

- TURKEY PAPERS -

TRANSATLANTIC  
SECURITY,  
NATO AND TURKEY

GÜLNUR AYBET

İPM | IPC

İSTANBUL POLİTİKALAR MERKEZİ  
SABANCI ÜNİVERSİTESİ KAMPUSU  
İSTANBUL POLICY CENTER  
AT SABANCI UNIVERSITY

**W** | Wilson  
Center

-TURKEY PAPERS-  
**TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY,  
NATO AND TURKEY**

GÜLNUR AYBET

March 2015

Editors: Bülent Aras, Professor of International Relations, Sabanci University and Global Fellow, Wilson Center  
Christian F. Ostermann, Director, Global Europe Program, Wilson Center

**Gülnur Aybet** is Professor and Head of Department of Political Science and International Relations at Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul, Turkey and also lectures at the War Academy of the Turkish Staff College. She was Senior Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Kent, England between 2001-2013 and also taught at the Universities of Nottingham, Bilkent, Izmir University of Economics, and the NATO Defence College. Her main areas of expertise are transatlantic relations, with special reference to NATO and the EU, and Turkish foreign policy. She is editor of the *Contemporary Turkey* book series published by I.B. Tauris. She has held many visiting scholarships, including at the Woodrow Wilson Center, SAIS, and St. Antony's College, Oxford, and is a regular participant of the Turkish-British TatliDil Forum, and member of the Council of Management of the British Institute at Ankara (BIAA). Prof Aybet completed her BA in Economics and Public Administration from Royal Holloway College, University of London, MSc in International Studies from the University of Southampton, M.Phil in War Studies from King's College London and her PhD in European from the University of Nottingham. She is the co-editor of *NATO in Search of a Vision* and the author of *A European Security Architecture After the Cold War: Questions of Legitimacy*.

All opinions in this paper reflect the views of the author, not of the Wilson Center or of Istanbul Policy Center.

### **About Istanbul Policy Center**

Istanbul Policy Center (IPC) is an independent policy research institute with global outreach. Its mission is to foster academic research in social sciences and its application to policy making. IPC team is firmly committed to providing decision-makers, opinion leaders, academics, and general public with innovative and objective analyses in key domestic and foreign policy issues. IPC has expertise in a wide range of areas, including - but not exhaustive to - Turkey-EU-U.S. relations, education, climate change, current trends of political and social transformation in Turkey, as well as the impact of civil society and local governance on this metamorphosis.

### **About Wilson Center**

The Wilson Center seeks to be the leading institution for in-depth research and dialogue to inform actionable ideas on global issues. The Wilson Center, chartered by Congress as the official memorial to President Woodrow Wilson, is the nation's key non-partisan policy forum for tackling global issues through independent research and open dialogue to inform actionable ideas for Congress, the Administration and the broader policy community.

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars  
Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center  
One Woodrow Wilson Plaza - 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20004-3027  
T 202-691-4000  
F 202/691-4001  
[www.wilsoncenter.org](http://www.wilsoncenter.org)  
[wwics@wilsoncenter.org](mailto:wwics@wilsoncenter.org)



## INTRODUCTION

The year 2012 marked the 60th anniversary of Turkey's entry into NATO. It is an interesting moment for Turkey's transatlantic relations: its membership in NATO is becoming even more crucial for transatlantic security at a time of changing priorities for the Alliance, which require thinking outside the box, and engaging new threats in innovative ways.

This is inevitable when we consider the rapidly changing global and regional geostrategic environments, as well as the profound changes within Turkey itself. The last decade, spent under consecutive AK Party governments, has significantly altered the political landscape of a country previously trammelled by unstable short-lived coalitions, a series of economic crises, a long-lasting conflict with the Kurds in the SouthEast, and sporadic interventions by the military in politics. The fact that this transformation was led by a party that came from Islamist roots, while 'political Islam' was defined as a priority national security threat in the 1990s, also shows the dramatic shift in Turkey's internal security priorities since then. New security challenges, such as migration and border security require the creation of new capacities, and this in turn is leading to the creation of new institutions and mechanisms to deal with these challenges. This paper explores the past and present state of Turkey's transatlantic security relationships in two parts. The first part looks at the evolution of NATO's roles in collective defence, collective security and its attempts at regional crisis management while assessing Turkey's place as a 'functional' ally rather than strategic partner in these different roles. The second part explores new security challenges that face both the Alliance and Turkey and assesses Turkey's unique position and contributions, as well as dilemmas, in facing these challenges. This part looks at three specific challenges that have an important bearing on Turkey and its transatlantic partners: the Syrian crisis in the context of the Libyan intervention; Turkey-Russia and NATO relations; and missile defence, in which Turkey plays a key role. The conclusion offers some considerations for how best to think outside the box and avoid past mistakes in Turkey's relations with the Alliance.

## TURKEY AND NATO: COLLECTIVE DEFENCE, COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND REGIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The initial definition of Turkey's transatlantic relationship centred on the provision of collective defence. But collective defence was not just about the military imperative of facing a Soviet threat. NATO's role has always extended beyond that of a military alliance. It is more a security community at the heart of a western system linked by a series of political and cultural relations.<sup>1</sup> NATO was therefore essentially part of a wider post-war liberal order wherein collective defence became the core of defending a way of life through an institutionalized, inter-dependent set of relations. NATO's normative role enabled the alliance to be framed not just in terms of security but also of identity. ***As long as Turkey's 'belonging' to the West was framed in terms of security and military capabilities, its Western identity in the transatlantic relationship was never questioned because it was part and parcel of a 'Western bloc'.***

However, the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the two blocs, left Turkey's Western identity in the cold. The 1990s were difficult times during which Turkey's relationship with both Europe and the United States continued to be strained. On the one hand, Turkey's security priorities diverged from those of its transatlantic partners while, on the other, the EU remained intransigent regarding Turkey's bid for membership. At the same time, Turkey resented both the EU and NATO's attempts to create a European Security and Defence Identity or Policy, with little consideration for third parties.

The 1990s became a paradox in Turkey-transatlantic relations. While Turkey's military and security contributions to the transatlantic security community's new mission of collective security intensified, its belonging to Europe became increasingly questionable. And because Turkey's 'Western-ness' has always been framed in security terms, it has been more of a 'functional' ally, one defined by its geographical and military assets.<sup>2</sup>

After the September 11 attacks, the transatlantic security community's mission of collective security and

humanitarian intervention were taken over by the new mission of ***'borderless' collective defence***.<sup>3</sup> Although NATO's mission in Afghanistan seemed like a 1990s-style, out-of-area, collective-security, "state building" intervention, it was in fact a new kind of collective defense—albeit one without borders. Article 5 was no longer relegated to in-area defense alone but was directed wherever threats emerged to alliance security.

Throughout this process, Turkey contributed to Alliance operations, not necessarily playing a combat role but continuing its peace-building roles of the 1990s. In this sense, Turkey's contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, where it took on the command of the mission more than once, has been quite significant. Meanwhile, Turkey remained involved in the ongoing missions in the Balkans—the Kosovo Force (KFOR), the Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR), and its follow-on mission led by the European Union (EU), EUFOR Althea.

It was during the transatlantic crisis over Iraq that this grey area into which Turkey had fallen became more acute. Despite the country playing a significant role in the crisis, the legal, strategic, and normative arguments over the war went above Turkey's head in a heated public debate between France, Germany, and the United States. As Europe, according to Donald Rumsfeld, divided into 'old' and 'new,' the unification of a Europe 'whole and free' seemed like a long distant memory in which international institutions were meant to be the guardians of norms and action in maintaining world order. In the discourse over the Iraq war, the United States viewed Turkey with surprise as an 'unreliable' ally who refused to help<sup>4</sup>, and the debate in Europe completely dismissed

3 Coined by Gülnur Aybet in G. Aybet, 'The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited: Grand Strategy And Emerging Issues.' In G. Aybet and R. G. Moore (Eds.), *NATO in Search of a Vision* (pp. 35-50), Georgetown University Press 2010 Washington, D.C.

4 It is also evident that views from the US found it difficult to read the transition going on in Turkey at the time: Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz had stated that the US government were surprised that 'for whatever reason, the Turkish military did not play the strong leadership role we would have expected'. Other US analysts have since commented that it is time for a new strategic relationship with Turkey which should not be based on engaging 'Turkey's traditional security policy makers alone'. Quoted in Ömer Taşpınar *Changing Parameters in US-German-Turkish Relations*, AICGS Policy Report, 18, American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2005, Washington DC. P. 29. See also Ian O Lesser, 'Turkey in the EU: A New US Relationship' *Insight Turkey* Vol 6 No 4 Oct-Dec 2004.

1 Bradley Klein, 'Beyond the Western Alliance, the Politics of Post-Atlanticism' in Stephen Gill (ed.) *Atlantic Relations Beyond the Reagan Era*, St Martin's Press, NY, 1989, pp. 201-202.

2 For further reading on the 'functional' ally thesis, see: Gülnur Aybet 'Turkey Between the Transatlantic Partnership' in Roger Kanet (ed.) *The United States and Europe in the Changing World*, Republic of Letters, Dordrecht, December 2009. ISBN: 978-90-8979-009-5, pp. 141-162.

Turkey's role in transatlantic relations, instead focusing on power politics between the European big-three countries and the United States.<sup>5</sup> Once more, Turkey remained as the edge of the Transatlantic partnership: not entirely in, not entirely out.

In fact, Turkey's position in the 2003 crisis affected two crucial developments: first, the Turkish Parliament's refusal to allow U.S. troops to cross into northern Iraq via Turkish territory, thus preventing the opening of a second front in the war; and second, the internal crisis in the Alliance caused by the refusal of three European allies to support the deployment of the Allied Mobile Force (AMF) as a preventative measure near Turkey's border with Iraq.

The bafflement of the transatlantic allies over how to 'read' Turkey in 2003 is very telling since similar confusion has resurfaced over Turkey's role in the Syrian crisis. Placing Turkey in the box of 'unhelpful' ally simplifies the more intricate connections between national and regional priorities as well as continuation of Turkey's traditional foreign policy parameters such as non-intervention in regional conflicts. It is hard to understand the surprise of Turkey's NATO allies at the result of the Parliamentary vote in 2003, since a similar vote was crucial in determining Turkey's role in the first Gulf War in 1991.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from this, Turkey's internal transformation affected the prioritization of its own security concerns. It was now a different country from the inward-looking state of the 1990s, when many of its security debates focused on Islamic fundamentalism and Kurdish separatism and Turkey's relations with the West foundered on the stalled European Community accession process.

The 2007 crisis between Turkey and its allies was another turning point. After the escalation of attacks by the PKK against Turkish armed forces, the Turkish Parliament passed a resolution authorizing a military incursion into northern Iraq.<sup>7</sup> What was new about

this particular crisis was that it forced the issue of reevaluating Turkey's strategic partnership with its Western allies. It shifted the U.S. position of "damage limitation" which it has maintained since 2003, to a more proactive concern for Turkey's security interests in the region. It also indicated that Ankara's hard power still influenced shifting Western perceptions of Turkey.

From 2009 onwards, a new phase of Turkey's transatlantic relationship began to take shape. Ankara left behind its "functional ally" status of the Cold War and the 1990s as well as the ambiguous position it had occupied in transatlantic relations since 2001, and emerged as a much more assertive power with regional influence. Yet the unravelling of the Arab Awakenings and differing strategic priorities in the region, created impediments to the development of a fully fledged strategic partnership between Turkey and its transatlantic allies.

5 For examples of 'missing' Turkey in the transatlantic debate in 2003 see: For European transatlantic discourse see: Dieter Mahnke, Wyn Rees and Wayne Thompson *Redefining Transatlantic Security Relations: The Challenge of Change* (Manchester University Press 2004) For examples of the American transatlantic discourse see Phil Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro *Allies at War: America, Europe and the Crisis over Iraq* MacGraw Hill 2004, New York and Ronald Asmus 'Rebuilding the Atlantic Alliance' in *Foreign Affairs* September/October 2003.

6 The Turkish Parliament passed an extended war powers bill on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 1991. This gave the US and the allied coalition freedom to use Turkish bases for air-strikes against Iraq

7 PKK (Kurdish acronym of Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanî) is a separatist group fighting an armed struggle with Turkey since 1984. They are also recognized as a terrorist organization by NATO, EU and the United States.

## THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX AND NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES:

The challenges and crises that have emerged in the past few years are unprecedented for the Alliance and for Turkey. Yet, the troublesome period in Turkey's transatlantic relations is not entirely due to Turkish policy priorities regarding these new challenges. Much of what is happening now is a continuation of Turkey's transatlantic relations from previous years. What is new and unique about this phase is that each of these challenges demands new ways of thinking. While NATO itself has played a very low-key role in all of these crises (except for its initial foray into Libya), ad hoc interventions, whether diplomatic or military, are still using old tools and concepts that are untenable in the long run. Thinking outside the box involves engaging Turkey realistically, as a NATO ally, an EU candidate and a regional actor with its own security priorities and concerns.

#### i) Diverging and Converging Paths: Syria and Libya:

Both the Syrian and Libyan cases in the so-called Arab uprisings have proved to be areas of significant *contention* and *cooperation* between Turkey and its transatlantic allies. While initially Turkey was reluctant to support any intervention in Libya, once France and the United Kingdom, with U.S. support, launched an aerial campaign using NATO assets, Turkey decided to lobby for bringing the whole operation under NATO control. This was because Turkey saw that any political control over the direction of the operation would be best served under the multilateral tool of the North Atlantic Council, not because they 'misjudged' the situation, as some Western analysts claimed.<sup>8</sup> It was only after the Council took control that Turkey became an active participant in Operation Unified Protector, though it did not play a direct aerial combat role. Having NATO take the lead in operations rather than letting ad hoc or U.S.-led coalitions into the region seems to be a Turkish desire that is likely to endure.

The simplistic reading of Turkish policy preferences during both crises unfortunately emanates from *framing Turkey as a 'good' or 'bad' ally during times of crisis*. This creates unhelpful labels when there is a far bigger picture that also involves Turkey's commitment to transatlantic security. Neither case in which

Turkey and its Western allies have agreed and disagreed at different times over different issues, can be read through a one-dimensional lens of Turkey 'breaking away from' or 'being on board with' transatlantic preferences, especially given diverging policy priorities between Europe and the United States over the Middle East with regards to Syria in particular. Therefore, there is a wider picture and a bigger story. Ever since the United States began its much talked about pivot to Asia, the reality of a rapidly changing Middle East, unfinished business in the Balkans, a nebulous state of affairs in the Caucasus, and a resurgent Russia made it a necessity to consider *delegating the management of regional change to alternative structures*. For a while, Turkey as a rising economy and a 'model' democracy with Islamic roots was favored by the West as an important component of such a structure. During this time, Western discourse about Turkey included phrases such as 'the Turkish model', or even discussion of a trilateral structure made up of Turkey, the EU, and the United States.<sup>9</sup>

One cannot dismiss the imperative of managing regional change. The transatlantic partnership did this with remarkable success in the transition from communism to liberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. It was the transatlantic core which drove the integration of Germany and Japan into a post war-liberal order after 1945. *The Transatlantic partnership has extensive experience with regional change*. However, such change must be guided by a coherent grand strategy, as the post-1945 and post-1990 designs were. *The main problem with the period after the Arab Awakenings has been that it lacks a coherent and consistent transatlantic grand strategy*.<sup>10</sup>

Much of what has essentially been wrong about transatlantic policies towards Syria is due to an inevitable outcome of NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011. It was the consequences of brutal regime change, in what started as a Responsibility to Protect humanitarian intervention under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, that hardened the resolve of Russia and China. As both permanent members of the UN Security Council

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> "Grand strategy" refers to the security and non-security goals of the state and the means that are employed, both military and non-military, to pursue these goals. More information on the western grand strategies of 1945 and 1990 see: G. Aybet, 'The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited: Grand Strategy And Emerging Issues.' In G. Aybet and R. G. Moore (Eds.), *NATO in Search of a Vision* (pp. 35-50), Georgetown University Press 2010 Washington, D.C.

<sup>8</sup> E. Alessandri, J. W. Walker, 'The Missing Transatlantic Link: Trilateral Cooperation in the Post-ottoman Space' *The German Marshall Fund of the United States: Analysis* 17 May 2012.; Interview with Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Diplomat, 20 May 2011.

rejected a draft resolution condemning the Syrian government for its use of force against civilians in October 2011<sup>11</sup>, the West has since been in a paralysis of indecision and inaction on several counts:

1. How far to take any intervention in Syria without Russian support and UN legality.
2. How to engage regional allies and partners, most notably Turkey, and come to an agreement on what their role in the crisis should be.
3. Which local actors to engage and who to leave out.
4. Whether or not to entirely dismiss the Assad regime.
5. What the short-term priorities and long-term strategy should be for Syria and the region.

Several factors have contributed to this long list of dilemmas: The repeated failure of the UN-Arab League peace effort and its envoys Kofi Annan and Lahkdar Brahimi; the deadlock at the Security Council, with Russia and China refusing to pass any resolution against the Syrian regime of Bashar Al Assad; the perpetual metamorphosis of the Syrian opposition into several factions - sporadically united, divided and at times fighting each other; the limited impact of the 'Friends of Syria' later termed the 'London 11' group of countries due to the exclusion of regional powers like Russia and the rest of the opposition groups outside of the Syrian National Council; the rise of radical groups, most notably ISIS<sup>12</sup> and the presence of other groups such as the Syrian Kurds, who have sought to manoeuvre their losses and gains vis-à-vis other opposition groups and the Syrian government to their own advantage. Adding Turkey's unique national security concerns to the list of contributing factors to Western dilemmas, these include: border security, which has also involved NATO consultations under Article 4; and the presence of the PKK across the Syrian border and their close ties to the Syrian Kurdish groups.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Security Council, Draft Resolution S/2011/612 4 October 2011. The resolution condemned the use of force against civilians by the Syrian authorities. Russia and China vetoed two further draft resolutions presented to the Security Council. The second vetoed resolution was presented on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, and called for the Council to adopt the Arab League's six point peace plan. The 3<sup>rd</sup> vetoed resolution was presented on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July and was put under article 41 Chapter VII of the UN Charter, calling for sanctions short of military intervention if the Syrian government did not comply with the six point peace plan. UN Security Council, Draft Resolution S/2012/77 4 February 2012 and UN Security Council, Draft Resolution S/2012/538.

<sup>12</sup> ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), sometimes referred to as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), recently claiming they are now called IS (Islamic State) and referred to in the region with their Arabic acronym Daesh. For the purposes of this article, the original acronym of ISIS shall be the main reference point.

Despite emphasis in Western media on the divergence between Turkey and its transatlantic allies over Syria, Turkey's requests for NATO support with the deployment of Patriot missile batteries were met without hesitation, unlike similar requests made by Turkey in the past. In 1991, during the first Gulf War, the Allies dragged their feet over Turkey's request for the deployment of the Allied Mobile Force (AMF). In 2003, during the Iraq war, Turkey once more made a request for NATO support, this time for the deployment of Patriots and AWACs. France, Germany and Belgium vetoed the request for preventative deployments in Turkey against a possible attack from Iraq, creating one of the worst internal crises within the Alliance. In contrast, Turkey's request in late November 2012 for the deployment of Patriots to augment its air defence systems and defend its territory against a possible missile attack from Syria, was met by the Alliance by the 4<sup>th</sup> of December. The swift deployment of six Patriot batteries provided by Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States were followed by the deployment of Spanish Patriots and military personnel in January 2015 to replace the two Dutch batteries.<sup>13</sup>

Turkey also called emergency NATO meetings invoking Article 4 twice over cross-border incidents during the Syrian civil war. The first came after the downing of a Turkish F-4 Phantom II military jet near the Turkish-Syrian border on July 22, 2012. The North Atlantic Council convened upon Turkey's request invoking Article 4 of the Washington Treaty.<sup>14</sup> The second came after mortar shells fired from Syria landed in the border town of Akcakale in October 2012, killing five people. Shortly afterwards the North Atlantic Council was convened yet again<sup>15</sup> and Patriot batteries were deployed soon thereafter.

In terms of defence, be it from border incidents or possible missile threats, NATO has stood in solidarity with Turkey. Other areas of the Syrian crisis where Turkey and its allies have not always seen eye-to-eye include the situation of the Syrian Kurds. This made matters more difficult as fighting between ISIS and the Syrian Kurds intensified. As the focus of the U.S. and its

<sup>13</sup> NATO News: "Spain joins Patriot missile defence mission in Turkey" 26 January 2015. Retrieved from: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_116890.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_116890.htm) Accessed 30 January 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Article 4 of the Washington Treaty states that: "the Parties will consult whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of any of the Parties is threatened." See NAC Statement on the shooting down of a Turkish aircraft by Syria Press Release (2012) 085 Issued on 26 Jun. 2012. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_88652.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_88652.htm) Accessed 30 January 2015.

<sup>15</sup> 'Syrian Shelling of Turkish Village Condemned by NATO and Pentagon' *The Guardian*, 4 October 2012



other allies shifted to the immediate priority of dealing with the threat posed by ISIS, Turkey was more interested in a comprehensive strategy -- one that dealt with Iraq as well as Syria and the removal of Assad (whom Turkey saw as the root cause of the emergence of radical groups such as ISIS) from power. , Among Turkey's priorities was also a balanced approach to arming rebels among Kurdish groups (avoiding the transfer of arms to groups with strong or direct affiliations with the PKK). ***It seemed that as the landscape of the Syrian conflict morphed from one reality to another, Turkey and its transatlantic allies developed different priorities for managing regional change.***

While Europe and the United States have refrained from committing to the deployment of ground troops, they commenced limited air strikes in both Iraq (U.S. and European Countries)<sup>16</sup> and Syria (U.S. and Arab Countries) against ISIS targets in September 2014, after the NATO summit in Wales. It was also after this summit that the coalition against ISIS gradually emerged.<sup>17</sup> A point of contention between Turkey and its transatlantic partners has been its precise role in the coalition. While both the European allies and the United States had unrealistic expectations of Turkey sending its army across the Syrian border to aid the besieged Kurdish town of Kobani, where fighting between Kurdish troops and ISIS intensified from October 2014 onwards, such expectations are not new. In November 2011, during the early stages of the war, Western diplomats were keen to see Turkey leading with the Arab League, a military incursion of ground troops into Syria.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the fact that the Turkish Parliament voted in October 2014 to expand its military operations in Iraq and Syria and to allow foreign forces to launch operations from its territory, it has refrained from sending troops across the border until a comprehensive approach - including Turkey's proposals of a no-fly zone and a safe area backed by an international coalition - are established in Syria. The no-fly zone would protect Turkey from attacks by Syrian fighter aircraft, and the safe area would provide refuge for displaced populations fleeing the horrors of the rapidly unfolding

war. The safe area is a greater imperative given the imminent fate of the Syrian city of Aleppo -- which is witnessing a battle between the moderate rebels of the Free Syrian Army, Islamic Front, People's Defence Units and jihadists, on one hand, and the Syrian government troops of Assad and Hezbollah, on the other. If Aleppo should fall, Turkey estimates another million refugees might flee to the Turkish border, which, with the nearly 2 million refugees Turkey is currently hosting from Syria and Iraq, would be impossible to handle. However, Turkey's allies have, thus far, resisted its proposals for the no-fly zone and the safe area. As the war unfolds, establishing both becomes more and more difficult.

With regards to the siege of Kobani, much as Turkey was unfairly criticised in the Western media for 'doing nothing', it took in nearly an additional 200,000 refugees fleeing the fighting in and around the city, and used the Parliamentary vote to allow the transit of Kurdish Peshmerga fighters from Northern Iraq into Kobani through Turkey.<sup>19</sup> After the siege of Kobani, the leader of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, Masoud Barzani, thanked the Turkish government for its assistance, which helped secure the setback for ISIS troops and ended the siege.<sup>20</sup> Throughout this time, Turkey was not only criticised by its Western allies for not sending its troops across the border, but also for not doing 'enough' to stop the flow of foreign fighters joining ISIS in Syria.

In fact, Turkey officially declared ISIS a terrorist organisation in October 2013 and has so far deported 1,164 foreign persons and refused entry to another 7,250 under the pretext that they could be foreign fighters or others aiding ISIS in Syria and Iraq.<sup>21</sup> The list is growing as intelligence sharing between Turkey and the European Union improves. Intelligence sharing in the early days of the conflict was dismal and it became impossible for Turkey to control the entry of EU, Australian, U.S. and other citizens -- some of whom were undoubtedly foreign fighters -- with 38 million tourists entering Turkey every year, and with

16 US fighter jets and drones started bombing ISIS in northern Iraq earlier in August 2014.

17 P. Stewart, J. Ponthus, U.S. says forms 'core coalition' to counter Iraq militants. *Reuters*. 5 September 2014. Retrieved from: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/09/05/uk-iraq-crisis-coalition-idUKKBN0H00TM20140905> Accessed 30 January 2015.

18 A senior diplomat from an EU country made the point to the author in a Ditchley Foundation conference on the Arab Spring in November 2011, under Chatham House rules. Several delegates from EU countries put forward the suggestion of a Turkish led ground intervention into Syria in concert with the Arab League.

19 Deniz Zeyrek: 'Ankara'nin Karari: Girmiyoruz' *Hürriyet* 8 October 2014 Retrieved from: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/27345556.asp> Accessed 1 February 2015; 'Turkey Votes to Allow Operations Against ISIS' *New York Times*, 2 October 2014. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/03/world/europe/turkey-votes-to-allow-operations-against-isis.html> Accessed 1 February 2015.

20 "Barzani thanks Turkey for help in 'freeing' Kobani". *Anadolu Agency*, 27 January 2015 Retrieved from: <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/news/456420--barzani-thanks-turkey-for-help-in-freeing-kobani> Accessed 1 February 2015.

21 Briefing note on foreign fighters by the Office of the Prime Minister, Directorate General of Press and Information.

Istanbul airports rapidly becoming hubs for business transit passengers.<sup>22</sup> But this situation, which not only impacts Turkey's national security but also regional and international security, is a slow piecemeal process and a tough learning curve, for everyone involved. Turkey established 'Risk Analysis Centres' in 2014 at all international airports as well as bus and train terminals between cities deemed to be at risk for transit of terror suspects. So far, 1500 persons have been detained at these centres and one third of those sent back to their country of origin.<sup>23</sup> The visit by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron, in December 2014, made timely intelligence sharing and mechanisms dealing with radicalisation priority areas of cooperation between the two countries.<sup>24</sup> The issue of controlling the flow of foreign fighters is new, and is especially difficult for Turkey with a combined 1,208 km (750 miles) border with Iraq and Syria; geographical terrain in places very difficult to control; and its unwavering open door policy for refugees fleeing from conflict in both Syria and Iraq.

Ever since President Obama presented his four point plan to 'degrade and destroy' ISIS, the focus has been on the airstrikes, for which the U.S. is sharing the burden with its global and regional partners, yet Turkey has refrained from taking part or allowing aircraft to take off from its base in Incirlik in the Southeast. All of this has led to negative connotations in the Western press about Turkey's role in the coalition, sometimes referring to it as an 'unreliable ally.'<sup>25</sup> Similar concerns about the United States' reliability as an ally in times of crises were also voiced in Turkey, given that Turkey's allies appear not to understand its unique security concerns.<sup>26</sup>

In all this, one can say Turkey has been doing its fair share within the coalition. It has been involved in the training and equipping of the Free Syrian Army in

cooperation with the United States.<sup>27</sup> It has cracked down on oil smuggling on the border to curb revenues going to ISIS and is comparing notes with the EU and U.S. on ISIS profiles -- with intelligence sharing likely to intensify. It not only allowed the transit of the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga fighters through Turkey into Syria, but was also involved in their special forces training in Northern Iraq.<sup>28</sup>

On the matter of the Incirlik air base, it is doubtful what strategic significance an additional base would have in the selective airstrikes carried out by the coalition in Iraq and Syria.

With the situation on the ground changing rapidly, the aerial campaigns are not continuous and fixed like those in the Balkans in the 1990s, but intense where needed -- for example, around Kobani. Turkey has been wary of allowing military operations in the region operating from Incirlik in the past. Even during the establishment of the no-fly zone over Northern Iraq, during Operation Provide Comfort, the restrictions on U.S. aircraft flying from Incirlik were extensive. As Aaron Stein rightly points out, the wariness of allowing use of Incirlik for combat operations in the region is not unique to the AK Party of the current government, but is a foreign policy tradition in Turkey.<sup>29</sup> Prime Minister Davutoglu has reiterated that to allow coalition use of Incirlik for air strikes, Turkey would need to see an integrated strategy that includes the creation of a no-fly zone and a safe haven for refugees.<sup>30</sup> Turkey's transatlantic partners are still dragging their feet in supporting these two proposals but, as the Turkish government has pointed out again and again, combatting ISIS with air power alone, and without a political settlement in Syria, would be futile. Some of Turkey's allies at times come close to supporting these

22 Aaron Stein, 'Turkey and the US led anti-IS Coalition: Ankara is Doing More than People Think. Blog: Turkey Wonk: Nuclear and Political Musings in Turkey and Beyond. 23 September 2014. . <http://turkeywonk.wordpress.com> Accessed 5 February 2015

23 Briefing note on foreign fighters by the Office of the Prime Minister, Republic of Turkey Directorate General of Press and Information.

24 David Cameron and Ahmet Davutoglu, Press Conference in Turkey. Released by Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, Delivered: 9 December 2014. Published: 10 December 2014. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/david-cameron-and-ahmet-davutoglu-press-conference-in-turkey> Accessed 1/February/2015

25 Erdogan's Turkey an Unreliable Ally Against Jihadists' *The Washington Times*, 22 October 2014; A. Finkel, 'A NATO Ally Stays on Sidelines of Fight Against Islamic State' *Reuters*, Analysis and Opinion, The Great Debate, 18 September 2014.

26 B. Orucoglu, 'Is the US a Reliable Ally? The Turks are Wondering' *Foreign Policy* 17 October 2014.

27 See Aaron Stein 'Turkey and the US led anti-IS coalition: Ankara is doing more than People think' (2014) op cit, and B. Hubbard, 'US Goal is to Make Syrian Rebels Viable' *New York Times*, 18 September 2014.

28 'Turkey trains Kurdish peshmerga forces in fight against Islamic State' *Reuters*, 22 November 2014.

29 Aaron Stein (2014) op cit. For example, during the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, Turkey had refused the use of its military bases to the United States. During the crisis in Lebanon in 1982, US forces based in Lebanon were only allowed to use Turkey's Incirlik airbase for 'humanitarian purposes' only after Turkish-Saudi consultations on the matter. In 2005, the Turkish government approved the use of Incirlik airbase by the United States as a logistics hub for the transfer of logistics and supplies exclusive of lethal supplies such as weapons and explosives destined for ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

'Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu on the US, Syria and the Islamic State', interview in *Washington Post*, 23 January 2015.

30 'Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu on the US, Syria and the Islamic State', interview in *Washington Post*, 23 January 2015.

proposals, but every day lost, makes both plans more and more difficult to implement.<sup>31</sup>

In summary, with Syria and Libya it is clear that Turkey's hesitation to give full support to some of the policy initiatives undertaken by its transatlantic allies, was based on entirely different reasons for each case. Neither of these reasons had any bearing on sympathy for local belligerents, but were based on Turkey's national and regional security concerns. In the case of Syria, in particular, Turkey has had very specific concerns regarding: border security, arming belligerents with ties to the PKK, and avoiding a wider regional sectarian war, likely to continue long after the aerial intervention of its transatlantic allies. The absence of a transatlantic strategy for Syria has produced stop-gap measures such as aerial campaigns and, more recently, sharing of intelligence on foreign fighters. Thinking outside the box therefore requires long-term strategic reasoning, that also takes into account the individual security concerns of allies in the region.

#### ii) Turkey-Russia and NATO:

Turkey's relations with Russia have also put it at odds with some aspects of NATO policy, particularly during the Russo-Georgian war of 2008. However, any divergence between Turkey and its transatlantic partners on Russia has received less attention from the West than disagreements over Syria. Perhaps this is because Europe and the United States have had their own ambiguities in confronting a resurgent Russia.

Ever since Russia's intervention in the Ukraine beginning in 2014, followed by the ousting of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, Europe and the United States have been at a loss as to how to deal with or confront Russia. The fact that Russia has denied the involvement of its army in the crisis and has relied on pro-Russian separatist groups and troops, although most Western analysts have identified them as Russian troops, has made it more difficult to frame the nature of the confrontation. The subsequent annexation of Crimea, a consequence of the Crimean Status Referendum held in 2014, and conflict in Eastern Ukraine's Donbass region between pro-Russian separatists and the Ukrainian government, has led to what some

analysts have termed a 'new Cold War'.<sup>32</sup> But this stand-off operates within very different parameters than the Cold War. It is not a confrontation within a framework of rules, but one in which each side is testing the other's resolve, while this testing of grounds itself is challenging the norms of the post-1945 liberal World Order.<sup>33</sup> *There is a dangerous exploratory dimension to the present situation, one that can lend itself to easy escalation, unlike the grounded framework of the bipolar confrontation of the Cold War.* This is why the line between cooperation and confrontation has been more flexible. On one hand, the United States and Europe have done little more than confront Russia's actions in Ukraine with words such as the imperative of upholding the 'rule of law', backed by incrementally imposed sanctions. The sanctions in turn have not been as effective as the sustained drop in oil prices at the behest of OPEC. On the other hand, the United States has been supportive of a Syrian peace conference, hosted and convened by Russia, which was boycotted by the main Syrian opposition and sought to leave the government of Bashar Al Assad in power.<sup>34</sup> The United States also needs Russia as part of the P5+1 talks over Iran's nuclear program which are making considerable progress. Furthermore Europe is still dependent on Russia's energy exports. A total of 30% of the EU's natural gas imports and 35% of its oil supplies come from Russia. Germany's dependence on energy trade with Russia exceeds the EU total.<sup>35</sup> There has also been a transatlantic rift on how to deal with the next stage of the conflict, after the breakdown of yet another ceasefire. The U.S. has indicated its desire to arm the Ukraine against Russia, but this plan has been firmly opposed by Germany and France, followed by the Franco-German initiative of launching new peace talks and a visit by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande to Moscow.<sup>36</sup>

32 Robert Levgold, 'Preparing for the Next Cold War', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.93, No.4 July-August 2014,

33A. George, P. Farley and A. Dallin *US-Soviet Security Cooperation: Achievements, Failures, Lessons*, Oxford University Press, 1988

34 'U.S. ambivalence towards Moscow talks shows pressure easing on Syria's Assad' *Reuters* 25 January 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/25/us-mideast-crisis-syria-diplomacy-idUSKBN0KY0K220150125> Accessed 1/2/2015. See also M Gordon and A. Barnard 'Kerry Supports Syrian Peace Talks in Russia' *New York Times*, 14 January 2015.

35 Richard Fuchs 'Germany's Russian energy dilemma' *Deutsche Welle*, 29 March 2014.

36 Richard Balmforth and Pavel Polityuk 'German, French leaders take Ukraine peace plan to Moscow' *Reuters*, 5 February 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/05/us-ukraine-crisis-idUSKBN0L910W20150205> Accessed 6 February 2015. 'Munich Security Conference exposes divisions over Ukraine' *Deutsche Welle*, 7 February 2015. <http://www.dw.de/munich-security-conference-exposes-divisions-over-ukraine/a-18242456> Accessed 7/2/2015

31 'French Minister Calls for Limited No-fly zone in Syria' *Daily Telegraph* 24 August 2012 ; Laurent Fabius 'After Kobane, Saving Aleppo', *The Washington Post*, 3 November 2014; Statement by Senators McCain and Graham on Turkey and the Fight Against ISIS, <http://www.mccain.senate.gov/public/index/cfm/press-releases?ID=248c4233-d909-4377-a877-9eaf5fde3b04> accessed 1/2/2015; 'France supports Turkey's no-fly zone plan for Syria' *Anadolu Agency*, 8 October 2014.

While its transatlantic partners have their own dilemmas in confronting Russia, the situation is even more complicated for Turkey, given that Russia is the country's second-largest trading partner after Germany with a total trade volume of \$32.7 billion. During a visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to Ankara in December 2014, both parties agreed to increase their trade volume to \$100 billion. Days before the visit, both sides signed a series of economic and financial agreements to overcome technical impediments to achieving that goal. Furthermore, a subsidiary of Rosatom, the Russian State Atomic Energy Corporation, is to construct and operate Turkey's first nuclear power plant in Akkuyu near Mersin. During the same visit, President Putin announced that the Russian plan for South Stream - a pipeline running under the Black Sea to provide gas to Europe - had been shelved and instead the preferred alternative would be a Turkish Stream, which would consist of a second pipeline to Turkey in addition to the existing Blue Stream, with a gas hub on the Turkish-Greek border. This has undoubtedly put a new emphasis on the Turkish-Russian energy relationship. Besides, Russia, hurting from the effect of sanctions coupled with low oil prices, now looks to Turkey as one of its 'new horizons'. Turkey in turn has not teamed up with the EU and the United States to impose sanctions against Russia.<sup>37</sup> Russia is also interested in Turkey taking over the G20 Presidency in 2015, with Putin stating before his visit to Ankara, that the sanctions against Russia went 'against the normative principles of the G20'.<sup>38</sup>

Such good relations are not always easy to maintain given Turkey's NATO membership. However, Turkey's position during the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 is also an example of how it maintains an independent stance on Russia but also adheres to its commitments as a NATO ally. The Montreux Convention, which is the legal basis of Turkey's control over the Bosphorus Straits, enables it to take a neutral position in such a crisis. The Straits are not only the major gateway of oil exports from Russia and the Caucasus but also play a crucial geostrategic role in times of crisis in the Black Sea. During the crisis Turkey made no exceptions for its NATO ally the United States, in the required limit of tonnage of warships entering the Black Sea through

the Straits and their requirement to exit the Black Sea after the 21 day limit under the strict guidelines of the Montreux Convention. Similarly, Russian disgruntlement at the allowance of the U.S. warships to pass was explained under Turkey's strict adherence to Montreux.<sup>39</sup>

The Russo-Georgian war was complicated for NATO's European allies because of energy dependence on Russia, but even more so for Turkey because, apart from energy dependence, Georgia plays a crucial geopolitical role, situated in the middle of the two pipelines that carry gas and oil from the Caspian into Turkey. Georgia's bid for NATO membership, and NATO's ambivalent attitude towards enlargement before the war, also made it awkward for NATO member states to respond to the specific situation. In an unexpected move, Turkey consulted with Russia during the Georgian crisis first, before its NATO allies. The Turkish proposal for a Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Pact was also first presented to Russia then Georgia. **Overall, Turkey has handled its relations with Russia and its transatlantic partners within the framework of realpolitik.** Strict adherence to the Montreux Convention protects it from having to take sides. However, Turkey also has disagreements with Russia, such as the one over Syria. **But on Syria, both sides have been able to compartmentalise the problem,** understanding the other's non-wavering opposition on the issue, but still able to put differences aside in the interest of economic relations. This is likely to continue.

The question remains: how will Turkey maintain its compartmentalised relationship with Russia as NATO prepares for a possible confrontation over the Ukraine crisis? At NATO's Wales Summit in September 2014, the allies agreed to adopt a 'Readiness Action Plan' primarily in response to Russia's intervention in Ukraine and to plan for possible intervention beyond that, indicating the need to protect allied territory in a classic collective defence situation. Under the Readiness Action Plan, NATO agreed to significantly enhance the existing NATO Response Force. The idea is to strengthen NATO's collective defence and at the same time increase its crisis management capability. At the NATO Defence Ministers meeting on February 5, 2015, ministers agreed to create a 'spearhead' high-readiness joint task force from within the Response Force. These measures are designed to reassure NATO's Central and

37 'Putin Praises Turkey for Defying Wave of Sanctions Against Russia over Ukraine'. *Breitbart* 1 December 2014 <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2014/12/01/putin-hails-turkey-for-not-sacrificing-own-interests-in-face-of-us-eu-sanctions/> Accessed 1/2/2015

38 'G20 summit: Russia sanctions 'undermine trade' - Putin' BBC News Europe, 14 November 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30051352> Accessed 1/2/2015

39 Karen Henderson and Carol Weaver (ed.s) *The Black Sea Region and EU Policy: The Challenge of Divergent Agendas* Ashgate, 2010, Farnham, England, p.72

East European and Baltic State members whose threat perception of Russia has increased since the Ukraine crisis. It is envisaged that Turkey will take part in the reinforced NATO Response Force. Just as Turkey is understanding of Russia's policies on Syria, Russia is understanding of Turkey's commitments within NATO. *Therefore, as long as NATO forces do not have to confront Russia under Article 5, the impact of Turkey joining the enhanced NATO Response Force is not likely to have a strong impact on Turkey-Russia relations*<sup>40</sup>

### iii) Missile Defence

At its Lisbon Summit in 2010, NATO announced that it would develop and deploy a new missile defence system to cover the territory of all its allies. It was agreed that Turkey would host the radar of this system. The NATO system was based on a plan announced by the Obama administration in 2009 to build a missile defence system for Europe that would also eventually cover the U.S. This initiative was built on several others that preceded it. The land and space-based missile defence system designed to protect the U.S. homeland against an incoming Soviet ballistic missile called the Strategic Defence Initiative, sometimes referred to as Star Wars, was one of the most ambitious plans for increasing defence expenditure under the Reagan administration in the 1980s. The controversy over the system impacted U.S.-Soviet arms control negotiations at the time, as the Soviet Union insisted the U.S. plan would violate the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty) which limited the deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems. Due to problems related to its feasibility and cost, and the subsequent end of the Cold War, the program was abandoned. But the initial investment led the U.S. to have a technological edge in the development of missile defence systems and this knowledge became subsequently transferred to other programmes. Attempts were made to continue development and testing under the Clinton Administration in 2000, and in 2007 George Bush proposed a new program for strategic missile defence in Europe. By the time Barack Obama came to office in 2009, Bush's plan was shelved and replaced with a NATO missile defence system, as opposed to a U.S. system. The latter seemed more offensive to Russia due to the original plan to

station the radar component, as well as the interceptor missiles, in the Czech Republic and Poland.<sup>41</sup>

The European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) involves a gradual building of a comprehensive missile defence system over four phases that can adapt to different threats as they emerge. In contrast to the Bush administration's plan, it involves the deployment of better-proven tested missile interceptor technologies with alternative basing modes that can be adapted as threats emerge. Both the Bush and Obama plans for missile defence were initially intended to protect NATO and U.S. assets in Europe against an Iranian ballistic missile threat, but the Bush plan did not provide protection for SouthEast European NATO countries: Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania. The EPAA, on the other hand, not only covers SouthEast Europe, but was also initially thought to be less offensive to Russia, given that not all the components would be stationed in Poland and the Czech Republic.<sup>42</sup> *The first phase of the EPAA, which is operational, consists of sea-based U.S. Aegis SM-3 interceptor missiles and an AN/TPY-2 Radar Surveillance system based in Kürecik near Malatya in Turkey.*

In May 2012, at NATO's Chicago Summit, it was announced that NATO had achieved interim Ballistic Missile Defense capability as the first phase of this plan became operational.<sup>43</sup>

Turkey agreed to host the radar component of the EPAA after painstaking negotiations at NATO's Lisbon summit in November 2010. The main point of contention was that the naming of any specific threat, including Iran, was deliberately avoided in any of the Lisbon documents.<sup>44</sup> All NATO allies agree on the strategic value of the system for their own security, but differing levels of threat perceptions remain. At the time of initiating the missile defence

<sup>40</sup>Statement by the nato defence ministers on the readiness action plan' NATO Press Release (2015) 027 [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_117222.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_117222.htm) Issied 5 February 2005. Accessed 5 February 2005/

<sup>41</sup>Massimo Calabresi, 'Behind Bush's Missile Defense Push' *Time* 5 June 2007. <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1628289,00.html> Accessed 1 February 2015. See also Wade Boese 'US Signs European Anti Missile Deals' *Arms Control Association*, 2 September 2008. [https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008\\_09/MissileDefense](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_09/MissileDefense) Accessed 1 February 2015. See also Greg Thielmann, "Strategic Missile Defense A Reality Check," *ACA Threat Assessment Brief Arms Control Association*, n.d., [http://www.armscontrol.org/system/files/TAB\\_StrategicMissileDefense.pdf](http://www.armscontrol.org/system/files/TAB_StrategicMissileDefense.pdf). Accessed 1 February 2015

<sup>42</sup>'Media Advisory: ACA Welcomes Shift to a More Pragmatic U.S. Missile Defense Policy' *Arms Control Association* 17 September 2009, <https://www.armscontrol.org/pressroom/missiledefenseshift> Accessed 1 February 2015.

<sup>43</sup>NATO Chicago Summit Declaration Issued on 20 May. 2012 Press Release (2012) 062 parag.58 [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_87593.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87593.htm) Accessed 1 February 2015.

<sup>44</sup>NATO Lisbon Summit Declaration Issued on 20 Nov. 2010 Press Release (2010) 155 parag 36 and 37. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68828.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm) Accessed 1 February 2015.

system, Meanwhile, NATO sources revealed that over 30 countries either had, or were acquiring, ballistic missile technology that could eventually be equipped with conventional as well as Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) warheads. NATO admitted that this proliferation problem did not necessarily mean these capabilities constituted an immediate threat, but meant that the Alliance had to take these potential threats into account as part of its collective defence. This may seem like implementing a solution before the problem arises, but there is also a sound technological consideration here. ***Missile Defence systems cannot be built at short notice during an unforeseen crisis. At the time of a crisis, NATO needs not only the deployment capability in place, but also a politically approved concept of missile defence and agreed rules of engagement within the Alliance.*** That is why NATO went ahead with the missile defence phased adapted system in 2010 when most of the threats were generic.<sup>45</sup> This touches on a very important, overlooked point regarding NATO's missile defence system: ***One of the purposes of the system is to build an "integrated system-of-systems architecture" based on the upgrading, testing and full integration of NATO's command and control (C2) systems and underlying communication network.*** The whole idea is to enable effective information exchanges between various NATO and national missile defense systems.<sup>46</sup> This is precisely why it would be problematic for Turkey to go ahead with a Chinese missile defense system bid that would be incompatible with NATO systems.<sup>47</sup>

Turkey had several reasons for agreeing to be a central part of the NATO missile defense system. Ever since the first Gulf War, with the use of Scud short range missiles by Iraq against Israel, it became evident to Turkey that, despite having the second largest army in NATO, the country was largely defenseless against missile threats from neighboring countries.<sup>48</sup> Acquiring its own missile defense capabilities became an imperative. Apart from having a system that was

state of the art and reliable, the advantages of technology transfer were also highly desirable, which is why Turkey's Under Secretariat for Defense Industry announced a co-production tender for an air and missile defense system in January 2013. A previous tender for an 'off-the-shelf' bid had been cancelled to meet Turkey's technology transfer demands. Although, in September 2013, the Under Secretariat announced that the Chinese company CPMEIC's bid to develop a co-produced long range air and missile defense system had been chosen above the United States' Raytheon and Lockheed Patriot system and the Italian-French Eurosam consortium's SAMP/T, the tender has been extended several times since then. Negotiations have dragged on as Turkey's NATO allies have made their concerns and objections regarding the Chinese bid very clear. Despite this, Turkey's courting of the Chinese system also has a political component, such as leverage over both France and the United States, the two other bidders.<sup>49</sup> ***Whatever the reasons, it is time to have a frank and realistic exchange between Turkey and its transatlantic allies about its intentions and perspectives on its national security needs concerning missile defence and its requirements for technology transfer.*** This would enable Turkey to better understand the importance that NATO allies place on the "integrated system-of-systems architecture" and for NATO allies to understand Turkey's need to have a stand-alone system.

Another reason for Turkey's decision to host the radar of the NATO EPAA is pragmatic due to the importance Turkey attaches to its strategic relationship with the United States. A sort of *realpolitik* was therefore implemented as the Turkish government understood the importance for the Obama Administration of getting the EPAA off the ground. Also, Turkey saw a long-term strategic interest in being involved in the EPAA in part for the development of its own missile defense system in the future.

Turkey's desire for a stand alone missile defence system, which may not be integrated into NATO systems, has met with criticism from NATO allies as a wavering of its commitment to NATO's collective defence. But the real concern here is whether a stand alone non-integrable Turkish system would impact NATO's 'integrated system of systems architecture' of which missile defence is an essential component. However, an independent Turkish system will not

45 Interview with NATO Official, Armaments Programme Support Section, Defence Investment, NATO International Secretariat NATO HQ, Brussels, 16 November 2010.

46 'Ballistic Missile Defence Programme' *NATO Communications and Information Agency* <https://bmd.ncia.nato.int/Pages/default.aspx> Accessed 1 February 2015

47 Aaron Stein, Can Kasapoglu, Sinan Ulgen "Turkey Goes Chinese for Missile Defense" *EDAM Discussion Paper Series* 2013/12 7 October 2013.

48 This consideration was exacerbated with the fact that no state in the region is formally a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime, and several states in the region are thought to either possess non-conventional weapons or to have previously possessed or sought them. See: Ian Kearns, *Turkey, NATO and Nuclear Weapons*. RUSI and ELN Joint Occasional Paper Ibid. page 18

49 Burak Ege Bekdil "Turkey Won't Rush Air Defense Contract" *Defense News*, 15 January 2015. <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/warfare/2015/01/15/turkey-air-defense-contract/21816397/> Accessed 1 February 2015.

necessarily impact NATO's defence posture, even though the Lisbon Summit Declaration in 2010 stated that missile defence will become an integral part of our overall defence posture.<sup>50</sup>

At the same summit, NATO tasked its members to carry out a comprehensive deterrence and defence posture review (DDPR) which was finally adopted at the Chicago summit in 2012. The DDPR was meant to flesh out the slightly vaguer term of 'deterrence' used in the Lisbon document. When we look at the DDPR, we see very little difference from the official language used in previous NATO documents regarding deterrence. This is because, unlike in the Cold War era, deterrence may be declared part of NATO strategy, but is not based on a classical deterrence theory which involves naming a threat with specific targets and political signals, indicating capability and willingness to use nuclear weapons to make the possible unthinkable. A missile defence system, had it ever come into being during the Cold War, would have been seen as destabilising to this delicate guessing game of mutual destruction. This is because the side with missile defence capability would have supposedly acquired first strike capability due to its capacity to 'survive' a retaliatory second strike. Ever since Flexible Response as a NATO strategy ended in 1991, subsequent strategic concepts have consistently maintained the language of an 'appropriate mix' of conventional and nuclear weapons to deter and defend. This wording has essentially helped avoid a debate on the removal of the U.S. sub strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. By 2010, missile defence was added into this mixture, *not because NATO had returned to a classical nuclear deterrent strategy like Flexible Response, but because, due to the political necessity of not naming a specific threat, missile defence had to be integrated into NATO's overall defence posture.* Yet, classical deterrence theory does not work against any generic threat in the future by simply 'being there'. This is why France insisted on naming a specific threat in the run up to the Lisbon summit. Similarly, of all the NATO allies, France has adhered to the traditional definitions of deterrence strategy, even in its diplomatic dealings with Iran.<sup>51</sup> In fact, missile defence, as part of NATO's defence posture, is a 'usable' system to intercept an incoming missile whether from Iran or a potential threat in the future from among the thirty or so countries developing ballistic missile capability, not

to bolster an elaborate deterrent strategy as in the Cold War. Since the NATO missile defence system's primary purpose is not to bolster deterrence in the Cold War sense, Turkey's stand alone system will not jeopardise NATO defence posture, since it will not impact the deterrent value of the NATO missile defence system as it would have done during the Cold War.

However, what is alarming for NATO member states about Turkey potentially 'going it alone' with a missile defence system is not so much the potential damage this could do to NATO's defence posture, but that it may disrupt NATO's intent to create an 'integrated system-of-systems architecture' involving a full integration of its command and control (C2) systems and underlying communication network. It is understandable that Turkey signalling an intent to have a stand-alone system, as well as being integrated with a NATO system, causes discomfort about the future robustness of such a 'system-of-systems'. Yet, this has little to do with Turkey's commitment to NATO's collective defence in a post-Cold War setting.

<sup>50</sup>NATO Lisbon Summit Declaration Press Release (2010) 155 Issued on 20 Nov. 2010 Parag.30. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68828.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm) Accessed 3 February 2015.

<sup>51</sup>Molly Moore, 'Chirac: Nuclear Response to Terrorism is Possible' *Washington Post* 20 January 2006 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/19/AR2006011903311.html> Accessed 2 February 2015.

## CONCLUSION:

As Turkey started to become a more regionally assertive actor, at times cultivating relations outside of the ‘transatlantic box’ - be it a special relationship with Russia or courting a Chinese missile defence bid - Turkey’s long-time allies in NATO and partners in the transatlantic relationship have grown uncomfortable. Turkey’s disagreement with aspects of the policies of some allies towards Syria has exacerbated the situation. For Turkey’s transatlantic allies and partners, these issues have made it even more difficult for them to ‘read’ Turkey and have led to an over simplified assessment of the situation, such as framing Turkey as an ‘unhelpful’ ally. Yet, new challenges and changing times require new thinking and new approaches. ***Turkey and its transatlantic allies need to think outside the box to cultivate a more realistically engaged relationship.***

Placing Turkey in the box of ‘unhelpful ally’ ignores the more intricate connections between national and regional priorities, as well as continuation of the traditional parameters of foreign policy. There is also confusion surrounding Turkey’s transformation from a ‘functional ally,’ whose belonging to the West is framed in terms of its security and geographical assets, to a regional strategic partner who plays a significant role in the management of regional change.

While Turkey was frequently referenced as a ‘model’ the period after the Arab Awakenings has lacked a coherent and consistent transatlantic grand strategy in the management of regional change. This has become crystallized in the Syrian conflict as the deadlock in the UN caused by Russian and Chinese objections doomed any UN-Arab League plan from the beginning, and the West wavered as to how deeply to become involved without strong UN backing. Turkey, on the other hand, had specific security concerns, sharing a long border with Syria as well as exercising caution in arming Kurdish groups affiliated with the PKK. ***It seemed that, as the landscape of the Syrian conflict changed rapidly, Turkey and its transatlantic allies developed different priorities for managing regional change.***

While Turkey has made removing Assad from power a priority, the U.S. and other European allies have insisted on dealing with radical groups like ISIS first. While Turkey has favored a long-term strategy that takes into account a peace settlement and accountable regimes, Western strategies have, by and large, involved stop-gap measures such as aerial campaigns and more

recently intelligence sharing on foreign fighters. Turkey also has the unique challenge of dealing with more refugees from Syria and Iraq (nearly 2 million) in comparison to its transatlantic partners and regional neighbours. Despite this,, Turkey’s suggestions for creating a no-fly zone and a safe area across the border in Syria. have received little enthusiasm from Turkey’s allies except France. ***The issue of dealing with the flow of foreign fighters has provided a very steep learning curve and been a piecemeal process for both Turkey and its transatlantic partners.*** Therefore, especially with regards to the Middle East, thinking outside the box requires long-term strategic reasoning, that also accounts for the individual security concerns of allies in the region.

***As for missile defense, it is time to have a frank and realistic exchange about Turkey’s intentions and perspectives on its national security needs concerning missile defence and its requirements for technology transfer.*** This may avert misunderstanding regarding Turkey’s consideration of the Chinese missile defence system alongside the U.S. Patriot and European EUROSAM proposals. What is alarming for NATO member states about Turkey ‘going it alone’ with a missile defence system is not so much about the potential damage this could do to NATO’s defence posture, but more due to NATO’s intent to create an ‘integrated system-of-systems architecture’. A possible weakening of the integrated system of C2 which would also protect against future cyber attacks, can be viewed with similar concern for Turkey as the interests of Turkey and its NATO allies are more likely to converge in the long term on the preservation of stability of the global commons: air, sea, space, and cyberspace.

NATO will adjust to a relatively more assertive Turkey within the Alliance, though there may be divergences in security prioritization between Turkey and its NATO allies from time to time. This is likely to happen as Turkey becomes a more indispensable strategic partner in the Middle East, not just for NATO but also for the EU. It is more than likely that Turkey and its transatlantic partners and allies will have diverging long- and short-term security priorities and will have to find ways to manage these while continuing their commitments to each other and finding innovative ways to cooperate as new challenges emerge.







**İSTANBUL POLİTİKALAR MERKEZİ**  
SABANCI ÜNİVERSİTESİ KAMPUSU  
**ISTANBUL POLICY CENTER**  
AT SABANCI UNIVERSITY

Istanbul Policy Center  
Bankalar Caddesi No: 2 Minerva Han 34420  
Karaköy, İstanbul TURKEY

 +90 212 292 49 39

 +90 212 292 49 57

@ ipc@sabanciuniv.edu

w ipc.sabanciuniv.edu