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TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS

AND THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION OF THE U.S.

KILIC BUGRA KANAT
WITH JACKSON HANNON, JACK DURKEE



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ABSTRACT

The forthcoming U.S. president will enter office facing significant challenges in the relationship with Turkey. Despite the strong alliances under the umbrella of NATO and the partnership within the coalition to fight against ISIS, which entered a new phase with the recent joint military operations with Turkish special forces and Free Syrian Army units, the two countries in recent years have experienced significant tensions in their relations. The next president of the United States and his or her foreign policy and security team will face questions and concerns over several significant security and strategic issues from their counterparts in Turkey. Overcoming these challenges and improving relations with Turkey, a significant ally both in NATO and in the fight against ISIS, needs to be an important priority for the next president. This will necessitate the next president taking several steps to consolidate already existing ties and strengthening mutual trust and confidence between the two allies. The issues of Syria, the YPG, and the Gulen case will be the most challenging disagreements to resolve for the new administration in its relations with Turkey.



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BACKGROUND

The forthcoming U.S. president will enter office facing significant challenges in the relationship with Turkey. Despite the strong alliances under the umbrella of NATO and the partnership within the coalition to fight against ISIS, which entered a new phase with the recent joint military operations with Turkish special forces and Free Syrian Army units, the two countries in recent years have experienced significant tensions in their relations. Some of these problems are more general and structural, pertaining to U.S. relations with its allies. The last several years of U.S. foreign policy have led to serious skepticism among U.S. allies in terms of U.S. goals in different regions and its commitment to alliances and partnerships. Despite repeated verbal reassurances from U.S. foreign policy makers, there are too many questions, too much tension, and not enough clarity in U.S. relations with its allies. This feeling is prevalent in most of the U.S.'s traditional allies, including Poland, due to the missile defense system withdrawal; Japan, due to the questions about U.S. commitment to Japanese security; and Saudi Arabia, the Gulf countries, and Israel, due to the recent nuclear deal with

Iran. This situation generates an image around the world of the U.S. that it is not as reliable as it used to be. Statements, such as "U.S. abandoning its allies" or "U.S. throws an ally under the bus" have become very frequently cited and used in phrases in explaining U.S. relations with allies. U.S. allies no longer feel that U.S. respects the concerns and understands the problems that these countries endure in their regions. More specifically, the statements of President Obama and administration officials in recent interviews demonstrate this indifference, lack of sensitivity, and in some instances, aversion to the concerns of U.S. allies. Comments portraying allies as burdens and "free riders" deepens a sense of distrust in the U.S. and can have long lasting impacts on U.S. standing in these countries.

These general crises, in terms of U.S. allies, have serious implications for the U.S.-Turkish relationship as well. The following analysis enumerates and discusses problems resulting from these crises in the U.S.-Turkish alliance. The lack of clarity and indifference to Turkey's concerns, a lack of urgency in responding to serious crises in Turkey, and a lack of appreciation of the trauma in Turkey following the coup attempt all have their traces in U.S. relations with other traditional allies as well. For an administration that initially aimed to challenge and abandon the unilateralism of the Bush years, the current situation is an interesting outcome. The next administration needs to think about this aspect of foreign policy, clarify its position and role in international system, and explain its expectations from its allies. Whether it be "sharing the burden" or balancing regional relations, the U.S. administration must restructure relations with its allies by undertaking confidence-building measures, and negotiating terms of a new era in alliance relations. This would be an important step to improve the deteriorating relations with Turkey as well. Parts of the problems that will be further discussed can be prevented or contained

with this new policy. However, the current state of Turkish-American relations also necessitates fine tuning and readjustment, specifically regarding bilateral relations.

Although there have been fluctuations in the bilateral relations between the two countries, the relations increasingly declined following the Gezi Park incident in June 2013. The tensions between the two capitals were later aggravated by serious disagreements over regional developments, including the coup in Egypt in the summer of 2013. A few months after that, the pre-existing divergences regarding the conflict in Syria reached their apex when the Syrian regime used chemical weapons against civilians in Ghouta, Damascus in August 2013. One of the lowest points in relations was reached when ISIS and the YPG started to fight in the town of Kobani. U.S. criticisms of Turkey's position and Turkish criticism of U.S. military assistance to the YPG resulted in the most significant breach of trust between two countries. Following the rise of ISIS, the U.S. constantly criticized Turkey's failure to secure its borders with Syria, which subsequently caused more stress in bilateral relations. In terms of security, Turkey's attempt to purchase air defense systems from China, which was resolved later, and the disagreement over the use of Incirlik Air Base strained relations between two countries for an extended period of time.

The next president of the United States and his or her foreign policy and security team will face questions and concerns over these issues from their counterparts in Turkey. Overcoming these challenges and improving relations with Turkey, a significant ally both in NATO and in the fight against ISIS, needs to be an important priority for the next president. This will necessitate the next president taking several steps to consolidate already existing ties and strengthening mutual trust and confidence between the two allies. The issues of Syria, the YPG, and the Gulen case will be the most challenging disagreements to resolve

for the new administration in its relations with Turkey. These steps need to take place together with further institutionalization of relations and an increase in both multi-track and public diplomacy. Military-to-military talks and communication between foreign service officers needs to be strengthened. It is also important for the two countries to explore new areas of cooperation in the field of humanitarian diplomacy, especially with regard to Syrian refugees, and security and energy in the eastern Mediterranean. The last several crises in Turkey, and comments from the U.S. about Turkish politics and society, revealed a significant lack of knowledge about Turkey and its society. The actions and initiatives that would help fill this important gap in knowledge and information about a significant ally have to be covered in order to end the misunderstandings and misperceptions, which usually lead to misjudgments and misinformation about the developments in Turkey. Taking these steps will help smooth the tactical divergences, political differences, and crisis of confidence between the two nations and countries. At this critical juncture of regional politics, instead of debating who needs whom more, the next administration should focus on how to reclaim the strategic partnership and working relationship with an important ally.

STATE OF U.S.-TURKISH RELATIONS

When President Obama came to the White House, U.S.-Turkish relations were going through one of the most problematic periods of its history. The crisis that started with the U.S. decision to invade Iraq and the March 1st vote in Turkish parliament that denied the U.S. access to Iraq through Turkey led to one of the lowest point in bilateral relations. Although the two countries tried to fix the relationship in the last years of the Bush administration, those efforts were too little too late. President Obama

started his tenure with an agenda that prioritized the relations with Turkey. He made one of his first presidential trips to Turkey and offered a “model partnership” between two countries. During his first term, the interpersonal relations between Obama and Erdogan proved to be some of the finest in the history of bilateral relations. However, starting mostly with the second term of Obama presidency, the two countries had significant disagreements over certain regional issues. The divergence in regards to the conflict in Syria and the disagreement as a result of the 2013 coup in Egypt were critical moments in bilateral relations. Later, after the rise of ISIS, the disagreement over the Syrian conflict grew significantly. The totally opposite positions taken by Turkey and the U.S. on the YPG were on one of the most significant issues that arose during this period between the two countries.

The U.S. views the YPG as the only group able to fight against ISIS; however, the Turkish government has expressed that YPG’s goal is more than fighting against ISIS.

The U.S.’s position vis-a-vis the YPG, and U.S. military assistance to the YPG while the YPG attacks Turkish troops in Northern Syria and the group’s main partner, the PKK, is fighting against Turkey, are issues that will continue to have serious repercussions on bilateral relations. Without a doubt, these issues have significantly factored into the biggest erosion in public standing and political trust between the two countries. So far, members of the U.S. administration have underemphasized the significance of these issues on relations between the two allies. The risk of military assistance to the YPG, which is considered a terrorist organization by Turkey and is the clone of the PKK terrorist organization (as desig-

nated by the EU and U.S.), was not sufficiently taken into account by the administration. The U.S. considered its warnings to the YPG sufficient to stop the group’s ambitions in Syria and any potential attacks against Turkey.

Since the Kobani crisis, the U.S. administration has helped YPG fighters by providing ammunition and sending “advisors” to train them to fight more effectively against ISIS. The U.S. views the YPG as the only group able to fight against ISIS; however, the Turkish government has expressed that YPG’s goal is more than fighting against ISIS. According to Turkey, the group has more serious ambitions, including its repopulation strategy in northern Syria. This situation became more serious after the Free Syrian Army’s (FSA) operation against Jerablus, backed by Turkey and the international coalition against ISIS. The YPG forces’ attacks on a Turkish unit with anti-tank weapons are a serious development. The fact that a U.S.-backed group attacked a NATO ally and partner in the international coalition against ISIS will seriously affect bilateral relations between Turkey and the U.S. The attack made it clear that the YPG did not pay attention nor took into consideration Vice President Biden’s warnings, and challenges not only the Turkish military but also the U.S. demands. As the FSA continues to extend its controlled areas between Talabyad and al Rai, the crisis between Turkey and the YPG may escalate, which would lead to a further deterioration in U.S.-Turkish relations. Any escalation risks endangering the bilateral relationship because of the potential support for PKK activities in Turkey from the U.S.-empowered YPG. Considering the overlapping human resources of the YPG and the PKK, there is a high chance of seeing U.S. trained YPG fighters fighting alongside the PKK against the Turkish military in Turkey. This would basically mean indirect U.S. assistance for the terrorist activity of the PKK within Turkey.

Beyond the U.S.'s over-reliance on the YPG in northern Syria, U.S.-Turkish relations have been repeatedly strained in the last five years due to disagreements regarding the future of Syria. At the outset of the protests in Syria, both Turkey and the U.S. sought a diplomatic solution, as seen by Turkey's efforts to utilize its ties with Syria to push Assad towards a peaceful resolution.¹ The regime began to violently crack down on the protesters and failed to adopt reforms and measures that would stop the bloodshed in the country. Both the U.S. and Turkey decided to call on Assad to step down, speaking out in August 2011.² In fact, up until this point, there was meaningful coordination in the efforts of these two countries to control the situation in Syria. Reportedly, the White House delayed its August statement to allow then-Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu a last chance to urge Assad to begin reforms.³

However, despite the statements from the U.S. after the initial denouncement, the Obama administration failed to take any serious action against the Assad regime. As Turkey faced an increasingly dangerous border with Syria and increasing numbers of refugees, the U.S. continued to delay action, disturbing the Turkish government. While the U.S. and Turkish governments continued to consult with one another on Syria, the U.S. government avoided committing to any serious action. Furthermore, while U.S. allies and partners grew frustrated by the Obama administration's failure to act on the Syrian conflict, the U.S. complained about Turkey's "lack of commitment and action". President Obama,

whose motto in the Syrian conflict has been "no boots on the ground" regardless of what happened, has repeatedly criticized Turkey for not using its army to fight against the ISIS.

Just over a year after President Obama initially called on Assad to step down, and just after President Obama rejected a Clinton-sponsored plan regarding the conflict in Syria (which had the support all of the allies in the region, including Turkey, France and Germany), he issued the "red line" statement regarding the use of chemical weapons. Speaking at a White House press briefing, the president said that "there would be enormous consequences if we start seeing movement on the chemical weapons front or the use of chemical weapons."⁴ Just a few days after that, U.S. and Turkish officials met in Ankara for the first time to jointly discuss plans to hasten the removal of Assad from power.⁵ The international community and Turkish authorities waited for the U.S. to act throughout 2012 as numerous reports of the Assad regime using chemical weapons came out of Syria. However, the U.S. administration failed to act for an entire year despite confirmed reports of the use of chemical weapons in Ghouta in August 2013. President Obama demurred to act and announced that he would seek Congressional approval before carrying out any strike against the regime.⁶ His decision not to launch a military strike was taken despite support from most U.S. allies, including Turkey. When Russia offered a deal to remove the Assad regime's chemical weapons from Syria in September, the U.S. agreed to the deal, foregoing any strikes against Assad for crossing the

1. "Erdogan Urges Assad to Hasten Reform," *Financial Times*, March 28, 2011, <https://www.ft.com/content/8a87bfd6-5921-11e0-b9f6-00144feab49a>

2. "Statement by President Obama on the Situation in Syria," The White House, August 18, 2011, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/statement-president-obama-situation-syria>

3. "U.S. and Allies Say Syria Leader Must Step Down," *The New York Times*, August 18, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/19/world/middleeast/19diplo.html>

4. "Remarks by the President to the White House Press Corps," The White House, August 20, 2012, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/08/20/remarks-president-white-house-press-corps>

5. "Turkey, US Officials in First Operational Meeting on Syria," *Hurriyet Daily News*, August 23, 2012, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-us-officials-in-first-operational-meeting-on-syria.aspx?pageID=238&nID=28426&NewsCatID=338>

6. "Statement by the President on Syria," The White House, August 31, 2013, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/31/statement-president-syria>

aforementioned “red line” and ignoring U.S. allies’ views about the deal. Following this, there were numerous controversial statements from different members of the administration about the U.S.’s position regarding the future of Syria. The U.S. administration’s indecisiveness puzzled the Turkish government and resulted in a serious lapse in confidence. In this period, several proposals by Turkey, including a safe zone for the refugees and a train-and-equip program for opposition forces, were ignored by the U.S. While Turkey pushed the U.S. to adopt more decisive policies to help end the crisis in Syria, thereby ending the humanitarian crisis and limiting the threat of the spread of terrorism, the Obama administration remained recalcitrant, instead focusing solely on ISIS.

Perhaps the most destructive development in the aftermath of the coup, though, is the disagreement between Turkey and the U.S. with regards to the extradition of Fethullah Gulen.

The recent coup on July 15th has also raised tensions between Turkey and the U.S. Turkish society achieved a milestone in its democratic growth when the 2016 coup attempt was emphatically defeated. The immediate response by U.S. government officials did not reflect the significance of the rejection of military intervention, however. The messages did not share the sense of urgency and did not demonstrate the support that Turkey expected. The first statement from Secretary Kerry especially disappointed the Turkish people and foreign policy makers. In his statement, Secretary Kerry underlined stability and continuity, instead of democracy, while the Turkish people were still on the streets trying to stop the military coup.

Despite the reactions from the Turkish people and policy makers, the White House waited another three hours to make a follow-up statement, in which the democratically-elected government was supported without mentioning the “coup attempt.” This generated the perception of a “wait and see” policy by the U.S. administration. After this, both the White House and State Department made clear and supportive statements but the support was not as powerful as Turkish people expected. These seemingly procedural statements failed to convince the Turkish government and its populace that the U.S. was genuine in its condemnation. President Obama waited another four days to call his Turkish counterpart following that the attack which targeted not only his rule but also his life. No U.S. leader visited Turkey, in fact, until U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford did so on August 1st.⁷ The first political visit took place when Vice President Biden visited forty days after the coup. Although Biden apologized for not visiting Turkey earlier and showed some sympathy, his interview in *The Atlantic*, published a day after the visit, ruined the limited improvement because of the remarks he made about Turkey and President Erdogan.

The rhetoric espoused by U.S. media toward post-coup operations has also contributed to the rising mistrust. The U.S. media has been hyper-focused on measures taken by the Turkish government, blatantly disregarding the fact that a rogue faction within the military had recently attempted a coup. A climate of unity overcame the country in the aftermath of the triumph of democracy, but that saw little to no coverage in the U.S.

Perhaps the most destructive development in the aftermath of the coup, though, is the disagreement between Turkey and the U.S. with regards

7. “Chairman in Turkey to Meet With U.S. Troops, Turkish Officials,” U.S. Department of Defense, August 1, 2016, <http://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/881458/chairman-in-turkey-to-meet-with-us-troops-turkish-officials>

to the extradition of Fethullah Gulen. Gulenists have been accused of infiltrating Turkish state institutions and forming a parallel structure with its members, which has seriously interrupted the functioning of the state and has challenged the hierarchical relations within the state bureaucracy. Especially following the December 17th operations in 2013, Turkey and the U.S. had low-intensity tensions over the residence of Gulen in the U.S. Following the coup attempt, the intensity of the crisis dramatically increased. Turkish policy makers requested the extradition of Gulen to Turkey, but U.S. authorities have insisted that an extradition will not take place without sufficient evidence. While the U.S. maintains the request is purely a legal procedure, Turkey views it as a political matter and expects the U.S. administration to expedite this process. This dichotomy has deepened divisions, and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu directly stated that the relationship between the two countries could worsen if Gulen is not extradited.⁸

These disagreements altogether have fostered mutual mistrust between Turkey and the U.S. A precipitous decline in U.S. standing in Turkey has also made it difficult for the two countries to uphold a working relationship. The resulting hostile climate is not conducive to coordination, an essential component in bilateral relations between allies with similar goals. A return to normalized relations necessitates rebuilding trust through cooperation on vital issues facing Turkey and the U.S. In order to normalize relations, the next U.S. administration must: follow a multi-track endeavor that aims to strengthen NATO and further institutionalize the diplomatic and military bilateral ties between Turkey and the U.S.; stabilize and re-coordinate the policies regarding the future of Syria and the fight against ISIS; rethink military relations with

the YPG and its position regarding the Gulen movement; and explore new areas of cooperation in the field of humanitarian diplomacy and security and energy cooperation in the eastern Mediterranean region. Following these multiple tracks simultaneously will entail the containment of crises, clarification of policies, coordination of joint endeavors, institutionalization of partnership, and exploration of new areas of cooperation. It sounds difficult to achieve but it should not be delayed or postponed. A working relationship between Turkey and the U.S. is necessary not only for the sake of bilateral relations but also for regional security and stability.

REVITALIZE AND INSTITUTIONALIZE

Revitalizing NATO

The U.S. and Turkey have important ties and connections that bind the two countries close together. The most significant tie is the alliance that the two countries have enjoyed for the last six decades under the umbrella of NATO. Throughout the Cold War, the two countries worked together against a common enemy and this relationship played an important role in the protection of the Western world from communist incursion and Soviet invasion. However, following the end of the Cold War, NATO, and thus the U.S.-Turkish alliance relationship, was not redefined or reformulated better address emerging threats. The limited, ad hoc mobilization of NATO resources does not provide a strong security framework and identity for the alliance. Although NATO is still the most significant alliance today, Turkey and the U.S. need to redefine the meaning of their alliance under the NATO umbrella, restructure the resources at their disposal, and play a more active role in reforming NATO. The emergence of effective coordination in the multilateral realm will also transfer itself to the bilateral security cooperation between Turkey and US.

8. "Turkey-US ties will suffer unless Gulen extradited, foreign minister says," *RT*, July 25, 2016, <https://www.rt.com/news/353092-turkey-us-gulen-ambassadors/>

The new President and his administration need to give a new meaning and spirit to NATO and its partners, such as Turkey. It has to be understood that NATO should have a new job description in the ever-evolving realm of international security. Instead of forming a new alliance or coalition when a new threat emerges, the U.S. and its partners need to make NATO adaptable to the changing threat conditions. New threats necessitate the development of closer coordination and communication between allies. In the context of Turkey's security environment, it is important to recognize the threats that different actors pose to Turkey, especially the two failed states on its borders which export insecurity to the country. In addition to this, from enhanced border security to greater intelligence sharing to recognizing the Turkish military's successes in Afghanistan to developing partner programs in the MENA region, there are many areas of interest where coordination between Turkey and NATO can strengthen their relationship. Furthermore, cooperation in these spheres can help remedy the relationship between Turkey and the U.S.

Given the crises in neighboring states, it is unsurprising that Turkey has sought support and reassurance from NATO on its borders with Syria and Iraq. However so far, the security establishment of Turkey has not received the assurances that it has been expecting from the alliance. In 2012, after various incidences, including the downing of a Turkish jet by the Syrian regime and the shelling of Turkish territories from Syria, the U.S., Germany, and the Netherlands provided NATO Patriot missile batteries at Adana, Gaziantep, and Kahramanmaraş.⁹ In 2015, the Dutch mission was replaced by a Spanish mission to continue until December 2016, but the U.S. and Germany withdrew their missile systems with no immediate replacements in late

2015 and early 2016, citing technical concerns.¹⁰ *The New York Times* later reported that U.S. officials "said the antimissile systems would be needed elsewhere to defend against threats from Iran and North Korea."¹¹ American officials handled the process even more poorly when they leaked further details about the negotiations to the press and stated that their Turkish counterparts were "livid" when informed about the unilateral decision of the US.¹² Although the U.S. later deployed HIMARS to Turkey to protect against rockets, the Patriot controversy caused a major crisis of trust in the security establishment.

An important step towards crisis-proofing the bilateral security relations and improving the defense cooperation between two countries will be to understand Turkey's concerns about missile defense systems and help it to improve its much needed systems. One of the most tense periods in the bilateral relations in the last few years was when Turkey declared it was considering procuring missile defense systems from China. The Turkish decision was driven by the strict unwillingness of the U.S. defense industry to share technology and to help Turkey to build its indigenous capacity. Major debates occurred over the interoperability of the Chinese missile systems with NATO systems. Considering the urgent necessity for a missile defense system, Turkey is looking to purchase a system through an agreement that will fulfill its needs and requirements while the national missile defense system that is currently being developed in Turkey is finished. If the negotiations with Eurosam fail to fulfill these criteria,

9. "NATO Support to Turkey: Background and Timeline," NATO, February 19, 2013, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_92555.htm?

10. "US Begins Removing Patriot Missiles From Turkey," *Defense News*, October 11, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/10/11/us-begins-removing-patriot-missiles-from-turkey/73787688/>

11. "After Delicate Negotiations, U.S. Says It Will Pull Patriot Missiles From Turkey," *New York Times*, August 16, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/17/world/europe/after-delicate-negotiations-us-says-it-will-pull-patriot-missiles-from-turkey.html?_r=1

12. Ibid

Turkey may once again time consider procuring a missile defense system from other sources, including Russia and China. This will most probably lead to another period of tension between Turkey and U.S., and between Turkey and NATO. In order to prevent this situation, the next administration needs to take some steps to find a middle ground wherein Turkey can secure a missile defense system and establish its own national missile defense system. This would improve the trust between the two allies and further cooperation in security matters.

As NATO's southernmost member, Turkey's southern border is not only Turkey's border, but the border of NATO as a whole. Turkey not only fields the second largest army in NATO, but also hosts a number of key assets, ranging from U.S. nuclear weapons at Incirlik Air Base as part of the NATO nuclear deterrent to early-warning missile detection systems, tracking radar in Kurecik, and NATO's Allied Land Command in Izmir. The next U.S. president should recognize that NATO deployments to support Turkey in safeguarding its border aren't solely to the benefit of Turkey. The NATO alliance relies on a number of systems in Turkey to provide a security umbrella to its members. Increased border security of the border serves to help protect a vital NATO ally, and to stop the spread of insecurity from the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. As the backbone of NATO, the U.S. carries a great deal of weight in NATO decisions. The next U.S. president should continue to increase NATO support on Turkey's border, including the deployment of Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) and anti-missile systems.¹³ These security reassurances will provide important opportunities for two nations to develop a more effective bilateral security ties and improve the capacity of the NATO as an alliance.

13. "NATO to Deploy Surveillance Aircraft Against Daesh," *Anadolu Agency*, July 9, 2016, <http://aa.com.tr/en/europe/nato-to-deploy-surveillance-aircraft-against-daesh/604769>

Numerous terrorist attacks the past year directed at NATO allies have highlighted the need for greater intelligence sharing in the alliance. Secretary General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg stated in a joint conference between him and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, "the fight against terrorism just underlines the importance of NATO" and that NATO allies are "sharing intelligence to fight terrorism."¹⁴ However, Cavusoglu emphasized that current intelligence sharing is inadequate, "especially with respect to foreign terrorist fighters."¹⁵

Although NATO is still the most significant alliance today, Turkey and the U.S. need to redefine the meaning of their alliance under the NATO umbrella, restructure the resources at their disposal, and play a more active role in reforming NATO.

The proposal of a new senior position within NATO, the Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence, makes realistic progress towards greater information exchange between NATO allies.¹⁶ This position will facilitate more efficient intelligence sharing and provide the alliance with the resources needed to effectively combat non-state actors and to fully utilize counter-terrorism measures. Turkey's proximity to the areas of conflict that have necessitated the establishment of the new position allows it to gather useful information. The U.S. and NATO should advocate for heavy Turkish involvement with this new position, as the intelligence Turkey gathers will not only confirm the validity of the position but also yield immediate

14. "Joint Press Point," NATO, April 21, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_130166.htm

15. Ibid

16. "NATO Moving to Create New Intelligence Chief Post," *Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/nato-considers-new-intelligence-chief-post-1464968453>

dividends vis-a-vis security within NATO. On top of involvement with the new intelligence position, greater information sharing between NATO and Turkey will strengthen their relationship through coordination towards a common goal.

One of the most tense periods in the bilateral relations in the last few years was when Turkey declared it was considering procuring missile defense systems from China.

Starting with the UN-mandated and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in August 2003 and continuing with NATO's Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in January 2015, Turkey has played a leading role in NATO's missions in Afghanistan. Within the ISAF's mission "provide effective security across the country,"¹⁷ Turkey's role was focused on aiding and overseeing operations of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police in Kabul.¹⁸ Turkey has continued to provide "training, advice and assistance" for these institutions following the launch of RSM.¹⁹ Building upon deep historical ties between the two countries, these missions have further forged favorable opinions of Turkey and its forces in Afghanistan. Wardak Province Governor Halim Fedai, whose province was assisted by Turkish forces in the ISAF, lauded these forces because "they work within Afghan

culture" and are "sensitive to Afghan values."²⁰ The ability to build lasting trust between the Turkish military and Afghan security forces is vital to Afghanistan's security.

The U.S. and NATO should publicly recognize the Turkish military's successes in the Afghanistan mission and provide further support so that Turkey may more effectively train and advise Afghan security institutions. Deepening coordination with the Turkish military in the RSM and following their example will not only work towards completing the mission but also allow NATO the opportunity to work with Turkey towards a common goal. This cooperation will repair ties between Turkey and NATO, and that ultimately will strengthen ties between Turkey and the U.S.

In their June 2016 report on NATO, Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns and General James L. Jones recommended that NATO "extend greater support to [its] Arab partners," and "restore strong American leadership" in the alliance.²¹ The next U.S. president should use NATO initiatives in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region as a confidence building measure in bilateral U.S.-Turkish relations. As members of NATO, both Turkey and the U.S. are involved in various partnership efforts with countries in the MENA region. Since 1994, NATO has maintained the Mediterranean Dialogue, which offers Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia opportunities to expand political dialogue and practical cooperation with NATO and its member states.²² In 2004, NATO launched

17. "NATO and Afghanistan," NATO, June 14, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm

18. "Turkish Military Operations in Afghanistan: A Continuation of Peace by Other Means," USAK, March 26, 2010, <http://www.usak.org.tr/en/usak-analysis/central-asia/turkish-military-operations-in-afghanistan-a-continuation-of-peace-by-other-means>

19. "Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan," NATO, June 13, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_113694.htm

20. "Turkey's Role in Afghanistan and Afghan Stabilization," *Military Review*, July/August 2013, http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/militaryreview/archives/english/militaryreview_20130831_art007.pdf

21. "Restoring the Power and Purpose of the NATO Alliance," R. Nicholas Burns & James L. Jones, June 2016, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Restoring_the_Power_and_Purpose_of_the_NATO_Alliance_web_0624.pdf

22. "NATO Mediterranean Alliance," NATO, February 13, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_60021.htm

the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative to expand practical cooperation opportunities with Gulf Cooperation Council member states, four of whom have joined: Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.²³

Turkey and the U.S. both participated in NATO Training Mission-Iraq that began in 2004 at the request of the Iraqi government.²⁴ In 2015, NATO announced that it would undertake a mission to train Iraqi security forces in Jordan and Turkey for the fight against ISIS.²⁵ Turkey and the U.S. have a vested interest in seeing a more stable and secure MENA region. One of Turkey's main criticisms regarding recent U.S. policy has been that it ignores Turkish security concerns. Increased efforts by the next U.S. president to maintain and develop these NATO missions where Turkey and the U.S. share interests will assure Turkey that the U.S. is aware of Turkey's regional concerns and interests. As noted by Florence Gaub in 2012, the aforementioned Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, while good steps to building ties and stability in the MENA region, remain undeveloped when compared to other NATO partner programs, like the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.²⁶ These NATO missions present an opportunity of clear strategic convergence between Turkey and the U.S. and an existing mechanism for cooperation to strengthen the relationship through expanded cooperation.

23. "Istanbul Cooperation Initiative," NATO, November 18, 2011, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_58787.htm?

24. "Post-War Iraq: Foreign Contributions to Training, Peacekeeping, and Reconstruction," Congressional Research Service, September 25, 2007, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32105.pdf>

25. "NATO Announces Defense Capacity Building Program for Iraq," U.S. Central Command, August 3, 2015, <http://www.centcom.mil/news/news-article/nato-announces-defense-capacity-building-program-for-iraq>

26. "Against All Odds: Relations Between NATO and the MENA Region," Florence Gaub, Strategic Studies Institute, August 2012, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub1112.pdf>

Transforming Diplomatic Relations

Given the importance of the MENA region and Turkey's value as a strong regional ally, the next U.S. administration will need to strengthen U.S.-Turkish diplomatic ties. Despite their positions as key NATO members and historical bilateral ties between the U.S. and Turkey, U.S.-Turkish diplomacy has reached a low point after the July 15 coup. Communication between these two countries should not be limited to high-level communications and summits between the leaders. Furthermore, messages to allies should not be sent through public statements and remarks from anonymous senior administration officials to the media. Although there have been very frequent interactions at the secretary or deputy secretary level between Turkey and U.S., especially over the last three years, there was only a minimal effort to institutionalize relations between two countries and establish more routine diplomatic communications. The high-level meetings became a particularity of extraordinary circumstances, while ordinary and routine summits and meetings were ignored and neglected. Thus, these summits and phone conversations between the presidents became the only crisis management mechanism. The next administration needs to resolve this problem and develop new mechanisms of diplomatic interaction between two countries, which will increase the chance of containing crises at the lower levels, provide a better mutual understanding of the foreign policy and security bureaucracies, and contribute to the smooth functioning of a working relationship between the two countries. Finally, the U.S. and Turkey should both work to rebuild public diplomacy efforts to allow for better people-to-people connections.

The next U.S. administration should work to expand channels of communication between the foreign policy and security bureaucracies within the U.S. and Turkish governments. That expansion must include increasing the amount of contact between high-level actors, such as the Secre-

tary of State and the Foreign Minister on a routine level with an agenda of improving the relationship and institutionalizing the partnership. Although there are frequent meetings at this level, they are rather irregular and focus on a single issue, such as the fight against ISIS. These ad hoc meetings may continue to play an important role in the resolution of these discrete problems, but they do not contribute to the improvement of relations as a whole. Regular opportunities for strategic dialogue will play an important role in bringing together these foreign policy makers with an agenda of improving the relation between two countries.

A second step of this process must entail improving communication between the bureaucracies. Although there are now household names on both sides in regards to the bilateral relations, from the media it seems like their role is mostly limited with the logistics and secretariat for the higher-level meetings. The lack of communication between these bureaucracies does not allow lower level officials to contribute to the smooth functioning of the relationship. Similar to their work in other countries, embassy staff and Foreign Service officers can play an important role in dispelling misunderstanding and misperceptions between the two countries. The next administration, together with its counterparts in Turkey, needs to launch new initiatives to start this new track of relationships. The strengthening of communication and interaction should not be limited to the foreign policy bureaucracies, but should also include the expansion of relations between the security and intelligence bureaucracies where the two countries need a better functioning relationship. Especially considering the conflict in Syria and rise of ISIS, there seems to be an increase in intelligence cooperation between the two countries. Considering the location of Turkey and increasing attacks from terrorist organizations, this intelligence cooperation has to be more regular and effective under the next administration. Ties between the defense and

intelligence establishments need to be restructured in a way that will allow the militaries of the two countries to develop bilateral channels of communication and coordination. In recent years, there are increasing amounts of rumors about the negative attitude of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) about Turkey. In Turkey, there is a general perception that the Department of Defense is not only skeptical of, but even disinclined towards cooperation with Turkey, while the Department of State is pursuing closer ties. The news reports about this situation are very detrimental for the bilateral relations. Brett McGurk's visit to Kobani in February 2016²⁷ and General Votel's concern about American military contacts among the coup supporters being arrested after July 15²⁸ raised concerns among Turkish policy makers. Regardless of its cause, the next administration needs to fix this attitude problem at CENTCOM, if it really exists, and reassure Turkey about this situation.

This lack of institutional ties and communication became most visible during the coup, and the subsequent shutdown of Incirlik Air Base and grounding of U.S. planes.²⁹ Despite the large number of U.S. forces deployed in Turkey and the history of cooperation with the Turkish Armed Forces and the U.S. military, communications between the security forces during and after the coup were very limited.³⁰ Since then, U.S.-Turkish military communications have returned to normal levels, and Gen. Joseph Dun-

27. "U.S. Envoy Visits Kurdish-Held Northern Syria," *Reuters*, February 1, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-visit-idUSKCN0VA2TR>

28. "Gen. Votel: Turkey Unrest Could Affect Islamic State Fight," *Stars and Stripes*, July 28, 2016, <http://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/gen-votel-turkey-unrest-could-affect-islamic-state-fight-1.421432>

29. "'There's Something Going On in Turkey,' U.S. Colonel Was Told During Coup Attempt," *NYT*, August 2, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/03/world/europe/turkey-coup-incirlik-air-base.html?_r=0

30. "Failed Coup in Turkey Threatens Military Ties With Key U.S. Ally," *Military Times*, July 19, 2016, <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2016/07/19/failed-coup-turkey-threatens-military-ties-key-us-ally/87288036/>

ford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited Turkey on August 1st.³¹

Gen. Dunford's visit on August 1st was the first by a high-level official, seventeen days after the coup attempt. Following the coup, President Obama did not speak to President Erdogan until July 19, 4 days after the attempted coup.³² The first political visit was by Vice President Joe Biden on August 24, more than a month after the attack, when he met with officials and visited Parliament.³³ The next administration should take more decisive steps in the case of any emergency in Turkey, or any other allied nation. The former administration has struggled to express empathy, which has left many U.S. allies feeling abandoned during critical instances. The next administration needs to be particularly reassuring when allies, including Turkey, need U.S. support and presence besides them.

While the examples given here largely focus on diplomacy in times of crisis, expanded cooperation is even more necessary in calm periods because it lays the systemic groundwork for crisis diplomacy. If Turkish and U.S. officials have well-established connections and histories with one another, those ties and ability to communicate quickly and clearly will weather a crisis better than a newly formed connection. The inability of U.S. and Turkish officials to communicate during the coup demonstrated the need to institutionalize better communication measures in case of crises in the future.

Strengthening Public Diplomacy

Public dialogue between Turkey and the U.S. is also in need of improvement. Since the beginning of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the two countries have experienced tension in their public relations, especially considering the public impact of the Iraq War, including the civilian casualties and Abu Ghraib photos. However, there were more serious repercussions in Turkey following the March 1st crisis and the Hood Incident. After these events, U.S. standing in Turkey declined dramatically. Since then, there had been a gradual increase in the perception of the U.S. in Turkey, but the perception of the U.S. in Turkey once again has experienced major turbulence in recent years. The U.S.'s inaction in Syria following chemical attacks, the U.S.'s lack of reaction in the aftermath of the coup in Egypt, and U.S. assistance to the YPG, have all contributed to the deterioration in the relationship. The failure of U.S. public diplomacy during the coup attempt and the Gulen extradition case further aggravated negative reactions against the U.S. in Turkey. Anti-Turkey rhetoric in Washington has also contributed to this atmosphere of mistrust. Current perceptions of each other are at one of the lowest points in the history of the Turkish-U.S. relationship. The new administration needs to take into account this serious problem and actively invest in fixing this through the effective use of public diplomacy. Considering the increasing public attentiveness to foreign and security policy in Turkey, this attitude can significantly limit the extent of cooperation between the two countries by constraining foreign policy makers in contact with their American counterparts. This situation can significantly damage the partnership in critical realms.

Before trying to fix the image of the U.S. in Turkey, the next administration needs to conduct an analysis of the main causes of anti-Amer-

31. "Dunford's Visit to Turkey is First by Senior U.S. Official Since Coup Attempt," *DoD News*, August 1, 2016, <http://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/882691/dunford-visit-to-turkey-is-first-by-senior-us-official-since-coup-attempt>

32. "Readout of the President's Call with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey," The White House, July 19, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/07/19/readout-presidents-call-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-turkey>

33. "Biden Seeks to Ease Turkey Tensions Over Coup Suspect Gulen," *Reuters*, August 24, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-usa-idUSKCN10Z0WF?il=0>

ican sentiment seen in Turkish public opinion. The anti-Americanism is not a homogenous phenomenon throughout the world. There are many different sources of anti-Americanism. The negative reaction to U.S. in Turkey is not ideological, but depends on the disagreements about regional politics. The confusion and lack of clarity of U.S. policy makers in the last seven years has also contributed to this situation. Interagency competition and the ambivalence resulting from multiple messages from the U.S. has also contributed to this situation. The Obama administration has not spent much effort to fix misperceptions and misunderstandings when they exist, and this has added to the accumulating public mistrust and lack of confidence. Thus, some dimension of the U.S.'s public perception in Turkey depends on the political divergences between two countries. The next administration needs to understand the impact of these differences of opinion and start an effective dialogue with the Turkish people to contain fall-out from these divergences.

The disagreements regarding Syria about the country's future and about the PYD are generating major reactions in Turkey. U.S. insensitivity about Turkey's security concerns and a lack of empathy with regard to the fight against the PKK is generating a major decline in Turkish popular opinion of the U.S. In the aftermath of the major terrorist attacks in Turkey by the PKK, including two bombings in Ankara and one in Istanbul, the U.S. failed to show the same degree of sympathy it showed to Belgium and France following attacks on their capitals. Furthermore, visits to Kobani by high level U.S. officials and the promotion on social media of pictures of U.S. officials with PKK members generated major anger towards the U.S. amongst the Turkish people. Following the joint operation to defeat ISIS in Jarablus, when two Turkish tanks were destroyed by YPG fighters, again the U.S. failed to decisively react. On top of that, the following day there were multiple statements from the U.S. trying to give the impression that it would

abandon Turkey if it fought against YPG forces. These statements have generated the perception that U.S. is no longer a reliable ally. The feelings that the U.S. does not care for Turks who have been killed in terrorist attacks by the PKK, and that the U.S. prefers the PKK as an ally instead of Turkey, became prevalent among Turkish public opinion. Recently, a debate in the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee between Senator Lindsay Graham and Secretary of Defense Ash Carter went viral on Turkish social media. The fact that Senator Graham sounded more empathetic to Turkish concerns surprised many Turks. Reactions from social media lauded Senator Graham, which demonstrates both the poor condition of the current U.S. administration's standing in Turkey, and simultaneously the possibility to win the hearts and minds of the Turkish people by becoming more empathetic towards Turkish security concerns.

A similar failure in public diplomacy took place during the coup attempt. As mentioned above, the U.S. administration's reaction to the coup attempt failed to understand the sense of urgency in Turkey. Vice President Biden's visit did not include some stops that could show the appreciation of trauma that Turkish people were passing through. There were no stop to to show solidarity with the Turkish people through visits to those who were wounded or sympathy meetings with families of those who lost loved ones while resisting the coup. These crises are important since the Turkish public has expectations of U.S. solidarity. In 1998, after one of the most destructive earthquakes in Turkey's history, President Clinton visited Turkey with his family, and in one short visit he was able to raise U.S. standing in Turkey. However, in potentially the most significant political catastrophe in the history of the Turkish Republic, the Obama administration failed to show the same degree of support and solidarity. The spokespersons failed to explain controversial statements. The next administration needs to improve public diplomacy regard-

ing both the YPG and the coup attempt, and in the case of crises needs to demonstrate the expected support to Turkey.

Of course, an important dimension of U.S. attitude towards Turkey is derived from the media. U.S. media coverage of Turkey seems to be a reflection of an apparent attitude within the administration towards Turkey. Since the beginning of major crises between two countries, “anonymous” senior administration officials have made statements criticizing Turkey and leaked details about the negotiations to the press. During the Kobani crisis, these senior officials leaked to both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* that the U.S. is “frustrated” with Turkey. Following that, before withdrawing the Patriot missile systems, the aforementioned leaks showed that Turks were “livid” when U.S. officials declared their decisions to withdraw the missile systems. The form of these statements have major repercussions in Turkey, as they are widely shared and covered in the local press. The next administration needs to understand that, especially in countries where the population is highly attentive foreign affairs, it is dangerous to attempt to pressure or embarrass an ally through these forms of messages.

The interviews that the President and Vice President gave to *The Atlantic* in the last three months more seriously embarrassed Turkish leaders in the media. *Atlantic* writer Jeffrey Goldberg, summing up conversations with both President Obama, senior administration officials, and others, wrote that “Erdogan has disappointed Obama like few others.”³⁴ Obama directly criticized Erdogan and almost mocked the U.S. allies in the Middle East during this conversation with Goldberg. Additionally, fellow *Atlantic* writer Steve Clemons published an interview with Biden repeatedly portraying Er-

dogan in a negative light, describing Erdogan as “erratic” at one point.³⁵ This interview was published the day after Biden’s visit to Ankara. The sentiments expressed in these publications about an ally do little to advance bilateral relations; in fact, comments like these actively degrade the relationship. The next administration should avoid making disparaging comments about allies in the press, as the media often influences how the populace views these situations.

The U.S.’s inaction in Syria following chemical attacks, the U.S.’s lack of reaction in the aftermath of the coup in Egypt, and U.S. assistance to the YPG, have all contributed to the deterioration in the relationship.

It is also important to mention that the structured tone of diplomatic statements also leads to a disconnection between the message the U.S. espouses and how Turkish people perceive it. The failure to release statements in language understandable to the average person disillusion them. Phrases within President Obama’s statement³⁶ condemning the coup almost exactly mirrored Secretary of State Kerry’s statement;³⁷ both focused on the “United States’ [...] support” for the “democratically-elected civilian government” of Turkey. These statements are perceived as formulaic, which leads the Turkish public to feel that the U.S. is disinterested in the situation in Turkey. It is also important for the next admin-

34. “How Obama Views the Men and Women Who (Also) Rule the World,” *The Atlantic*, March 18, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/03/obama-goldberg-world-leaders/473367/>

35. “The Geopolitical Therapist,” *The Atlantic*, August 26, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/08/joe-biden-interview/497633/>

36. “Readout of the President’s Update on the Situation in Turkey,” The White House, July 16, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/07/16/readout-presidents-update-situation-turkey>

37. “The Situation in Turkey,” U.S. Department of State, July 15, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/07/260132.htm>

istration to ensure the statements, with regard to the developments in Turkey, can be understood and effectively circulated, and if there are misperceptions and misunderstandings, that they will be fixed in a timely fashion.

Since the beginning of major crises between two countries, “anonymous” senior administration officials have made statements criticizing Turkey and leaked details about the negotiations to the press.

Statements from the State Department warning U.S. citizens not to travel to Turkey also add unnecessary complications in relations. The latest Travel Warning (at the time of printing), released on August 29, 2016, repeatedly listed the state of emergency in Turkey as a primary reason to avoid Turkey. The state of emergency in Turkey, which is a normal response to any serious existential threat and has been utilized in places like France and Venezuela in 2016, has received excessive and solely negative responses from Western powers. What many either fail to realize, or choose to disregard, is the fact that Turkey experienced a violent coup attempt that killed over two hundred innocent civilians not even two months prior to the warning. The state of emergency is a necessary response to ensure the security of Turkey, and repeated travel warnings citing this measure as a reason to avoid Turkey are both divisive and destructive to the relationship.

Creating the intellectual framework to overcome misunderstandings about the other’s culture and society would allow more honest and direct dialogue between Turkey and the U.S. One way to expand bilateral cultural and societal knowledge would be to increase incentives for students to study abroad in the other country. Of the 304,467 U.S. students who

studied abroad in 2013/2014 and 289,408 the year before,³⁸ respectively 2,163 and 2,037 studied in Turkey.³⁹ Additionally, the number of Turkish students studying in the U.S. has dropped 13.5% in the last five years.⁴⁰ Having educated students knowledgeable of the other country will facilitate deeper understanding and more detailed discussions on how to improve relations between the countries. After the attempted coup, the U.S. State Department suspended the prestigious Fulbright English Teaching Assistant program in Turkey, citing security concerns, and recipients of the security-related Boren awards and the Critical Language Scholarship in Turkey also reported that their programs had been affected.⁴¹ All of these programs offer U.S. students an opportunity to spend time working and living in the middle of Turkish society, expanding U.S. knowledge of Turkey and developing cultural ties. Moving forward, the next administration should work to address any security concerns with Turkey so that U.S.-Turkish relations can continue to benefit from the exchanges.

Improving Economic Cooperation

Despite some improvements in the last decade, the economy remains the weakest link of bilateral relations between two countries. Since 2009, the year after the worldwide financial crisis, total trade volume between the two countries rose from \$10.757 billion to \$17.384 bil-

38. “U.S. Study Abroad: Leading Destinations,” Institute of International Education, 2015, <http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/US-Study-Abroad/Leading-Destinations/2012-14>

39. “Open Doors Fact Sheet: Turkey,” Institute of International Education, 2015, <http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/Fact-Sheets-by-Country/2015#.V7M5fjMrKR>

40. *ibid*

41. “State Department, Citing Security, Suspends Teaching Program in Turkey,” *The New York Times*, August 5, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/06/us/state-department-citing-security-suspends-teaching-program-in-turkey.html>

lion in 2015⁴², which is a significant rise in a short period of time. There was also a slight increase in the foreign direct investment (FDI) between the two G20 members as well: FDI from the U.S. to Turkey rose from \$4.027 billion in 2011 to \$4.384 billion in 2014; FDI from Turkey to the U.S. in the same timeframe went from \$583 million to \$1,084 million.⁴³ Relative to the size of the U.S. economy, these numbers are much lower than U.S. trade with other G20 countries. Turkey's membership in the G20 and numerous joint projects, such as the Framework for Strategic Economic and Commercial Cooperation (FSECC)⁴⁴ and Near-Zero Zone,⁴⁵ provide the framework necessary for improving economic relations. U.S. and Turkish companies have also cooperated on defense industry development projects, such as the F-35 Lighting II, where "industrial opportunities for Turkish companies are expected to reach \$12 billion."⁴⁶ The cooperation on the F-35 is only the latest project on which the two countries have collaborated.

When compared to other G20 member states, however, there is vast room for expansion of trade. Other than Argentina⁴⁷ and South Africa⁴⁸, trade volume between the U.S. and other G20 members is multiple times larger than of that between Turkey and the U.S. Turkey's expected exclusion from the Transatlantic Trade

and Investment Partnership (TTIP)⁴⁹ has also raised concerns. The TTIP, a proposed comprehensive trade agreement that would significantly expand trade and investment between the U.S. and the EU, would allow the U.S. to impose a customs duty on Turkish imports without affording Turkey the ability to do the same on U.S. imports.⁵⁰ Considering that Turkey and the U.S. don't have a completed free trade agreement, exclusion from TTIP would hamper the allies' economic relations. While the direct costs to Turkey of exclusion from the TTIP is uncertain, most studies agree that it would have serious consequences on the growth of the Turkish economy, given its unique relation to the EU trade rules.⁵¹ Including Turkey in the TTIP would also increase bilateral access between the Turkish and U.S. economies and fuel job growth. A better effort by the next U.S. administration to address the possible negative effects on the Turkish economy of the TTIP would aid both economic and political relations. The next administration needs to pay attention these sensitivities of Turkey and consider how Turkey's potential economic loss from exclusion from the TTIP will affect the bilateral relation.

While Turkey and the U.S. continue to cooperate on various defense industry projects, such as the F-35, the Turkish government has made it clear that they are looking for defense industry opportunities that will develop the Turkish defense industry, rather than continue

42. "Trade in Goods with Turkey," United States Census, 2016, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c4890.html>

43. "Investing in the U.S.," export.gov, 2016, <http://2016.export.gov/TURKEY/investingus/index.asp>

44. "U.S. Relations With Turkey," U.S. State Department, February 24, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ci/bgn/3432.htm>

45. "Turkey Near-Zero Zone," U.S. Department of Energy, 2016, <http://energy.gov/ia/turkey-near-zero-zone>

46. "Turkey F-35," Lockheed Martin, 2016, <https://www.f35.com/global/participation/turkey>

47. "Trade in Goods with Argentina," United States Census, 2016, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c3570.html>

48. "Trade in Goods with South Africa," United States Census, 2016, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c7910.html>

49. "U.S. Objectives, U.S. Benefits In the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership: A Detailed View," Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2016, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2014/March/US-Objectives-US-Benefits-In-the-TTIP-a-Detailed-View>

50. "Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership," Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2016, <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/transatlantic-trade-and-investment-partnership-t-tip/t-tip>

51. "TTIP's Enlargement and the Case of Turkey," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, January 2015, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/FINAL_IPC-WWICSTurkeyPaper_TTIP.pdf

to only act as consumers. Speaking at the Atlantic Council in May 2016, the Turkish Undersecretary for Defense Industries Ismail Demir noted that the Turkish government is seeking to build “an industrial base [upon which] to stand all of those developments” in the defense industry. On August 11, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu suggested that Turkey may seek partners outside of NATO for defense industry projects.⁵² A week later, in an interview with *Sputnik*, Cavusoglu elaborated that Turkey is looking for partners, “willing to cooperate with us in the area of investments and technology exchange.”⁵³ The next U.S. president should consider backing reform efforts for U.S. defense exports laws, to allow for increased cooperation between U.S. and Turkish companies. Increased military coordination, which is both feasible and mutually beneficial, would generate increased trade in defense industries.

The next administration needs to take into consideration the significance of economic relations between two countries, and how increased economic interaction can help sustain a smoothly functioning bilateral relationship. It has been proven that a higher volume of trade and a higher degree of economic interaction can play an important facilitating role for political and strategic affairs as well. Since the beginning of the relationship between the two countries, this dimension of bilateral relations has been mostly neglected, which made it harder to contain political crises and limiting the relationship to just the political and military dimension. The next administration needs to strengthen this weak link in the bilateral relationship. The crises in bilateral

relations due to the Turkey’s decision to purchase air defense systems from a Chinese company also demonstrated despite the long lasting relations in the defense industry, it is also very vulnerable. The difficulty of getting Congressional approval for the purchase of Predators Drones from the U.S. also demonstrated this fact. Given the risky security environment that Turkey faces, the U.S. administration needs to work more closely with the Turkish government to establish a baseline of defense industry cooperation that is mutually beneficial and that will be more flexible in the area of technology transfer. Without this flexibility in the coming decade we will continue to see similar crises in bilateral relations.

STABILIZE

Coordination in Syria

During the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011, protests quickly spread through the MENA region; government crackdowns and coups tried to halt these revolutions in violent fashions. None were as brutal as the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s response. Assad’s heavy-handed response to dissent drew the ire of international actors worldwide, including both Turkey and the U.S., as chaos descended upon the country. Observing the potential for Syria to slip into a military conflict, the Turkish and U.S. strategies towards quelling the violence were initially aligned. Obama and Erdogan spoke via phone on August 11, 2011, and during this conversation they agreed “on the need for an immediate halt” of violence and to “monitor the actions [...] of the Syrian government.”⁵⁴ As Assad continued to violently suppress opposition in Syria, both leaders eventually called for the Syrian president’s resignation. Obama stated on August 18, 2011 that the “time [had] come for President Assad to

52. “Turkey May Seek Non-NATO Options for Defense Industry Cooperation: Foreign Minister,” *Reuters*, August 11, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-nato-idUSKCN10M0YV>

53. “Interview of H.E. Mr. Mevlut Cavusoglu to Sputnik, 18 August 2016, Ankara,” Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 18, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/interview-of-h_e_-mr_-mevl%C3%BCt-%C3%A7avu%C5%9Fo%C4%9Flu-to-sputnik_-18-august-2016_-ankara.en.mfa

54. “Readout of the President’s Call with Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey,” The White House, August 11, 2011, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/11/readout-presidents-call-prime-minister-erdogan-turkey>

step aside.”⁵⁵ Turkish foreign policy makers took the same position around the same time.

This alignment of strategies continued into 2012, when multiple countries, including Turkey and the U.S., signed the Geneva Communiqué on June 30. A peace conference focused on developing an end to the Syrian conflict, the proclamation stated that a peaceful “transitional governing body [with] full executive powers” was the only way for the conflict to reach an end.⁵⁶ The signatories delineated that Assad could not remain in power after the transition. Then, on August 20, Obama released the now infamous “red line” statement. After brushing off calls to implement a no-fly zone, the U.S. president stated that evidence of use of chemical weapons would be “a red line” for the U.S.⁵⁷ This potential for U.S. military intervention signified the beginning of the split in strategies between the two countries. Turkey assumed it was a temporary divergence, due to the upcoming U.S. presidential election, but further inaction after Obama was re-elected proved this assumption false.

Thus, the confirmation that the Syrian government used chemical weapons on civilians in the Ghouta area of Damascus on August 21, 2013 led many international actors to believe that the U.S. would finally pursue definitive action in the conflict. However, other than condemning the attacks through various written statements and resolutions,⁵⁸ the Obama

administration took no action against Assad. In fact, senior leaders within the administration were still discussing different possibilities of how to approach intervention in Syria. The U.S.’s inaction, despite the red line of chemical weapons being crossed, weakened the legitimacy of Obama’s position regarding Syria. Still advocating for Assad’s removal from power, Turkey once again was unable to understand the U.S. strategy towards Assad and the Syrian conflict. While both countries still seemed to advocate for Assad’s removal from power, they seemed to envision different ways in which that might be accomplished. As U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland stated, while the U.S. and Turkey shared views on overall strategy, they sometimes split in regards to the correct tactics.⁵⁹ While the U.S. and Turkey had similar goals in Syria, the plans to achieve those goals were not.

The rise of ISIS in 2014 signified the complete divergence of the two countries’ strategies towards Syria. Both countries have been concerned with their own security, and ISIS’s meteoric rise posed a more dangerous threat to the United States, as it perceives it, than Assad ever would, while Turkey viewed Assad as the root cause of ISIS’s rise. The breakdown of the Syrian state due to Assad’s rule also allowed the PYD to gain territory adjacent to the border with Turkey. Turkey, which views the PYD as a syndicate of the PKK and thus an existential threat, will never feel secure as long as the PYD has control of Rojava. Thus, the removal of Assad and resolution of the Syrian conflict will make the territorial integrity of Turkey more secure. The U.S. pivot to combatting ISIS allowed low-intensity tensions between the two countries to simmer. While both Turkey and the U.S. advocate for Assad’s removal of power, these divergences on

55. “Statement by President Obama on the Situation in Syria,” The White House, August 18, 2011, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/statement-president-obama-situation-syria>

56. “Final Communiqué Action Group for Syria,” United Nations Security Council, June 30, 2012, <http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Syria/FinalCommuniqueActionGroupforSyria.pdf>

57. “Obama Threatens Force Against Syria,” *New York Times*, August 20, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/world/middleeast/obama-threatens-force-against-syria.html>

58. “Report of the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic on the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus on 21 August 2013,” United Nations Security Council, September 16, 2013, [https://disarmament-library.un.org/UNODA/Library.nsf/780cfafd472b047785257b1000501037/e4d4477c9b67de9085257bf800694bd2/\\$FILE/A%2067%20997-S%202013%20553.pdf](https://disarmament-library.un.org/UNODA/Library.nsf/780cfafd472b047785257b1000501037/e4d4477c9b67de9085257bf800694bd2/$FILE/A%2067%20997-S%202013%20553.pdf)

59. “Nuland’s Remarks Quoted by Turkish Media,” The Atlantic Council, November 14, 2013, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/news/in-the-news/nuland-s-remarks-quoted-by-turkish-media>

how to combat ISIS and which actor is more important to defeat first has strained relations between the two allies.

As addressed earlier, the U.S. and Turkey have occasionally been at odds over policies towards the Syrian crisis. While they share key strategic goals, Turkey and the U.S. have disagreed on a number of tactical questions. The Turkish intervention in Syria by supporting FSA units in Jarablus and its attempt to clear the borderland between Turkey and Syria of ISIS and YPG forces generated another significant issue between two countries. Although the two countries launched the operations together and both backed the FSA forces, with Turkish tanks on the ground and coalition planes above, disagreements over the YPG following the fall of Jarablus generated a low level tension. However, the meeting between Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and Minister of National Defense Fikri Isik on September 8th where they “discussed the importance of retaking Raqqa, and the need for local forces to play a central role” suggests a possibility of future realignment of U.S. and Turkish tactics about the operation.⁶⁰

There are several issues that need to be resolved by the next administration in regards to the crisis in Syria. It should be remembered that both as a NATO ally and a partner in international coalition against the ISIS, the Turkish state holds an immense amount of leverage in the resolution of the Syria crisis as a whole. Thus it is necessary for the U.S. to stabilize its relations with Turkey in regards to the conflict in Syria. The first step should be the clarification of the U.S. administration goals for the future of Syria. Since President Obama’s statement in August 2011, the U.S. administration given mixed messages and signals that confuse not only its allies

in the region but also the experts in Washington, D.C. In different instances, though later clarified, statements by members of the U.S. administration have been perceived as signifying that the U.S. administration is ready to accept the continued rule of the Assad regime. These statements not only create confusion among Washingtonians, but have caused increasingly serious repercussions for U.S. relations among U.S. allies in the region. Already concerned about a perceived lack of U.S. commitment to its allies’ security, the unclear position of the U.S. on Syria only deepens the mistrust of U.S. support. The first step of the next administration, if it wishes to take some meaningful steps in Syria and if it wishes to stabilize its relations with its partners in the region, should be to make a definitive statement that is more than just rhetoric and which will be followed up by clear and certain steps. In regards to Syria, the administration needs to clarify if its policy is still “Assad must go” or if it will be amenable to other political solutions to the conflict. But more important than anything else in regards to its relations with its allies generally, and with Turkey specifically, will be to end the ambiguity. Lengthy closed door meetings between U.S. officials and their Russian counterparts are not a solution for this problem.

The second step should include more operational support to resolve the situation in Syria, namely the establishment of safe zones in Syria and the supplying of Syrian opposition groups. The next U.S. president will come into office facing a serious humanitarian and political catastrophe in Syria. While the number of civilians who have been killed is unclear, most agree that it is a shocking high number, with estimates ranging up to 400,000 dead.⁶¹ While the death toll

60. “Readout of Secretary Carter’s Meeting with Turkish Minister of National Defense Fikri Isik,” U.S. Department of Defense, September 8, 2016, <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/937226/readout-of-secretary-carters-meeting-with-turkish-minister-of-national-defense>

61. “The Syrian War’s Death Toll is Absolutely Staggering. But No One Can Agree on the Number,” *The Washington Post*, March 15, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/03/15/the-syrian-wars-death-toll-is-absolutely-staggering-but-no-one-can-agree-on-the-number/>

is staggering, the even larger number of refugees has turned into a massive crisis for a number of U.S. allies. In order to address this issue, the next U.S. president must be willing and able to coordinate with key allies like Turkey to formulate a stronger and more comprehensive response than what the U.S. has done so far.

Early on in the conflict, some Syrian opposition groups called for the establishment of no-fly zones⁶², an idea which Turkey expressed support for.⁶³ Despite that, the Obama administration has remained staunchly opposed to the idea of establishing no-fly zones throughout the conflict. Later, a relatively vague concept of a “safe zone” was offered to achieve a similar goal in the northern Syria. However, it was also refused by the Obama administration, though the administration did not provide an alternative approach to resolve the issue. Turkey has continued to push the international community to support the creation of a buffer area, calling for a “ground operation with our international allies” in February 2016 to establish an “ISIS-free zone.”⁶⁴ Even after German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed support in April of 2016, Obama argued against it, claiming that it would require a “big military commitment,” that the U.S. wasn’t willing to support.⁶⁵ Today, both in terms of humanitarian security concerns, many experts, major U.S. allies, and Syrian refugees are asking for the establishment of zones that will protect civilians from the heavy and indiscriminate bombardment by the Syrian

air forces, the incursion and destruction of the groups like ISIS, and the invasion and population changes of the groups like YPG. U.S. military backing, international coalition air forces, Turkish ground forces, and strengthened FSA forces together can create such a zone that will alleviate the humanitarian crisis, contain the spread of terrorist groups, and will send a strong message to the Syrian regime and its supporters. The next U.S. president should act quickly to communicate with its allies to develop this policy immediately following their inauguration.

While both countries still seemed to advocate for Assad’s removal from power, they seemed to envision different ways in which that might be accomplished.

Since the beginning of the Syria crisis, the U.S. has followed a convoluted policy regarding material support to opposition groups. The U.S. has overtly supplied non-lethal aid to certain groups, such as the YPG, as well as a covert program to fund opposition groups that was revealed in 2012.⁶⁶ That same year, the U.S. also established a ‘nerve center’ with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar in Adana, Turkey to coordinate with the Syrian opposition.⁶⁷ Despite these early moves to support the opposition, the U.S. later drew back support. In 2015, both the CIA’s covert⁶⁸ and the

62. “Syria Opposition Calls for No-Fly Zone,” *Al Jazeera*, August 13, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/08/201281223383335319.html>

63. “Turkey PM ‘Will Support’ Syria No-Fly Zone,” *Al Jazeera*, May 10, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2013/05/201351076615828.html>

64. “Turkey Revives Plan for Safe Zone in Syria to Stem Flow of Refugees,” *The Guardian*, February 16, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/16/turkey-safe-zone-syria-refugees-russian-airstrikes>

65. “Obama Pushes for Global Trade Deals in Face of Opposition,” *AP*, April 24, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/ebe378b664534f4c8cf625e239a44a43/obama-use-germany-visit-push-trans-atlantic-trade-deal>

66. “Exclusive: Obama Authorizes Secret U.S. Support for Syrian Rebels,” *Reuters*, August 1, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-syria-obama-order-idUSBRE8701OK20120801>

67. “Exclusive: Secret Turkish Nerve Center Leads Aid to Syria Rebels,” *Reuters*, July 27, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-centre-idUSBRE86Q0JM20120727>

68. “Secret CIA Effort in Syria Faces Large Funding Cut,” *The Washington Post*, June 12, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/lawmakers-move-to-curb-1-billion-cia-program-to-train-syrian-rebels/2015/06/12/b0f45a9e-1114-11e5-adee-e82f8395c032_story.html

Pentagon's overt⁶⁹ operations to fund and support groups faced serious cuts and were scaled back. Replacing those programs, the Obama administration began an effort to provide support to vetted existing opposition groups, such as some FSA forces in the Azaz-Marea region and the Syrian Arab Coalition. The ability to communicate with and support these groups has been facilitated by Turkish cooperation, and the next U.S. president should keep that in mind when evaluating their policy. They should make their goals and tactics clear to their Turkish counterparts, and develop a policy satisfactory to both countries.

In recent days, this increasingly convoluted policy has contributed to a major problem with its allies, like Turkey. The lack of coordination between different agencies on the ground is generating a confused image of U.S. involvement, and in some instances has become detrimental to U.S. efforts. As a *New York Times* story depicted, the perception is that Department of Defense backed groups are fighting against the CIA backed groups.⁷⁰ In countries like Turkey, it is difficult to follow these rivalries and disputes among the different U.S. agencies. As part of an attempt to clarify U.S. strategy and its end goal in Syria, the U.S. administration also needs to clarify its programs to arm and train opposition groups. When it comes to vetting and working with opposition groups and different, though failed, joint operations, such as train and equip program, the U.S. and Turkish military and intelligence bureaucracies achieved a certain degree of familiarity with one another. This relationship need to be developed and strengthened in order to achieve a more ef-

fective program in terms of helping FSA and other vetted groups on the ground.

Given the shared border, the war in Syria has developed into a full national security threat for Turkey. As long as the war continues, Turkey will be forced to take on the burden of an ever-growing number of refugees and face a looming terrorist threat. The status of Syria as a failed state gives terrorist groups like ISIS and PKK an area in which to plan and prepare terror attacks against other states, such as Turkey. While the attack in June of this year at Ataturk Airport in Istanbul grabbed the headlines, it was only one of many that Turkey has faced in recent months.⁷¹ As well, the brutality of these terror groups and the Assad regime continues to drive civilians out of Syria and into Turkey. While Turkey has already taken in a staggering number of refugees- the UNHCR reports 2,728,986 refugees in Turkey- its charity carries a high cost.⁷² Turkey is facing a grave threat as long as the conflict continues. Whatever policies the next U.S. president adopts in regards to no-fly zones or programs to arm Syrian opposition groups, they must make it clear to Turkey that the U.S. will support its ally. The next president must be willing to have a dialogue with the Turkish government and reassure Turkey when designing and implementing U.S. policy in Syria.

Fighting against ISIS

Until June 2014 when Mosul fell to ISIS, most countries did not pay serious attention to the rise of organizations like ISIS from the conflict in Syria.⁷³ Although many experts warned the governments of Western countries about the

69. "Obama Administration Ends Effort to Train Syrians to Combat ISIS," *The New York Times*, October 9, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/10/world/middleeast/pentagon-program-islamic-state-syria.html>

70. "In Syria, Rebels Threaten Kurdish-Controlled Territory as U.S. Allies Clash," *The New York Times*, August 28, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/29/world/middleeast/syrian-rebels-isis-kurds-turkey.html>

71. "Timeline of Terror: Istanbul Airport Attack Is Just Latest to Hit Turkey," *NBC News*, June 28, 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/istanbul-ataturk-airport-attack/timeline-terror-istanbul-airport-attack-just-latest-hit-turkey-n600671>

72. "Turkey Regional Refugee Response," UNHCR, July 28, 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>

73. "Insurgents seize Iraqi city of Mosul as security forces flee," *Washington Post*, June 10, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/insurgents-seize-iraqi-city-of-mosul-as-troops-flee/2014/06/10/21061e87-8fcd-4ed3-bc94-0e309af0a674_story.html

risk of an emerging failed state in the region and possible security ramifications of this, it was largely ignored. Even the U.S. president, during an interview with David Remnick of *The New Yorker*, called ISIS a “jayvee” team, showing the U.S. underestimation of the threat from the organization.⁷⁴ Still, the Turkish government and many experts in Washington, D.C. indicated the risk of terrorist groups expanding in failed states and the possible adverse effects of failed states on regional and international security. However, again according to some reports in *The New York Times*, some members of the Obama administration considered this increasing spiraling of violence and emergence of more violent groups as an opportunity, hoping that the extremist groups would sap one another’s strength.⁷⁵

Slowly building power throughout 2013, ISIS was able to occupy Raqqa and Fallujah in January of 2014 without igniting a significant response. Early on, the Syrian opposition signaled the possible danger of this group by attributing responsibility for the targeted assassination of main opposition figures to ISIS.⁷⁶ Despite the concern that Mosul’s fall elicited from both Turkey and the U.S., there was still no shared strategy at the beginning of the crisis. The primary disagreement between the two countries was over the cause of the rising insecurity. Turkey considered ISIS to be an outcome of the rising insecurity, anarchy, and repression of the Assad regime, whereas the U.S. viewed ISIS as a discrete issue. President Erdogan said that “the source [of ISIS attacks in Iraq] is Syria,” and that “terrorist groups emerge in countries with no

stable government.”⁷⁷ This disagreement generated a period of minimal cooperation between the two countries in the fight against ISIS.

Another factor that contributed to this stalemate was the conditions that ISIS generated on the ground. When it took Mosul, ISIS took a number Turkish diplomats and their families hostage, just as the situation took increasing urgency for the U.S. after ISIS killed two American hostages.⁷⁸ This situation caused a major lack of coordination between two countries in regards to the fight against ISIS. While the Turkish government and public was very sensitive about the hostages taken by ISIS, the beheadings of James Foley and Steven Sotloff, two U.S. journalists, sparked outrage in the U.S. that convinced the U.S. government to shift its focus to solely combatting ISIS.⁷⁹ Secretary of State Kerry highlighted this new focus, stating, “this is not about al-Assad now. This is about ISIL.”⁸⁰

For 101 days, 49 Turkish citizens and diplomats were held hostage by ISIS from June 2014 until September that year. As Turkish President Erdogan noted on September 22, 2014, “[the Turkish government] acted very carefully” while ISIS held those hostages.⁸¹ Following the release of the hostages and their return to Turkey, the Turkish government opened a corridor to Ko-

74. “Going the Distance,” *The New Yorker*, January 27, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/01/27/going-the-distance-david-remnick>

75. “Obama’s Uncertain Path Amid Syria Bloodshed,” *The New York Times*, October 22, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/23/world/middleeast/obamas-uncertain-path-amid-syria-bloodshed.html>

76. “Syria Rebels Fight Back Against ISIS,” *The Daily Star*, January 4, 2014, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Jan-04/243088-syria-rebels-fight-back-against-isis.ashx#axzz2pRajcBEq>

77. “Assad behind ISIS attacks in Iraq, says President Erdogan,” *Daily Sabah*, August 30, 2014, <http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2014/08/30/assad-behind-isis-attacks-in-iraq-says-president-erdogan>

78. “Militants Storm Turkish Consulate in Iraqi City, Taking 49 People as Hostages,” *New York Times*, June 11, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/12/world/middleeast/militants-seize-turkish-consulate-staff-in-mosul.html>

79. “After Beheading of Steven Sotloff, Obama Pledges to Punish ISIS,” *New York Times*, September 3, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/04/world/middleeast/steven-sotloff-isis-execution.html>

80. “‘Sloppy process’ of ousting Assad led to ISIL’s rise, Kerry says,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, September 25, 2014, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/sloppy-process-of-ousting-assad-led-to-isil-rise-kerry-says.aspx?pageID=238&nID=72151&NewsCatID=359>

81. “Turkish President Erdogan on ISIS and Regional Security,” Council on Foreign Relations, September 22, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/turkey/turkish-president-erdogan-isis-regional-security/p33488>

bani for Iraqi Peshmerga fighters.⁸² However the main disagreements continued. While the U.S. directed its resources towards ‘defeating and degrading’ ISIS, the Turkish government focused on the resolution of the crisis in Syria as a whole, which was expected to generate a more long lasting impact than dealing with the symptom of increasing lawlessness and brutality of the Assad regime.

Turkey is in a key location to support any mission against ISIS, and its cooperation and support can help maintain a long-term operation, which the war on ISIS has become.

Perhaps the largest divergence between Turkish and U.S. policy on the fight against ISIS has been Turkish concern over the U.S. strategy against ISIS and the fear that it does not address underlying issues. An October 2014 op-ed by Ibrahim Kalin, an advisor to President Erdogan, reiterated the concerns that the American strategy against ISIS was too limited in its scope, and would not address the root causes that allowed ISIS to expand to such a degree.⁸³ At the event where he spoke about the hostages taken by ISIS, Turkish President Erdogan reiterated that airstrikes alone would not work to defeat ISIS, and that, “a more comprehensive plan should be established to ensure regional stability.”⁸⁴ When Turkey and the U.S. reached an agreement in 2015 to allow the use of Incirlik Air Base for

coalition strikes against ISIS, it was announced as part of the beginning of a “comprehensive battle” against ISIS.⁸⁵ While the concerns over a comprehensive strategy that limited Turkish involvement in the coalition seem to have been resolved, some differences remain.

Turkish and U.S. officials have been talking at each other, rather than with each other, about what each expects from the other in the fight against ISIS. Towards the end of 2015, the Obama administration repeatedly called on the Turkish government and armed forces to do more to seal the Turkey-Syria border against ISIS recruits and materials. As part of the Incirlik deal in June of 2015, the two governments agreed to seek a resolution to the border issue, but U.S. officials still pushed for a larger Turkish effort in November of 2015.⁸⁶ In Paris on December 1, 2015, President Obama noted that the U.S. and Turkish militaries were working to address how, “Turkish ground forces on the Turkish side of the border can do a much better job of sealing the border.” That same day, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter said that, “Turkey must do more to control its often porous border.”⁸⁷

On the other side, Turkish officials criticized a lack of intelligence sharing between countries seeking to stop foreign recruits from joining ISIS. Even after Turkey and the U.S. signed a deal to increase intelligence sharing in April of 2015, there were often gaps in the coverage.⁸⁸ Criticisms by Turkish officials on the state of intelligence sharing were echoed by a

82. “Kurdish Convoy Heads to Syria to Take On Islamic State,” *Reuters*, October 29, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-peshmerga-idUSKBN0II09X20141029>

83. “Questions About the Anti-ISIS Strategy,” *Daily Sabah*, October 1, 2014, <http://www.dailysabah.com/columns/ibrahim-kalin/2014/10/01/questions-about-the-antiisis-strategy>

84. “Airstrikes Against ISIS Not Answer, Says Erdogan, Calls for a Comprehensive Strategy,” *Daily Sabah*, September 24, 2014, <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2014/09/24/military-action-incomplete-solution-to-combat-isis>

85. “Turkey Says ‘Comprehensive Battle’ Against IS to Come Soon,” *BBC*, August 5, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33786072>

86. “U.S. Urges Turkey to Seal Border,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 27, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-urges-turkey-to-seal-syria-border-1448674401>

87. “US Urges Turkey to Seal Border with Syria,” *Financial Times*, December 1, 2016, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/94001904-9851-11e5-9228-87e603d47bdc.html#axzz4I5LONJ1i>

88. “Turkey, US To Improve Intelligence Against ISIS,” *Daily Sabah*, April 29, 2015, <http://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2015/04/29/turkey-us-to-improve-intelligence-against-isis>

bipartisan U.S. Congressional report on foreign fighters published in September of 2015. That report found that information shared between nations was often, “ad hoc, intermittent, and often incomplete.”⁸⁹

Efforts to combat terrorist finance are an example of strong cooperation between the U.S. and Turkey that can be used a guideline for better cooperation between intelligence agencies, but also expanded to combat the continued threat of terrorism. Turkey is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and the Counter-ISIL Finance Group that was established in 2015. In 2015, Turkey and the U.S. coauthored the FATF report on ISIS financing.⁹⁰ The Turkish Financial Intelligence Unit (MASIK) cooperates with other financial intelligence units worldwide as part of a strategy undertaken by Turkey in line with UN Security Council resolutions 2178 and 2199. These efforts demonstrate the ability of Turkish and U.S. intelligence services to work together in a smooth fashion, something that the next U.S. administration should attempt to apply to U.S.-Turkish cooperation as a whole.

The Washington Post published an article in March of 2016 which documented how increased intelligence sharing helped Turkey stop foreign fighters, but also highlighted continued Turkish frustrations about their Western partners.⁹¹ The different value apparently placed on border security and intelligence sharing by U.S.

and Turkish officials demonstrates a continued issue of strategic convergence and tactical divergence. Both the U.S. and Turkey are concerned with stopping the growth and expansion of ISIS, but have prioritized different tactics to do so. In the meantime, ISIS attacks against major population centers in Turkey significantly altered the conditions and the handling of this major threat. As the attacks in Europe also demonstrated, the fight against the ISIS must include more than airstrikes to bomb ISIS and border security.

Moving forward in the fight against ISIS, the next president should be aware of these differences.

Turkey is in a key location to support any mission against ISIS, and its cooperation and support can help maintain a long-term operation, which the war on ISIS has become. It is also the biggest victim of the ISIS terror attacks, aside from Syria, Iraq, and Libya. While Turkey's proximity to Syria and Iraq offers the coalition ease-of-access, it also leaves Turkey vulnerable to attacks by ISIS, as evidenced by the growing number of bombing attacks in 2015 and 2016. Stronger U.S. and coalition support for Turkish security efforts against ISIS infiltration can help avoid events such as the 2014 hostage crisis, which led to reduced Turkish involvement in the war against ISIS. It is also important to remember that U.S. reliance on the group like YPG and SDF adds to U.S.-Turkish differences on policy. While the Obama administration has made moves to better incorporate and inform Turkey on SDF operations, the next administration should continue to do so. Such coordination not only will help ease Turkish concerns over Kurdish expansion, but will help develop a comprehensive strategy that will create a stable post-ISIS Middle East.

The FSA operation in Jerablus that Turkey and the international coalition backed was a good starting point for future cooperation in this

89. “Final Report of the Task Force on Combatting Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel,” Homeland Security Committee, September 2015, <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/TaskForceFinalReport.pdf>

90. “Financing of the Terrorist Organisation Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL),” Financial Action Task Force, February 2015, <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/Financing-of-the-terrorist-organisation-ISIL.pdf>

91. “Undercover Teams, Increased Surveillance and Hardened Borders: Turkey Cracks Down on Foreign Fighters,” *The Washington Post*, March 6, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/undercover-teams-increased-surveillance-and-hardened-borders-turkey-cracks-down-on-foreign-fighters/2016/03/06/baa4ba3a-e219-11e5-8d98-4b3d9215ade1_story.html

field. Regardless of who informed whom and when about this operation, the outcome of the operation for now is a major success, in sweeping the ISIS from the border areas and forcing them to withdraw. This success provides the coalition partners a great opportunity develop plans for future joint operations. If the potential spoiler role of YPG and SDF can be contained and end goals with clear exit strategy can be defined, it will provide an important opportunity to sweep ISIS from all of northern Syria. However, it is still important to strengthen intelligence cooperation in order to degrade the capability of ISIS to recruit, train, and mobilize people from different countries around the world. The next administration needs to come up with a more comprehensive strategy that will fill the gaps in the existing one and work together with Turkey about the military and intelligence realm of this fight. This cooperation may also pave the way for a more effective coordination and cooperation in regards to the fight against any form of terrorist organization.

RETHINK US-PYD Relations

One of the most significant challenges in U.S.-Turkey relations has been the disagreement over the status of the PYD and its armed forces, the YPG. As mentioned before, the issue of the PYD has been the most significant spoiler of the relationship between the two countries for the last two years. While both Turkey and the U.S. classify the PKK as a terrorist organization,⁹² the U.S. has declined to designate the PYD as such, despite evident ties between the two groups.⁹³ Even a number of senior U.S. officials have confirmed

the group's connection to the PKK.⁹⁴ This artificial distinction, together with the end of the resolution process in Turkey following the termination of the ceasefire by the PKK, serves as a major source of stress on bilateral ties.

Disagreements between the U.S. and Turkey regarding the PYD became readily apparent during ISIS's siege of Kobani in 2014, a PYD-controlled Syrian city on the border with Turkey. The Obama administration's decision to supply and support the PYD during the clashes between ISIS and YPG, regardless of Turkish concerns, has placed considerable strain on U.S.-Turkish bilateral relations. During the siege of Kobani, the U.S. leaned on Turkey to support a group it views as a terrorist organization. Since then, the U.S. has continued to supply PYD forces, disregarding their ties to the PKK and reported abuses of Syrian Arab civilians by the PYD. Turkey has continued to cooperate with the U.S. in the fight against ISIS, allowing the U.S. to utilize Incirlik Air Base, but strong differences remain.⁹⁵ The U.S.'s reliance on the PYD has led it to run roughshod over Turkey, an established and critical ally in the region, for the sake of expedient gains against ISIS.

From the very beginning, the criticisms of Turkish inaction in Kobani ignored basic realities of the situation in Turkey and Syria. Prior to the siege of Kobani, Turkish government officials had repeatedly met with the leader of the PYD, Saleh Muslim, in an attempt to reach an agreement. The Turkish government made three major requests in return for Turkish cooperation with the PYD: to not threaten Turkish border security; to not seek an independent Kurdish region in Syria;

92. "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, May 20, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>

93. "Counter-ISIL Operations and Middle East Strategy," U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, April 28, 2016, <http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/16-04-28-counter-isil-islamic-state-of-iraq-and-the-levant-operations-and-middle-east-strategy>

94. "US defense chief admits links among PYD, YPG, PKK," *Hurriyet Daily News*, April 29, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/us-defense-chief-admits-links-among-pyd-ypg-pkk-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=98499&NewsCatID=358>

95. "Turkey Opens Key Air Base for US Strikes on ISIS," *Defense One*, July 23, 2015, <http://www.defenseone.com/threats/2015/07/turkey-opens-key-air-base-us-strikes-isis/118443/>

and to oppose the Assad regime.⁹⁶ Throughout 2013, Turkish officials met with Saleh Muslim attempting to find common ground for cooperation, but eventually failed due to PYD intransigence on Turkish conditions. Despite the failure of those talks, Turkey hosted a large number of refugees from Kobani as the fighting began.⁹⁷ As well, in a following step Turkey allowed Kurdish Peshmerga forces to transit through Turkish territory to support the Kurds in Kobani.⁹⁸ While the Turkish government provided this support, official policy considered, and still today considers the PYD to be a terrorist organization.

After the siege of Kobani was lifted and the PYD began offensive operations against ISIS, Turkey made it clear that it had limits regarding Kurdish expansion. In late June 2015, Turkey declared that Kurdish forces west of the Euphrates would be a violation of a “red line.”⁹⁹ In a tactical move and considering the impossibility of relying on solely Kurdish forces who constitute less than 15 percent of the population, the U.S. led an effort establish what is called the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). After the YPG captured¹⁰⁰ the border town of Tal Abyad in June of 2015, Amnesty International released a report¹⁰¹ detailing instances where the group

forcibly displaced people and demolished houses. These actions amount to war crimes, as more than 90% of the buildings in the town were leveled within one year and people were threatened with death had they remained in their homes.¹⁰² Other human rights organizations have also accused the YPG of other violations, including extrajudicial detainment, killings, and the use of child soldiers.¹⁰³ The U.S. however chose to ignore those reports and to continue their support for YPG operations.

In the face of the security concerns of Turkey, the U.S.’s continued reliance on the PYD has caused Turkey to doubt U.S. support for Turkey in its fight against terrorism. Turkey considered U.S. support for the YPG harmful to its national interest and national security. The next administration needs to take into account these concerns of its ally, especially given the increasing terrorist activity of the PKK in Turkey. U.S. support for the PYD in Syria has legitimized a branch of the organization that has historically been “the defining terrorist threat to [Turkey],” the PKK.¹⁰⁴ The incoming administration should rethink U.S. policy towards the PYD. While U.S. support has directly strengthened the YPG’s military capabilities, it is questionable if this has yielded the U.S. any more authority over the YPG’s actions. Moreover, this policy directly harms the U.S.’s standing in Turkey and U.S. efforts to defeat terrorism in different parts of the world. The double standard that that U.S. has adopted in regards to terrorism may set a dangerous precedent in the international security arena for states to empower different terrorist organizations to fight as proxy forces. Furthermore, reliance on the YPG

96. “Kurds Could Help Shift Course of War in Syria,” *The Star*, July 29, 2013, <http://www.thestar.com.my/news/world/2013/07/29/kurds-could-help-shift-course-of-war-in-syria/>

97. “Kobani Fighting Sends 400,000 Refugees to Turkey,” *Voice of America*, October 19, 2014, <http://www.voanews.com/al-kobani-fighting-sends-four-hundred-thousand-refugees-to-turkey/2488705.html>

98. “Turkey Opens Corridor for Kurdish Fighters to Relieve Kobani,” *Financial Times*, October 20, 2014, <https://www.ft.com/content/64ed8d28-581e-11e4-b331-00144feab7de>

99. “Turkey Says West of Euphrates ‘Red Line’ in Northern Syria,” *TRT World*, July 1, 2015, <http://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkey-says-west-euphrates-red-line-northern-syria-3972>

100. “Syrian Kurdish forces capture key ISIL-held town,” *Al Jazeera*, June 16, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/syrian-kurdish-units-close-tal-abyad-150615155954847.html>

101. “‘We Had Nowhere Else to Go.’ Forced Displacement and Demolitions in Northern Syria,” Amnesty International, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/files/live/sites/almonitor/files/documents/2015/AI.WeHadNowhereElseToGo.PDF>

102. *ibid*

103. “US-equipped YPG commits war crimes, human rights watchdogs say,” *Daily Sabah*, October 13, 2015, <http://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2015/10/13/us-equipped-ypg-commits-war-crimes-human-rights-watchdogs-say>

104. “A Different War on Terrorism: The U.S., Turkey and the PKK,” *Small Wars Journal*, May 2, 2012, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Different-War.pdf>

will not generate a sustainable resolution to the conflict in Syria. The dynamics on the ground, the strained relationship between the YPG and Arab groups, and the demographic realities already demonstrate the major risk of inflaming tensions in this U.S. endeavor.

The relationship between the U.S. and a PKK affiliate has and will continue to damage ties between the U.S. and Turkey.¹⁰⁵ A policy to end assistance to the PYD will reassure Turkey of continued American support on national security issues. For the next administration, a possibility of arms and militant transfers from the YPG to the PKK will generate a major crisis in bilateral relations. So far, the U.S. administration has tried to contain the possibility of such an instance by pressuring and warning the YPG to limit its actions to Syria and respect Turkish concerns. Following the Jerablus offensive by the Turkish backed FSA forces, U.S. exhortations may not be enough to stop the YPG from directly targeting Turkish forces on Turkish soil. The attack on a Turkish tank in Syria by YPG forces showed the possibility of such a scenario.¹⁰⁶ The overestimation of their influence over the YPG by U.S. administration officials carries a great deal of risk. Already, Turkey had to use force on several occasions to remind the YPG of its red lines.

For instance, in order to gain Turkish support for an SDF-led operation against ISIS in Manbij, west of the river, the U.S. assured Turkey that Kurdish forces would withdraw east of the river after combat ended.¹⁰⁷ Following the end of the offensive however, Turkish forces shelled

YPG positions in northern Manbij after they did not withdraw back to Rojava.¹⁰⁸ During a Syrian regime offensive in February 2016, YPG forces from the Afrin Canton attacked FSA positions near the Syrian town of Azaz.¹⁰⁹ In response, Turkey shelled those YPG forces to maintain supply lines to the Syrian opposition forces.¹¹⁰ While the open conflict between Turkey and the PYD eventually stopped, tensions remain high.

In addition to recognizing the YPG as part of the PKK and cutting ties, the U.S. should denounce the YPG's tendency to commit war crimes while in conflict. Disregarding the obvious fact that war crimes are abhorrent, these acts ostracize the YPG from other Syrian groups and further destabilize the region, which is increasingly spreading into Turkey. The U.S. government should retract its support of the YPG and condemn the acts it commits that are antithetical to the values that both Turkey and the U.S. uphold. In place of the YPG, the U.S. should expand its assistance to a larger umbrella of opposition forces that is more ethnically representative of Syria. While the Kurds have a place in Syria's future, the PYD is a terrorist group that does more harm than good to any effort to establish peace. Furthermore, contrary to popular assumptions, the PYD does not represent a majority of the Kurds that lives in the Northern Syria. Their ties to the PKK make them *persona non grata* with Turkey, and their actions in predominantly-Arab regions in Syria have made them suspect in the eyes of many Syrians. Continued support for the PYD will damage U.S. options for future action in Syria. Ending support for the YPG and working more with the FSA would not

105. "Erdogan: U.S. Should Choose Between Turkey, Kurdish Forces," *U.S. News*, February 8, 2016, <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2016-02-07/erdogan-us-should-choose-between-turkey-kurdish-forces>

106. "Fighting Escalates on Turkey-Syria Border, Endangering U.S. Forces," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 28, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/fighting-escalates-on-turkey-syria-border-endangering-u-s-forces-1472375014>

107. "Exclusive: U.S.-Backed Forces Launch Offensive for Manbij Pocket - U.S. Officials," *Reuters*, June 1, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-offensive-idUSKCN0YN377>

108. "Turkey Strikes Islamic State, YPG to Open Corridor for Rebels: Official," *Reuters*, August 22, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-turkey-operations-idUSKCN10X1YY?il=0>

109. "Syrian Air Base 'Seized by Kurds and Their Allies,'" *The Telegraph*, February 11, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/12151367/Syrian-air-base-seized-by-Kurds-and-their-allies.html>

110. "Syria Conflict: Turkey Shells Kurdish Militia," *BBC News*, February 13, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35571663>

only help create a viable opposition government to replace the Assad regime, but would also align U.S. policies with Turkey's. This alignment would create strategic common ground, which Turkey and the U.S. could utilize to bring a conclusion to the war in Syria and mend the frayed ties between the two allies.

July 15th Coup and Gulen Case

Soon after the December 17th crisis in 2013, the Gulen movement started to be considered a national security threat for Turkey. It became clear that the Gulenist network within a broad range of institutions in the state structure had set out to bring down a legitimately elected government through the use of state power. Especially important was the increasing Gulenist presence in the police and judiciary, which presented itself as the protector of democracy against the military's dominance in Turkish politics. Several events exposed the danger of this network's overreach in the use of the security establishment's instruments. The wiretapping of the then-Prime Minister Erdogan's offices, the arrest of the former General Chief of Staff Ilker Basbug for terrorism related charges in January 2012, and the attempted arrest of the undersecretary of the National Intelligence Agency (MIT), Hakan Fidan, in February 2012 raised serious questions about the ultimate goals of the network.

The turning point came in December 2013 when the police and judiciary organized a major operation against government officials, following the emergence of a proposal to shut down the university prep schools. The Turkish government started a major investigation and accused the Gulen group of establishing a parallel structure within the government that significantly challenged the authority and hierarchy of the state bureaucracy. Turkey became increasingly vocal about the activities of the Gulen movement globally as well as in the U.S. The Turkish government took precautions to limit the activities of

the movement in Turkey in the meantime. Following further revelations of the extent of the movement, it was declared a national security threat by the Turkish National Security Council, and started to be identified as a terrorist organization. Despite the falling-out between Gulenists and the AK Party, the group was able to protect its infiltration into many Turkish governmental institutions. The group continued to develop a "parallel structure," and the coup attempt exposed how extensively they had permeated throughout the Turkish state's security apparatus.

Condemnation of the coup and the widespread belief of Gulen's culpability has united the previously polarized political parties in Turkey.

Within days of the failed attempt, vast swathes of Turkish society, including policy makers, called on the U.S. to extradite Gulen. A poll administered in Turkey by Andy-Ar on July 19 found that over 80% of respondents desired Gulen's extradition, and that over 75% believed that Gulenists constituted an existential threat to Turkey.¹¹¹ Senior Turkish government officials later stated that 95% of the Turkish public found Gulen responsible for orchestrating the coup.¹¹² In fact, condemnation of the coup and the widespread belief of Gulen's culpability has united the previously polarized political parties in Turkey. The leaders of the AKP, CHP, and MHP joined "democracy watch" events and conducted multi-

111. "Turks believe cleric Gulen was behind coup attempt: survey," *Reuters*, July 26, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-survey-idUSKCN1060P1>

112. "95 percent of Turkish people believe Gulen behind coup: Energy Minister," *Hurriyet Daily News*, July 28, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/95-percent-of-turkish-people-believe-gulen-behind-coup-energy-minister-.aspx?PageID=238&NID=102159&NewsCatID=338>

ple public meetings against the coup attempt.¹¹³

In the face of this overwhelming belief that Gulen and his organization are responsible for the coup, his residence in the U.S. has fueled a negative Turkish reaction towards the U.S. Multiple dossiers have been sent to the U.S. containing information about Fethullah Gulen's extradition. The U.S. should move forward with this request in a speedy manner, as many senior Turkish officials have warned that prolonging the process reflects poorly on how Turkey views the U.S. in such a critical juncture of history.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Turkish officials have stated that a failure to extradite Gulen would weaken ties between the two countries.¹¹⁵ The Turkish people and the government officials expect the U.S. take this matter very seriously as it constitutes a direct and immediate threat to Turkey's national security. So far, the Turkish perception is that the U.S. has failed to appreciate the severity and urgency of this threat.

The next president must work to resolve lingering issues over the July 15 coup attempt in Turkey, even though it is often difficult to grasp the intricacies of this network's efforts to infiltrate the state. Kati Piri, the Turkey rapporteur for the European Parliament, asserted that, "We don't have organizations like the Gülen Movement in Europe," making it difficult for Europeans to understand Turkish concern over the coup.¹¹⁶ This difference in perceptions exists

not only between Turkey and Europe, but also with the U.S. The next U.S. president should recognize how the failed coup attempt has complicated the bilateral relationship with Turkey. The July 15 was a shocking turn of events for a Turkey which believed itself to be over with the time of coups and military juntas. While expecting unequivocal support for its democracy, the Turkish government was instead met with lack of solidarity, empathy, and understanding. Although the Obama administration has made it clear that it views the Gulen case as a purely legal issue, as former Ambassador James Jeffrey noted, there are "steps that the US government can take to expedite" the extradition request, and there are also "steps the US can take to put pressure on the Gulenist movement."¹¹⁷ Especially if the Obama administration is unwilling to take these steps, the next U.S. president should consider doing so.

When setting the foreign policy agenda of the administration, the next president will have an opportunity to reset the current U.S.-Turkish impasse over the coup attempt. Even after Biden's trip to Ankara on August 24th, public opinion in Turkey remains ambivalent about the U.S. government.¹¹⁸ The extradition case has already resulted in bruised Turkish feelings that will likely stay for the rest of the Obama presidency. A new president and administration will be a good opportunity to develop a new discussion. Growing cooperation between the U.S. and Turkish governments can help ameliorate the damaged ties and dispel the distrust that is so pervasive at this time. It needs to be understood that Turkey has serious concerns in regards to its national security. Considering the involvement of an armed wing of an organization as the per-

113. "AKP, CHP, MHP hold first meet on constitutional reform," *Hurriyet Daily News*, August 12, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/akp-chp-mhp-hold-first-meet-on-constitutional-reform.aspx?pageID=238&cnID=102805&NewsCatID=338>

114. "Turkey increases pressure on U.S. for Gulen's extradition," *Washington Post*, July 26, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/turkey-increases-pressure-on-us-for-gulens-extradition/2016/07/26/8249d682-533b-11e6-b652-315ae5d4d4dd_story.html

115. "Ties With Turkey Will Be Impacted if U.S. Doesn't Extradite Gulen: Minister," *Reuters*, July 25, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-minister-usa-idUSKCN1050R9>

116. "EU Trying to Grasp FETÖ Threat, Coup Attempt, EP Turkey Rapporteur Piri Says," *Daily Sabah*, August 23, 2016, <http://www.dailysabah.com/eu-affairs/2016/08/24/eu-trying-to-grasp-feto-threat-coup-attempt-ep-turkey-rapporteur-piri-says>

117. "Gulen's Future in US Justice Department's Hands," *Deutsche Welle*, August 22, 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/gulens-future-in-us-justice-departments-hands/a-19493162>

118. "Biden Wasted a Trip, Turkey Wasted Time," *Daily Sabah*, August 24, 2016, <http://www.dailysabah.com/editorial/2016/08/24/biden-wasted-a-trip-turkey-wasted-time>

petrator of the most violent episode of Turkish history, which bombed the national parliament, ran tanks over the citizens, and tried to assassinate the Turkish president and his family, there are certain measures an ally like the U.S. needs to take. This should involve the processing the requests of Turkey in a more expedited manner in accordance with the extradition treaty. President Erdogan reflected Turkish government's frustrations over this matter when he said, "According to the [1981] extradition treaty with the U.S., we'd expect Gülen to be detained, however he still roams freely. Perhaps even more importantly, the administration needs to reassure Turkey that it has its political support on the national security requirements of a critical NATO ally. The next U.S. president must understand that even if there is cooperation in other fields between two countries, this issue will be hard to wind down without a sincere resolution."

EXPLORE

Refugee Crisis

The humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict in Syria has put considerable strain onto Turkey's institutional infrastructure. More than 2.7 million refugees are currently in Turkey, and many more have passed through to Europe as Turkey has become a transit country for refugees fleeing the increasing unrest in different countries throughout the Middle East.¹¹⁹ To combat the influx, the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) has spent a great amount of resources and energy to alleviate the humanitarian tragedy. AFAD has received numerous awards for public service, including some from the UN¹²⁰ and the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016.¹²¹ Other civil society groups and some international NGOs also joined the effort to handle the refugee crisis in the country. However, all of these efforts seem to be insufficient to contain the crisis in Turkey and to alleviate the tragedy on the ground in Syria. Until recently, most Western countries ignored this crisis and contributed neither funding the relief efforts nor hosting the refugees in their countries. After some countries within the EU stepped in to help Turkey, the situation improved on the surface level. However, this effort revealed major cleavages in European domestic politics in regards to the handling of the humanitarian crises. The inhumane treatment of refugees in some Eastern European countries and anti-refugee sentiments in Western European countries like Britain shocked many in Turkey. After the Aylan Kurdi incident, the EU decided to act and reached an agreement with Turkey in regards to the Syrian refugees. The EU-Turkey Refugee Agreement was an achievement in international diplomacy, but it has done little to mitigate the crisis in Turkey, resettling only 1,085 refugees from Turkey in Europe.¹²²

U.S. contributions to alleviate this humanitarian crisis are also less than expected. Although Secretary Kerry recently announced an additional provision of \$439 million towards the crisis, bringing the total amount the U.S. has provided to Syria since the start of the crisis to \$5.6 billion, this support has been insufficient to resolve the crisis.¹²³ This number especially pales in comparison to Turkish efforts; Turkey contrib-

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119. "Syria Regional Refugee Response," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, August 11, 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>

120. "AFAD president: Turkey acts with human sensitivity in humanitarian work," *Daily Sabah*, May 22, 2016, <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2016/05/23/afad-president-turkey-acts-with-human-sensitivity-in-humanitarian-work>

121. "Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016," Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2016, <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/GHA-report-2016-full-report.pdf>

122. "EU and Turkey Restart Talks Over Migrant Pact," *The Guardian*, August 25, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/25/eu-and-turkey-restart-talks-over-migrant-pact>

123. "U.S. Humanitarian Assistance in Response to the Syrian Crisis," U.S. State Department, July 12, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/07/259622.htm>

uted \$3.2 billion in 2015 alone.¹²⁴ The number of Syrian refugees that the U.S. has accepted also remains way behind Turkey and some countries in Europe. So far, the U.S. has accepted only 10 thousand refugees from Syria.¹²⁵ Considering the size and scale of the country and its resources, this number is miniscule and has generated criticisms against the U.S. efforts.

The EU-Turkey Refugee Agreement was an achievement in international diplomacy, but it has done little to mitigate the crisis in Turkey, resettling only 1,085 refugees from Turkey in Europe.

The next administration should take several steps in order to help alleviate the crisis in Syria. First of all, U.S. needs to contribute more effective funding for the relief efforts by increasing its contribution to the organizations and countries that host these refugees. Secondly, it should considerably increase the number of refugees that it accepts from Syria. This would not only be a powerful humanitarian message to the world in regards to this crisis but also would improve the global image of the U.S., which is significantly tarnished because of the debates in the country during the election campaigns in regards to the immigration and refugees. Thirdly, considering the significant risk to civilians who remain in Syria due to the bombings, the starve and siege strategy of the Assad regime, and the attempts by the groups like the YPG to ethnically cleanse certain parts of the country, the

U.S. administration should work with Turkey to find a solution for the situation of internally displaced people (IDPs) and civilians who are still in Syria. These Syrians are in the most dangerous situation right now. The idea of a safe zone, under whatever name or formula, needs to be reconsidered for refugees. A safe zone would allow some of the IDPs and Syrian civilians to remain in Syria, lessening the burden on Turkey's infrastructure and helping reduce the flow of refugees into countries that are irrationally hostile towards them. This would also prevent refugees from becoming easy prey for illicit human trafficking networks and groups. For a safe-zone to be effective, two things would need to be done: the international community would need to ramp up its assistance, and be consistent in its disbursement; and the international community would need to protect the safe-zone. Providing sufficient monetary and logistical assistance to the safe-zone transcends bilateral efforts, but the U.S. and Turkey together should lead the international community in assistance measures. In order to achieve this goal, the two countries can work together to launch new initiatives and find another effective area of cooperation.

Cyprus

Cyprus represents a significant turning point in relation between the two countries. Bilateral relations during and after the Turkish operation in Cyprus, exemplified by Johnson's letter to Turkey, represent one of the lowest points of relations between the two countries. However, there is a new opportunity on the island. A revitalized peace process on the island offers an area of further cooperation between the two countries. It will also be an important step for cooperation between the two countries in regards to the security of the Eastern Mediterranean region. Especially after the conflict in Syria, the security and stability in this region

124. "Turkey Most Generous Country in the World," AFAD, June 27, 2016, <https://www.afad.gov.tr/en/4345/Turkey-Most-Generous-Country-in-the-World>

125. "U.S. Reaches Goal of Admitting 10,000 Syrian Refugees. Here's Where They Went," *The New York Times*, August 31, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/30/us/syrian-refugees-in-the-united-states.html>

has constituted a significant threat for the security of countries in the region, and international security as a whole.

Since 1974, the status of Cyprus has been a prickly subject. In recent months, however, officials on both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot governments have given tentatively positive statements about the status of reconciliation since talks were re-launched in May of 2015.¹²⁶ Though nothing is certain, the two sides are reportedly in serious talks which include ‘taboo issues’ that had previously been kept off the table, such as property concerns and security guarantees.¹²⁷ The next U.S. president should continue the efforts that previous U.S. administrations, and especially the Obama administration, have done in recent years to support finding a solution to the Cyprus problem. Both Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State John Kerry have visited Cyprus multiple times to support the peace process, and during his visit to Turkey on August 24, Vice President Biden reportedly discussed the issue with Turkish President Erdogan and spoke on the phone with Greek Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades in his last visit to Ankara, signifying that the Obama administration is aiming to leave a significant agenda and improvement in regards to the conflict in the island.¹²⁸

While not directly involved in the conflict, the U.S. stands to gain a great deal from a resolution to the Cyprus issue. Both Greece and Turkey are NATO members, but friction between the two nations has previously caused issues when planning alliance operations, such

as the anti-smuggling operations in the Aegean Sea.¹²⁹ The U.S. also contributes to the UN peacekeeping operation in Cyprus, UNFICYP.¹³⁰ A resolution to the Cyprus problem could lead to a conclusion of that operation, removing an international obligation that the U.S. currently must fill. The U.S. cannot solve this issue for the involved parties, but as an ally to both Greece and Turkey, it can support Cypriot efforts to resolve the issue. The next president may come to office facing an amicable situation well on its way to a resolution, or they may face a situation where the talks have fallen through. If the former, they should continue to offer support for the process to the involved parties, both publicly and privately. If the latter, they should reaffirm support for the process, and work to help reassemble the reconciliation process.

Energy Cooperation in Eastern Mediterranean

On top of the complex relations between Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus, relations with Israel and Egypt also add to tensions within the region and to the U.S.-Turkey ties indirectly. However, the discovery of vast oil and natural gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean has also provided ample opportunities for cooperation within the region. The discovery of the Zohr, Aphrodite, Tamar, and Leviathan reserves within the last decade have energized hopes of economically motivated political rapprochement between these countries.¹³¹ The Turkish-

126. “Best Chance Cyprus Has Had for Peace,” *Politico Europe*, March 31, 2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/cyprus-reunification-peace-nicos-anastasiades-mustafa-akinci/>

127. “UN Envoy: No More ‘Taboo’ Issues in Cyprus Peace Talks,” *Associated Press*, August 24, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/ap-un-envoy-no-more-taboo-issues-in-cyprus-peace-talks-2016-8>

128. “Anastasiades speaks to Biden,” *Cyprus Mail*, August 25, 2016, <http://cyprus-mail.com/2016/08/25/anastasiades-speaks-biden-2/>

129. “NATO Overcomes Greek-Turkish Tension to Set Terms of Aegean Mission,” *Reuters*, February 25, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-nato-idUSKCN0VY0M7>

130. “Troop and Police Contributors,” UNFICYP, July 31, 2016, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>

131. “A Gas Discovery in Egypt Threatens to Upend Mideast Energy Diplomacy,” *New York Times*, October 28, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/29/business/energy-environment/a-gas-discovery-in-egypt-threatens-to-upend-mideast-energy-diplomacy.html?_r=1

Israeli rapprochement provides an important opportunity for the exploration and exploitation of the energy resources from the region. The Levant Basin, in which the aforementioned reserves are located in, holds approximately \$700 billion worth of energy.¹³² Many believe that cooperation regarding the exploitation of these fields can help drive the resolution of political differences.¹³³

The construction of the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) and Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) both run through Turkey and Greece.¹³⁴ Shared economic interests have helped lay historical differences between the countries to rest, and the discovery of additional reserves in the region may bolster cooperation beyond those two countries to include Egypt, Israel, and Cyprus as well. Normally, Lebanon and Syria would be recipients in energy transactions as well; however, due to the war in Syria and Lebanon being at-odds with Israel, the newly-found energy reserves will be directed to Turkey¹³⁵ and Egypt¹³⁶ instead. The development of TANAP and TAP will create pipelines to Europe that can be used to route the newly discovered reserves through Turkey to Europe.

Developing transportation routes for these newly-discovered oil and natural gas fields to Turkey can bring economic growth to the eastern Mediterranean and establish relations which can be used to work towards resolving

the diplomatic tensions in the region. With U.S.-based companies, such as Noble Energy, having stakes in exploration activities and production-sharing contracts, the U.S. government should encourage these companies to work with Turkey and the other countries and encourage efforts at cooperation amongst the countries.¹³⁷ Despite the possible economic benefits, political tensions may hinder viable development if left unaddressed. The current administration, played a large role in the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement.¹³⁸ The Turkish-Israeli relationship is unlikely to return to pre-dispute levels, at least not in the near future, and the next U.S. administration should maintain and encourage continued reconciliation between the two key U.S. partners in the region. The U.S. should assist in facilitating both economic and diplomatic cooperation in the eastern Mediterranean through the development of these energy resources, which would benefit a number of U.S. allies and partners. If used effectively, the cooperation among the countries of the region and the U.S. in the Eastern Mediterranean can generate a significant center of geopolitical gravity and an area of cooperation.

CONCLUSION

U.S. relations in the Middle East in general, and with Turkey in specific, are going through tumultuous times. The next U.S. president will be faced with sorely strained ties with an important NATO member and valuable bilateral ally. They should work to demonstrate that rebuilding and continuing a strong partnership with Turkey is a priority for their administration. These recommendations fall into a num-

132. "How gas could warm relations between Israel and Turkey," *Reuters*, June 20, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-turkey-gas-insight-idUSKCN0Z60WJ>

133. "Can Natural Gas Put Cyprus Back Together Again?" *Foreign Policy*, July 27, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/27/can-natural-gas-put-cyprus-back-together-again/>

134. "Why oil is not yet a blessing for the eastern Mediterranean," *Politico*, February 26, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/27/can-natural-gas-put-cyprus-back-together-again/>

135. "How gas could warm relations between Israel and Turkey," *Reuters*, June 20, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-turkey-gas-insight-idUSKCN0Z60WJ>

136. "Egypt to sign gas supply deal with Cyprus," *Interfax Global Energy*, August 25, 2016, <http://interfaxenergy.com/gasdaily/article/21667/egypt-to-sign-gas-supply-deal-with-cyprus>

137. "Gas, Oil Exploration Complicates Turkey, Cyprus Talks," *VOA News*, September 19, 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/a/gas-oil-exploration-complicates-turkey-cyprus-talks-130191118/170879.html>

138. "Israeli Official: Reconciliation Deal Reached with Turkey," *Associated Press*, June 26, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/934a1e0528194dfdaa29763902731f11/israeli-official-reconciliation-deal-reached-turkey>

ber of distinct stages. The first is to strengthen and institutionalize the existing ties and relationship between the two countries. In order to do so, the next president should:

- Work to revitalize NATO by shifting to resources to recognize and address the new threats that exist in the new security era, like terrorism and failed states;
- Support Turkish efforts to obtain a missile defense system and to develop an indigenous system that is interoperable with other NATO systems;
- Better institutionalize the ties between the foreign policy bureaucracies of Turkey and the U.S., both civil and military;
- Develop and support efforts to increase public diplomacy and exchange between the two nations, building a better understanding of each nation among private citizens; and
- Promote economic ties, via inclusion in the TTIP or special status to allow for continued mutually beneficial economic growth and development.

The next U.S. president should also be aware of how past disagreements have contributed to the current tensions, and look to reach out to the Turkish government to resolve these issues, including:

- Communicate with the Turkish government to coordinate efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis in a way that preserves U.S. strategic interests while addressing Turkish concerns;
- Reconsider the former administration's refusal to support the implementation of a safe zone, the creation of which would help the citizens of Syria trapped in a horrendous war, Turkey, and other U.S. allies in Europe;
- Find common ground to better address both nation's concerns about ISIS, including increased border security and better intelligence sharing; and

- Continue the work to coordinate and cooperate in international efforts to stop international financing of terrorism.

The administration should rethink and develop new approaches that differ from those taken by the Obama administration on several key issues that continue to raise tensions between the U.S. and Turkey, namely the PYD and the July 15 coup. A new approach by the U.S. to these issues will contribute a great deal to improving the U.S.-Turkish bilateral relationship.

- The next president should end support for the PYD, given its clear ties to the terrorist PKK, which continues to conduct attacks against Turkish civilians and security forces. Continued U.S. support for the PYD also contributes to the sectarian divide in Syria, where continued instability is exported to neighboring Turkey.
- The next president however should make a clear effort to reassure Turkey of U.S. support and take what measures they can to respond the concerns of Turkish government in regards to an organization that is considered as a national security threat by the Turkish state. The next US administration should understand the sense of urgency and appreciate the trauma of the Turkish society following the Gulenist coup attempt.

Finally, there are several opportunities where the U.S. and Turkey can expand their cooperation, strengthening the relationship through the development of mutually beneficial interests. These areas include:

- A more concerted partnership between Turkey and the U.S. to support Syrian refugees and resolve the refugee crisis, easing the burden on allies and partners in both the Middle East and Europe;
- Steadfast efforts by the new administration to continue to diligent efforts by the

Obama administration to support Cypriot reconciliation; and

- Encouragement by the U.S. for development of natural gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, which may set the stage for better diplomacy and stability in the region.

The recommendations in this paper are not panaceas for any and all issues in the relationship between the two countries. During the past few years,

there have been both high and low points in the U.S.-Turkish alliance. While the U.S. and Turkey may not always be in lockstep, they continue to share numerous mutual interests, and both benefit greatly from a continued strong partnership. The next U.S. president should be aware of this, and work to maintain that partnership. These recommendations are designed to serve as a roadmap for the continued health of the U.S.-Turkish relationship.

The forthcoming U.S. president will enter office facing significant challenges in the relationship with Turkey. Despite the strong alliances under the umbrella of NATO and the partnership within the coalition to fight against ISIS, which entered a new phase with the recent joint military operations with Turkish special forces and Free Syrian Army units, the two countries in recent years have experienced significant tensions in their relations. The next president of the United States and his or her foreign policy and security team will face questions and concerns over several significant security and strategic issues from their counterparts in Turkey. Overcoming these challenges and improving relations with Turkey, a significant ally both in NATO and in the fight against ISIS, needs to be an important priority for the next president. This will necessitate the next president taking several steps to consolidate already existing ties and strengthening mutual trust and confidence between the two allies. The issues of Syria, the YPG, and the Gulen case will be the most challenging disagreements to resolve for the new administration in its relations with Turkey.



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