authorities and the PKK have escalated in recent months, following the latter’s renewed attacks on the Turkish army and police in the eastern part of the country. Consequently, Turkey will continue to require close cooperation with the U.S., particularly given that Northern Iraq remains a safe haven for the PKK. All in all, NATO membership strengthens Turkey’s position and provides a tangible guarantee of assistance, at least in political if not military terms (such as the sharing of intelligence).

In the aftermath of the Syrian revolution and recent advancements in the Iranian nuclear program, Turkey will also remain a highly valuable member of NATO, mainly for its geopolitical position. Turkey stands at the nexus of four

¹⁸ A. Nader, T. Ozhan, S. Larrabee, M. Ataman, *The Arab Spring and its Effects on Turkey’s Regional Policy*, SETAV, 2011, www.setav.org.

¹⁹ “Iran Threatens to Hit Turkey if US, Israel Attack,” *Today’s Zaman*, 27 November 2011.

geographic regions (the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and the Persian Gulf region) and shares borders with potentially threatening states such as Iran and Syria. Turkey's military forces and capabilities are also an asset to the Alliance. Turkey has the second largest military capability in NATO in terms of active service personnel, equipped with full spectrum capabilities and is also a reliable contributor to Alliance operations. What is more, Turkey spends far more on defence than the average ally, and has not made defence cuts following the financial crisis.

Despite a somewhat strained relationship in recent years, Turkey will also continue to see the benefit of NATO membership in the near future, which helps Turkey to build its position in the international arena, especially towards neighbouring regions as well as partners in the EU. Bearing in mind the rapidly changing security environment surrounding Turkey, Turkey is likely to remain politically and militarily committed to the Alliance.²⁰

The positive attitude of Turkish elites towards the Alliance, however, miss the mood of the public. Polls shows that popular support for the Alliance in Turkey has notably decreased in recent years. In 2011, 37% of Turks felt that NATO was essential to Turkey's security compared with 53% in 2004.²¹ This trend coincides with the growing hostility towards the U.S. after controversial military interventions in Iraq and to a lesser extent, Afghanistan. The decline in popular support for the Alliance is also rooted in the redefinition of Turkey's foreign policy priorities under the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). One major priority has been to strengthen Turkey's regional and international standing as well as be regarded as an equal partner in relations with the EU and the U.S. A key element of this has been the concept of "Strategic Depth" (Turkish: "Stratejik Derinlik"), created by the current Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu. Accord to this concept, Turkey should seek to rebuild its political, economic and cultural influence in the countries which were once part of the Ottoman Empire and thus, are somewhat predestined to become important Turkish partners. In particular, this policy includes the use of "soft power" such as diplomacy, trade, military assistance, cultural links and the attractiveness of Turkey's political and social model as a way to increase cooperation, especially with those with whom relations have traditionally been fraught.

²⁰ A. Patel, "Why Turkey Will Continue to Remain a Committed Member of the Atlantic Alliance", *RUSI Commentary*, 2011, www.rusi.org.

²¹ "Transatlantic Trends 2011: Top Line Data," *GMFUS*, 2011, www.gmfus.org.

A good illustration of this policy is the economic cooperation between Turkey and Arab countries. Turkey has signed free-trade agreements with Egypt (2007), Jordan (2009), Morocco (2004), Syria (2004), and the Palestinian territories (2004) in recent years. As a consequence, the value of Turkey's exports to the Middle East and North Africa has increased sevenfold between 2001 and 2008. In 2010, Turkey's trade with Arab countries stood at \$10 bln. Further, Turkey also uses tools aimed at ordinary citizens. In 2009, Turkey abolished visas for the citizens of Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Syria, thus opening the country to Arab businessmen, journalists, students and tourists. A good illustration of Turkey's interest in the Arab world is reflected by the multi-day trip undertaken by the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan to Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt in the summer of 2011, shortly after the uprisings in each country, marking a bold effort to tie the new Arab democracies to Turkey.

Another illustration of Turkey's ambition to act as a leader in the Arab World has been the drastic limitation of its relations with Israel following the attack on the so-called "freedom flotilla" (i.e. a maritime convoy with humanitarian aid destined for Gaza, but suspected by Israel, of carrying weapons) by Israeli special forces in July 2010, which killed several Turkish citizens. Following the publication of a UN report in September 2011, which recognised that the scale of Israel's response was disproportionate to the threat, Turkey expelled several Israeli diplomats, denounced the two countries' agreement on military cooperation and lowered the importance of Turkey's diplomatic mission in Tel Aviv. These moves were accompanied by a statement from Prime Minister Erdogan, in which he referred to Israel's actions as "grounds for war."²² Turkey's relations with Israel, which have traditionally been rather good, have been seriously undermined as a consequence. A new source of tension is the Israeli-Cypriot agreement on the exploitation of gas deposits from beneath the Mediterranean in the Cypriot exclusive economic zone. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, supported by Turkey also claims the right to the exploitation of the deposits. The number of disputes between Turkey and NATO allies in recent years suggests a shift in the vectors of Turkish security policy. In an examination of the causes, course and outcome of these disputes and the Turkish drive to redefine its regional role against the backdrop of Turkey's continuing involvement in NATO, it can be assumed that relations between Turkey and its NATO allies will not lead to a

²² "Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan Saw 'Grounds for War' with Israel after Flotilla Raid," *The Telegraph*, 13 September 2011.

crisis. Yet, the Allies will have to come to terms with a new Turkey, emancipated and striving hard with its national interests in the context of the Alliance. Although Turkey remains a reliable ally, the allies will increasingly have to take into account its specific security interests, and often differing risk assessment. Turkey's strategic goal is a situation, in which Turkish political support will be an indispensable element of any NATO effort in the Middle East and North Africa. Turkey wants to have its voice clearly heard by the strongest Allies. Otherwise, Turkey will not hesitate to adopt a different course than the majority of allies. In this context, one cannot help but make an interesting comparison. Turkey, ruled by Prime Minister Erdoğan and the AKP may pursue a similar course to that of France, under General de Gaulle. For instance, Turkey may remain tied to NATO as pillar of European security, but at the same time pursue its own distinct strategic interests, which may somehow undermine U.S. dominance within the Alliance. A "Gaullist" Turkey would be a committed and reliable ally in a crisis, but tough in negotiations, relentless in the fight for its own interests and manifesting a clear drive to shape at least some of the Alliance's policies according to its own national strategy.²³

At the same time, Turkey's European ambitions appear to be receding. Turkey's accession negotiations have been blocked since 2005, whilst major EU countries such as France and Germany, openly oppose the prospect of Turkish membership. Even the establishment of a visa free travel regime, which the EU has already introduced for the citizens of the Balkans has proven problematic. The EU, which has been focused on its own problems in the last years, has neither proposed a credible perspective for Turkish integration so far, nor taken any action to convince Turkey that it can expect some tangible benefits from its partnership with the EU. European experts and research centres have occasionally proposed the launch of a new strategic dialogue between the EU and Turkey. However, the results have been limited due largely to fundamental differences in how to structure talks. Still, Minister Davutoğlu recently participated in an informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers (Gymnich) in Sopot in September 2011. The meeting provided a good opportunity to discuss issues related to Turkey's accession negotiations along with the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. Still, there is no guarantee that the continuation of informal contacts can provide the basis for increased dialogue between Turkey and the EU.

²³ O. Taspinar, "The Rise of Turkish Gaullism: Getting Turkish-American Relations Right," *Insight Turkey* 2011, no. 1, pp. 11–17.

Taking it all into consideration, it is not surprising that Turkey adopts a negative attitude towards the development of the EU's CSDP, and has consistently rejected attempts by the NATO Secretary General to enhance relations between the two organisations. Given that Turkish demands vis-à-vis CSDP are unlikely to be met in the foreseeable future (i.e. inclusion in the planning and preparation phases of autonomous EU operations and participation in the activities of the EDA), Turkey is unlikely to stray from its current political course, namely demanding closer participation in CSDP and blocking EU-NATO cooperation. For as long as CSDP remains in crisis (no large operations have been organized since 2008 while member states are becoming increasingly reluctant to support the development of military and civilian capabilities for future missions) Turkey's course will remain unchanged. Unfortunately, this means that EU-NATO relations are unlikely to improve significantly. Recent steps in relation to staff-to-staff contacts in both organisations and the start of a working cooperation between the NATO Secretary-General and the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, will remain the only developments for now, even if they are of a rather technical nature. Disappointed, Turkey has moved away from the mainstream of European security cooperation.²⁴ And for now, at least, there are no reasons why it should reconsider its position.

Still, European integration is likely to remain a priority for the AKP government. This is not only illustrated by its attempts to resolve the Cyprus problem but also in its work to draft a new constitution, which would make Turkey more democratic in accordance with EU criteria. The AKP government, recently re-elected for the third time, will remain interested in EU membership because it views accession as an opportunity to increase living standards within Turkey. Further, it will not abandon the policy for fear of losing sections of its electorate that see EU integration as a chance for the further democratisation of the country. However, the acceleration of talks by Turkey should not be expected. The government will neither make further concessions on the Kurdish issue nor on the Cyprus problem. Furthermore, in the event of future turmoil, it is likely that the government may sacrifice an improvement in relations with the EU for the sake of domestic political goals.

²⁴ N.A. Erlap, "Turkey-EU Relations: Has It Become a hopeless Case?," Policy Note, no. 201151, October, 2011, Economic Policy Foundation of Turkey, www.tepav.org.tr.

Conclusions

Turkish foreign and security policy has undergone a transformation in recent years. Turkey openly seeks a greater role in the Middle East and North Africa and is willing to defend resolutely its interests in relations with Europe and the U.S. Nonetheless, as a rational actor, Turkey will try to avoid a crisis in its relations with NATO allies, given that the Alliance continues to play a central role in the country's security and especially bearing in mind the potential for instability in nearby regions. Turkey will likely remain a reliable and committed ally in a time of crisis. Nonetheless, Turkey will continue to be a source of friction in the Alliance, particularly when its interests or demands are not accepted, thus serving to undermine the cohesion of the Alliance. However, this will not be a permanent crisis, as is the case with EU-NATO relations. As regards the latter, there is unlikely to be any breakthrough. There is a real lack of interest on the part of the EU to redefine its relations with Turkey and then of course, there is the Cyprus veto, which is a formal obstacle to greater Turkish participation in CSDP and the resumption of accession negotiations.