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Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations

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Summary

Several Turkish domestic and foreign policy issues have significant relevance for U.S. interests, and Congress plays an active role in shaping and overseeing U.S. relations with Turkey. Members of Congress regularly engage in oversight or legislative activities on the following subjects with respect to Turkey, among others:

- U.S.-Turkey military cooperation, including arms sales and aid;
- Turkey's interactions with countries such as Armenia, Cyprus, and Israel;
- general Turkish domestic issues;
- concerns regarding Christians, Jews, and other religious minorities in Turkey;
- and
- bilateral trade.

This report provides background information on Turkey and discusses possible policy questions and considerations for Members of Congress. U.S. relations with Turkey—a longtime North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally—have evolved over time. Turkey's economic dynamism and geopolitical importance underpin its regional and global influence. Although Turkey still depends on the United States and other NATO allies for political and strategic support, and has close economic links with the European Union, its increased economic and military self-reliance since the Cold War allows Turkey relatively greater opportunity for an assertive role in foreign policy. The record of U.S.-Turkey cooperation during the Obama Administration has been mixed. To some extent it mirrors the complexities that past U.S. Administrations faced with Turkey in reconciling alignment on general foreign policy objectives with substantive points of disagreement.

Greater Turkish independence of action and continuing political transformation appear to have been mutually reinforcing—with both led for more than a decade by President (previously Prime Minister) Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Islamist-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP). However, it remains unclear how Turkey might reconcile majoritarian views favoring Turkish nationalism and Sunni Muslim values with secular governance and protection of individual freedoms and minority rights, including with regard to Turkey's Kurdish citizens.

Existing challenges for Turkey and tensions in U.S.-Turkey relations have been exacerbated by a failed coup attempt in July 2016 and the ongoing government response. The vigorous response, accompanied by the Turkish parliament's approval of a three-month state of emergency, seeks to restructure the military and other key institutions and purge Turkey of the influence of Fethullah Gulen. Gulen was formerly a state-employed imam in Turkey, and is now a permanent U.S. resident whose teachings provide foundational inspiration for an array of individuals, educational institutions, and other organizations in Turkey and elsewhere around the world.

Turkish officials' claim that Gulen was responsible for the failed coup has fueled anti-American sentiment and conspiracy theories among the media and public opinion. Turkish officials have called for the United States to extradite Gulen, with some saying that a U.S. failure to do so could damage bilateral relations. U.S. officials have stated their willingness to consider any Turkish extradition request under the terms of the applicable bilateral treaty.

Bilateral tensions in the failed coup's aftermath have the potential to affect U.S.-Turkey cooperation in countering the Islamic State and more broadly. Effects from some coup plotters' apparent use of Incirlik air base temporarily disrupted U.S. military operations, raising questions about Turkey's stability and the safety and utility of Turkish territory for U.S. and NATO assets.

U.S. and international officials have expressed concern that Erdogan may use the coup attempt as justification to further consolidate power and control expression in Turkey, though evidence indicates fairly broad public acceptance of the government's measures, even among some of Erdogan's political opponents.

In a context of increased speculation regarding post-plot Turkish military capacity and resolve, U.S. and Turkish officials continue to face a number of sensitive issues related to Syria. These include (1) U.S. cooperation with Syrian Kurds who are aligned with Kurdish militants in Turkey; (2) U.S. and Turkish military and diplomatic dealings with a number of different stakeholders, including Russia and Iran; and (3) Turkish efforts to stop or control flows of fighters and refugees at its borders. Turkey has taken steps in 2016 to improve relations with Russia, Iran, and Israel, prompting speculation about the implications for Turkey's long-standing Western ties. The United States provided air support to Turkish military operations in northern Syria in August 2016. These operations could have significant implications for the aforementioned issues.

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Introduction and Issues for Congress

As global challenges to U.S. interests have changed over time, U.S. relations with Turkey—an important North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally since the Cold War era—have evolved. Several Turkish foreign and domestic policy issues have significant relevance for U.S. interests, and Congress plays an active role in shaping and overseeing U.S. relations with Turkey. Though the United States and Turkey have many common interests, they periodically face challenges in harmonizing their priorities and actions. This may stem partly from differences in how each of the two countries evaluates the other’s importance in securing and advancing its interests and accordingly determines the extent to which it is willing to compromise within the bilateral relationship.

Members of Congress regularly engage on a number of key issues involving Turkey. In light of a failed coup attempt in July 2016 and the Turkish government’s response (described below), these include:

- **Overall U.S.-Turkey Relations.** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called upon the United States to extradite Fethullah Gulen (see “July 2016 Failed Coup and Aftermath” below), whom Erdogan blames for the coup attempt. Political and legal questions surround the extradition question with implications for bilateral relations. Various statements from Western and Turkish officials and media sources have both fueled and calmed tensions. In response to the coup attempt, Turkey’s government has carried out significant personnel and institutional changes and has detained thousands while continuing to face serious domestic and regional challenges.
- **Syria and Iraq, Anti-Islamic State Coalition, and Kurds.** Including U.S.-Turkey dynamics involving the coalition against the Islamic State organization (IS, also known as ISIS, ISIL, or the Arabic acronym *Da’esh*), and also involving Kurds within and outside Turkey, various terrorist threats to Turkey, other state and non-state actors, and contested territory in northern Syria (such as the border town of Jarabulus where the United States provided air support to Turkish operations in August 2016).
- **Turkey’s NATO Role.** U.S./NATO basing and operations in Turkey against the Islamic State and otherwise, joint exercises and expeditionary missions, and NATO assistance (including air defense batteries and AWACS aircraft) to address Turkey’s external threats.
- **Arms Sales and Bilateral Military Cooperation.** U.S. arms sales or potential sales to Turkey include F-35 next-generation fighter aircraft. The United States provides annual security-related aid to Turkey of approximately \$3-\$5 million.
- **Domestic Stability and Human Rights.** Including the government’s approach to rule of law, civil liberties, terrorism, the economy, Kurds and other minorities (including Christians and Jews), and nearly 3 million refugees and migrants from Syria and elsewhere.
- **Border Concerns.** Turkey’s ability and willingness, in concert with other international actors, to control cross-border flows of refugees, migrants, and possible foreign fighters and terrorists.
- **Turkish Relations with Other Key Actors.** These include Israel, Russia, Iran, the European Union (EU), Armenia, and Cyprus.

According to the Turkish Coalition of America, a non-governmental organization that promotes positive Turkish-American relations, as of August 2016, there are at least 150 Members of the House of Representatives (145 of whom are voting Members) and four Senators in the Congressional Caucus on Turkey and Turkish Americans.¹

Figure I. Turkey at a Glance



Geography	Area: 783,562 sq km (302,535 sq. mile), slightly larger than Texas
People	<p>Population: 78,741,053 (2015) Most populous cities: Istanbul 14.4 mil, Ankara 5.2 mil, Izmir 4.1 mil, Bursa 2.8 mil, Antalya 2.2 mil (2014)</p> <p>% of Population 14 or Younger: 25.5% (2015)</p> <p>Ethnic Groups: Turks 70%-75%; Kurds 18%; Other minorities 7%-12% (2008)</p> <p>Religion: Muslim 99.8% (Sunni 75%-88%, Alevi 12%-25%), Others (mainly Christian and Jewish) 0.2%</p> <p>Literacy: 95% (male 98.4%, female 91.8%) (2015)</p>
Economy	<p>GDP Per Capita (at purchasing power parity): \$20,396 (2015)</p> <p>Real GDP Growth: 3.1%</p> <p>Inflation: 8.0%</p> <p>Unemployment: 9.8%</p> <p>Budget Deficit as % of GDP: 2.0%</p> <p>Public Debt as % of GDP: 32.7%</p> <p>External Debt as % of GDP: 55.4%</p> <p>Current Account Deficit as % of GDP: 4.3%</p>

¹ See <http://www.tc-america.org/in-congress/caucus.htm>.

Source: Graphic created by CRS. Map boundaries and information generated by Hannah Fischer using Department of State Boundaries (2011); Esri (2014); ArcWorld (2014); DeLorme (2014). Fact information (2016 estimates unless otherwise specified) from International Monetary Fund, *Global Economic Outlook*; Turkish Statistical Institute; World Bank; Economist Intelligence Unit; and Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*.

Country Overview and the Erdogan Era

Since the 1980s, Turkey has experienced fundamental internal change—particularly the economic empowerment of a middle class from its Anatolian heartland that emphasizes Sunni Muslim values. This change helped fuel continuing political transformation led by the Islamic-leaning Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, or AKP) and President (formerly Prime Minister) Recep Tayyip Erdogan (pronounced *air-doe-wan*) after the AKP won four governing majorities—2002, 2007, 2011, and 2015—during a period in which Turkey’s economy has generally enjoyed growth and stability. For decades since its founding in the 1920s, the Turkish republic had relied upon its military, judiciary, and other bastions of its Kemalist (a term inspired by Turkey’s republican founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) “secular elite” to protect it from political and ideological extremes—sacrificing at least some of its democratic vitality in the process.

Through the AKP’s electoral victories, popular referenda, court decisions, and other political developments within the existing constitutional order, Turkey has changed into a more civilian-led system that increasingly reflects the new middle class’s dedication to market economics and conservative values. However, many Turkish citizens and outside observers express concern that Erdogan and the AKP have taken Turkey in a more authoritarian direction and are seeking to consolidate their hold on power.²

Domestic polarization has intensified since 2013: nationwide anti-government protests that began in Istanbul’s Gezi Park took place that year, and corruption allegations later surfaced against a number of Erdogan’s colleagues in and out of government.³ Additionally, concerns regarding Erdogan have accelerated since he became president in August 2014 via Turkey’s first-ever popular presidential election and claimed a mandate for increasing his power by pursuing a “presidential system” of governance.⁴

² For general information on the status of democracy and human rights in Turkey, see the State Department’s Country Reports for Human Rights Practices for 2015. A February 2014 Freedom House report critical of Erdogan and his associates alleged that they had engaged in patterns of behavior over a number of years involving widespread intimidation and manipulation of media, private companies, and other civil society actors through various means, including active interference in their operations and regulatory action to compel government-friendly outcomes. Freedom House, *Democracy in Crisis: Corruption, Media, and Power in Turkey*, February 2014.

³ Freedom House, *op. cit.* In addition to evidence that a number of Turkish businessmen engaged in “tender-rigging,” or paying bribes to public officials in exchange for preferential treatment of their bids for public contracts and zoning exceptions, some of the most high-profile charges revolved around an apparent arrangement by Turkish cabinet ministers to engage in “gold-for-energy” trades with Iranian sources between March 2012 (when international money transfers to Iran through the SWIFT system were prohibited) and July 2013 (when energy transactions with Iran using precious metals became subject to U.S. sanctions). The corruption charges were all dropped in October 2014, and in January 2015 the Turkish parliament cleared four government ministers who had also been implicated. U.S. officials arrested one of the alleged Iranian sources (named Reza Zarrab) in March 2016 for unlawful evasion of U.S. sanctions, and Turkish media and social media outside of pro-government circles feature regular speculation about what evidence Zarrab’s investigation and trial might reveal about Turkey’s top leadership. “Iran’s Turkish connection: Golden squeal,” *Economist*, June 11, 2016.

⁴ Under Turkey’s present constitution, the presidency is officially nonpartisan and is less directly involved in most governing tasks than the prime minister. Since becoming president, Erdogan has remained active politically, has (continued...)

In recent years under Erdogan and the AKP, Turkey has seen:

- major personnel and structural changes to the justice sector and the widespread dropping of charges or convictions against Erdogan colleagues⁵ and military leaders amid government accusations that the Fethullah Gulen movement had used its own agenda to drive police and prosecutorial actions and was intent on establishing a “parallel structure” to control Turkey;⁶
- official or related private efforts to influence media expression through intimidation, personnel changes, prosecution, and even direct takeover of key enterprises;⁷
- various measures to prevent future protests, including robust police action, restrictions on social media, and official and pro-government media allegations that dissent in Turkey largely comes about through the interaction of small minorities and foreign interests;⁸
- the May 2016 replacement of former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu’s AKP government by Prime Minister Binali Yildirim and others characterized as more deferential to Erdogan;⁹ and
- U.S. and European statements of concern regarding Turkish measures targeting civil liberties and the potential for developments that may undermine the rule of law and political and economic stability.¹⁰

Analyses of Erdogan sometimes characterize him as one or more of the following: a reflection of the Turkish everyman, a cagey and pragmatic populist, a protector of the vulnerable, a budding authoritarian, an indispensable figure, or an Islamic ideologue.¹¹ Analyses that assert similarities between Erdogan and leaders in countries such as Russia, Iran, and China in personality, psychology, or leadership style offer possible analogies regarding the countries’ respective pathways.¹² However, such analyses often do not note factors that might distinguish Turkey from

(...continued)

claimed greater prerogatives of power under the constitution, and has proposed constitutional change that would consolidate his power more formally by vesting greater authority in the office of the president in a way that may be subject to fewer checks and balances than such systems in the United States and other president-led democracies. Calling a popular referendum to amend the constitution would require a parliamentary supermajority beyond the AKP’s current representation.

⁵ Tim Arango, “Some Charges Are Dropped in Scandal in Turkey,” *New York Times*, October 17, 2014.

⁶ Piotr Zalewski, “Erdogan turns on Gulenists’ ‘parallel state’ in battle for power,” *Financial Times*, May 6, 2014.

⁷ State Department, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015, Turkey, updated June 14, 2016; “Turkey’s Zaman: Editorial tone changes after takeover,” *Al Jazeera*, March 7, 2016.

⁸ Lisel Hintz, “Adding Insult to Injury: Vilification as Counter-Mobilization in Turkey’s Gezi Protests,” *Project on Middle East Political Science*, June 6, 2016.

⁹ Reuben Silverman, “Some of the President’s Men: Yildirim, Davutoglu, and the ‘Palace Coup’ Before the Coup,” reubensilverman.wordpress.com, August 1, 2016.

¹⁰ State Department, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015, op. cit.; European Commission, Turkey 2015 Report, November 10, 2015, available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2015/20151110_report_turkey.pdf.

¹¹ See e.g., Mustafa Akyol, “Turkey’s Authoritarian Drift,” *New York Times*, November 10, 2015; Nora Fisher Onar, “The populism/realism gap: Managing uncertainty in Turkey’s politics and foreign policy,” *Brookings Institution*, February 4, 2016; Mustafa Akyol, “Does Erdogan want his own Islamic state?” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, April 29, 2016; Burak Kadercan, “Erdogan’s Last Off-Ramp: Authoritarianism, Democracy, and the Future of Turkey,” *War on the Rocks*, July 28, 2016.

¹² See e.g., Oral Calislar, “A tale of two Rambos: Putin, Erdogan take on West,” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, December 2, (continued...)

these other countries. For example, unlike Russia or Iran, Turkey's economy cannot rely on significant rents from natural resources if foreign sources of revenue or investment dry up. Unlike Russia and China, Turkey does not have nuclear weapons under its command and control. Additionally, unlike all three others, Turkey's economic, political, and national security institutions and traditions have been closely connected with those of the West for decades. Turkey's future trajectory is likely to be informed by factors including leadership, geopolitics, history, and economics.

In the wake of the unsuccessful July 15-16, 2016, coup attempt (described below), debate persists about whether Erdogan's governing style and impact are of greater or lesser concern than those of past Turkish leaders with authoritarian tendencies. Criticisms of Erdogan and the AKP and calls for greater pluralism and rule of law are tempered by assertions from many observers that Turkey remains more democratic, prosperous, and tolerant of various lifestyles than in past eras. Some commentators also note that the implications of a change in leadership would be uncertain.

Erdogan and various other key Turkish figures (including political party leaders) are profiled in **Appendix A**.

July 2016 Failed Coup and Aftermath

On July 15-16, 2016, elements within the Turkish military operating outside the chain of command mobilized air and ground forces in a failed attempt to seize political power from President Erdogan and Prime Minister Binali Yildirim.¹³ Government officials used various traditional and social media platforms¹⁴ and alerts from mosque loudspeakers¹⁵ to rally Turkey's citizens in opposition to the plot. Resistance by security forces loyal to the government and civilians in key areas of Istanbul and Ankara succeeded in foiling the coup,¹⁶ with around 270 killed on both sides.¹⁷ The leaders of Turkey's opposition parties and key military commanders helped counter the coup attempt by promptly denouncing it.¹⁸

Turkish officials have publicly blamed the plot on military officers with alleged links to Fethullah Gulen—formerly a state-employed imam in Turkey and now a permanent U.S. resident (see “Failed Coup Aftermath and the Gulen Extradition Question” below for more on the implications for U.S.-Turkey relations). Allies at one point, the AKP and Gulen's movement had a falling out in 2013 that complicated existing struggles in Turkey regarding power and political freedom. Gulen strenuously denies involvement in the plot, but has acknowledged that he “could not rule out” involvement by some of his followers.¹⁹ For more on Gulen and the Gulen movement, see

(...continued)

2014; Douglas Bloomfield, “Washington Watch: Is Erdogan the new Ahmadinejad?” *Jerusalem Post*, July 17, 2013; “Sending the Wrong Signal to Turkey,” *New York Times*, April 19, 2016.

¹³ Metin Gurcan, “Why Turkey's coup didn't stand a chance,” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, July 17, 2016.

¹⁴ Uri Friedman, “Erdogan's Final Agenda,” *The Atlantic*, July 19, 2016; Nathan Gardels, “A Former Top Turkish Advisor Explains Why Erdogan Is The Coup's Biggest Winner,” *Huffington Post*, July 19, 2016.

¹⁵ Pinar Tremblay, “How Erdogan used the power of the mosques against the coup attempt,” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, July 25, 2016.

¹⁶ Gardels, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Ray Sanchez, “Fethullah Gulen on ‘GPS’: Failed Turkey coup looked ‘like a Hollywood movie,’” *CNN*, July 31, 2016.

¹⁸ Kareem Shaheen, “Military coup was well planned and very nearly succeeded, say Turkish officials,” *Guardian*, July 18, 2016.

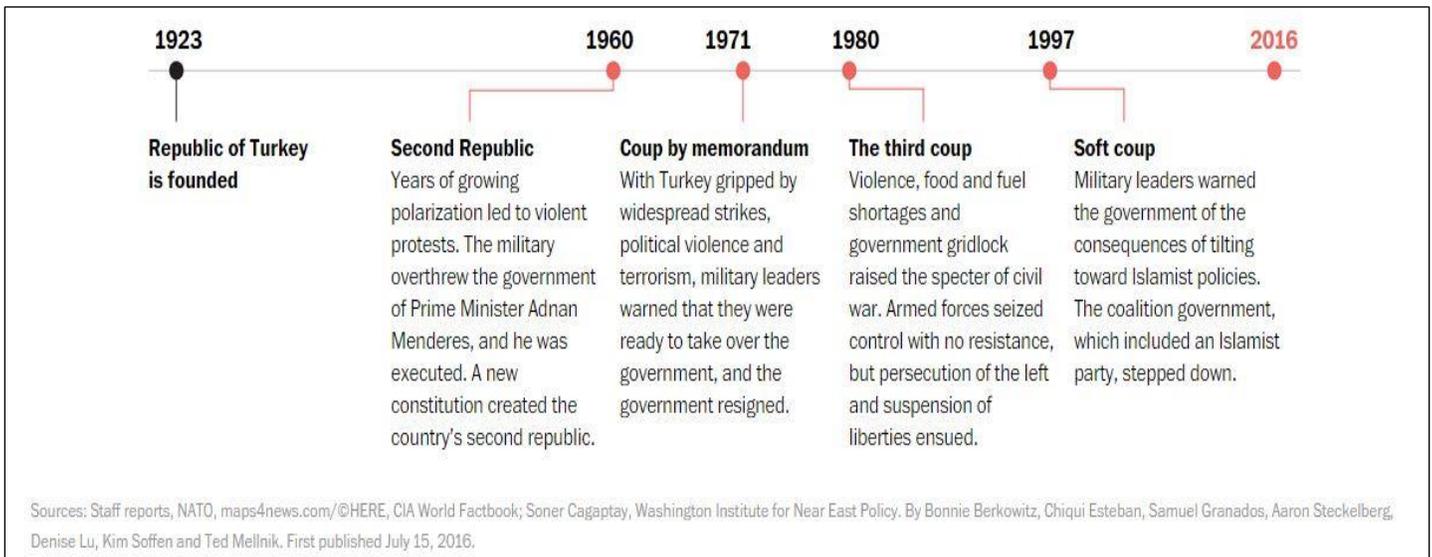
¹⁹ Stephanie Saul, “An Exiled Cleric Denies Playing a Leading Role in Coup Attempt,” *New York Times*, July 16, 2016.

CRS In Focus IF10444, *Fethullah Gulen, Turkey, and the United States: A Reference*, by Jim Zanotti.

In recent years, many observers had concluded that the long era of military sway over Turkish civilian politics had ended.²⁰ Reportedly, this was largely due to efforts by the government and adherents or sympathizers of Fethullah Gulen during Erdogan’s first decade as prime minister (he served in that office from 2003 to 2014) to diminish the military’s traditionally secularist political power.²¹

However, increased internal and external stresses in the past few years may have made Turkey more dependent on military force in confronting threats and maintaining stability, leading some to speculate on the potential for renewed military intervention in politics.²² The plotters’ precise motivations are unclear, but could possibly have included differences with military and political leadership over Turkey’s general trajectory or specific policies.²³ Many observers theorize that the coup attempt probably sought to thwart a reportedly imminent purge of some involved in the plot.²⁴

Figure 2. Past Turkish Domestic Military Interventions



Source: *The Washington Post*.

Amid post-plot turmoil and an atmosphere of distrust, Turkey’s government has detained or dismissed tens of thousands of personnel within its military, judiciary, civil service, and

²⁰ Steven A. Cook, “Turkey has had lots of coups. Here’s why this one failed.” *washingtonpost.com*, July 16, 2016; Patrick Kingsley, “‘We thought coups were in the past’: how Turkey was caught unaware,” *Guardian*, July 16, 2016.

²¹ Raziye Akkoc, “Erdogan and Gulen: uneasy allies turned bitter foes,” *Agence France Presse*, July 17, 2016.

²² See, e.g. Lars Haugom, “A Political Comeback for the Turkish Military?” *Turkey Analyst*, March 11, 2016; Michael Rubin, “Could there be a coup in Turkey?” *American Enterprise Institute*, March 21, 2016; Gonul Tol, “Turkey’s Next Military Coup,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 30, 2016; Cengiz Candar, “How will Turkey’s military use its restored standing?” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, April 24, 2016.

²³ See, e.g., Borzou Daragahi, “Document Reveals What Really Drove Turkey’s Failed Coup Plotters,” *BuzzFeed*, July 28, 2016.

²⁴ Joe Parkinson and Adam Entous, “Turkey’s Spies Failed to See Coup Coming,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 2016; Metin Gurcan, “Why Turkey’s coup didn’t stand a chance,” *op. cit.*

educational system, and taken over or closed various businesses, schools, and media outlets.²⁵ The government largely justifies its actions by claiming that those affected are associated with the Gulen movement, even though the measures may be broader in who they directly impact.²⁶ Amnesty International alleges that some detainees have been subjected to beatings, torture, and other human rights violations.²⁷ Given that several schools and other organizations with apparent ties to the Gulen movement are located around the world, Turkey's government has appealed to other governments to close down these organizations. Some have either done so or indicated a willingness to do so, and some have not.²⁸

The United States, various European leaders, and the U.N. Secretary-General have cautioned Turkey to follow the rule of law.²⁹ Western countries' emphasis on concerns about the government response has reportedly bothered many Turks (including some who normally oppose Erdogan) who largely show support for the government's post-coup actions, and who may have expected the West to show more solidarity with the Turkish people after they faced down the coup.³⁰

²⁵ Tulay Karadeniz, et al., "Turkey dismisses military, shuts media outlets as crackdown deepens," Reuters, July 28, 2016; Ayla Jean Yackley, "Turkey seizes assets as post-coup crackdown turns to business," Reuters, August 18, 2016; Joe Parkinson and Emre Peker, "Turkey Tightens the Screw," *Wall Street Journal*, August 25, 2016.

²⁶ "Turkish anger at the West: Duplicity coup," *Economist*, August 20, 2016.

²⁷ Merrit Kennedy, "Amnesty International: After Turkey's Failed Coup, Some Detainees Are Tortured, Raped," NPR, July 25, 2016.

²⁸ "The hunt for Gulenists: Extradition quest," *Economist*, August 20, 2016.

²⁹ See, e.g., Duncan Robinson and Mehul Srivastava, "US and EU leaders warn Turkey's Erdogan over post-coup crackdown," *Financial Times*, July 18, 2016; "UN head 'deeply concerned' by ongoing arrests in Turkey," *Hurriyet Daily News*, July 28, 2016.

³⁰ Kadercan, op. cit.; Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, "Coup Attempt Unifies Turkey — But Could Distance the West," German Marshall Fund of the United States, August 2, 2016.

Observers debate how lasting and influential the purges will be,³⁵ and how the failed coup and echoes of past Turkish military interventions might influence future military and government actions.³⁶ In late July, Turkey's Supreme Military Council (Turkish acronym YAS) decided that the country's top military commanders, who maintained their loyalty to the government and were taken hostage during the failed coup, would retain their positions.³⁷ Shortly thereafter, the government announced a dramatic restructuring of Turkey's chain of command, giving the civilian government decisive control over the YAS. Erdogan also placed the military more firmly under the civilian government's control and revealed plans to place Turkey's national intelligence agency under his direct control, as well as to reorganize institutions involved with military training and education.³⁸

State of Emergency and Death Penalty Debate

On July 21, the Turkish parliament voted to approve a three-month state of emergency, which can be extended. This allows the government to rule by decree. Turkey also partially suspended the European Convention on Human Rights, citing examples from France, Belgium, and Ukraine as precedents.³¹ Additionally, Turkey is engaged in a nationwide debate on reinstating capital punishment. Pointing to anti-coup protests that have voiced support for bringing back the death penalty, President Erdogan has stated that if the parliament passes such a measure, he will sign it.³² Capital punishment was abolished in Turkey in 2004 as an EU membership prerequisite. Some EU officials have recently reiterated that no country can join the EU while maintaining the death penalty,³³ making any reinstatement likely to render Turkey's long-stalled prospects for accession an even more remote possibility.³⁴

With nearly half of the generals and admirals who were serving on July 15 now detained³⁹ and/or dismissed from service,⁴⁰ there are doubts in some quarters about the efficacy of the Turkish military in combating the numerous threats to Turkish security, including those from the Islamic State and the PKK.⁴¹ Beyond the personnel and institutional challenges, many observers assert that the internal divisions revealed by the coup attempt will be detrimental to both cohesion and morale.⁴²

³¹ "Turkish Lawmakers Give Leader Erdogan Sweeping New Powers," Associated Press, July 21, 2016.

³² "Erdogan: I will approve death penalty if parliament votes," *Hurriyet Daily News*, August 7, 2016.

³³ Selen Girit, "Will Turkey's failed coup mean a return to the death penalty?" BBC News, July 19, 2016.

³⁴ Kursat Akyol, "Will Turkey reinstate the death penalty?" *Al-Monitor Turkish Pulse*, July 29, 2016.

³⁵ Ben Hubbard, et al., "Failed Turkish Coup Accelerated a Purge Years in the Making," *New York Times*, July 22, 2016.

³⁶ See, e.g., Tim Arango, "With Army in Disarray, a Pillar of Turkey Lies Broken," *New York Times*, July 29, 2016. For references to past military interventions that occurred outside the chain of command (Turkey's first coup in 1960 and two failed coups in 1962 and 1963), see Nick Danforth, "Lessons for U.S.-Turkish Relations from a Coup Gone By," *War on the Rocks*, July 26, 2016; Aaron Stein, "The Fracturing of Turkey's Military," Atlantic Council, July 20, 2016.

³⁷ Emre Peker, "Turkey Firms Grip on Its Military," *Wall Street Journal*, July 29, 2016.

³⁸ Cinar Kiper and Elena Becatoros, "Turkey's Erdogan brings military more under gov't," Associated Press, August 1, 2016; Yesim Dikmen and David Dolan, "Turkey culls nearly 1,400 from army, overhauls top military council," Reuters, July 31, 2016.

³⁹ Arango, "With Army in Disarray, a Pillar of Turkey Lies Broken," op. cit.

⁴⁰ Peker, op. cit.

⁴¹ Aaron Stein, "The Fallout of the Failed Coup," *American Interest*, August 16, 2016; Metin Gurcan, "Critical meeting will determine fate of Turkish forces post-coup," *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, July 25, 2016; Humeyra Pamuk and Gareth Jones, "INSIGHT- Turkish military a fractured force after attempted coup," Reuters, July 26, 2016.

⁴² Soner Cagaptay, "Turkey's Troubling Turn," *Foreign Affairs*, July 19, 2016; James Stavridis, "Turkey and NATO: What Comes Next Is Messy," *Foreign Policy*, July 18, 2016.

The Kurdish Issue

Background

Ethnic Kurds reportedly constitute approximately 18% of Turkey's population, though claims regarding their numbers vary. Kurds are largely concentrated in the relatively impoverished southeast, though populations are found in urban centers across the country. Kurdish reluctance to recognize Turkish state authority in various parts of the southeast—a dynamic that also exists between Kurds and national governments in Iraq, Iran, and Syria—and harsh Turkish measures to quell Kurdish identity- and rights-based claims and demands have fed tensions that have periodically worsened since the foundation of the republic in 1923. Since 1984, the Turkish military has waged an on-and-off struggle to put down a separatist insurgency and urban terrorism campaign by the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or *Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan* (PKK).⁴³ The initially secessionist demands of the PKK have since ostensibly evolved toward the less ambitious goal of greater cultural and political autonomy.⁴⁴

The struggle between Turkish authorities and the PKK was most intense during the 1990s, but resumed in 2003 after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, following a lull. According to the U.S. government, the PKK partially finances its activities through criminal activities, including its operation of a Europe-wide drug trafficking network.⁴⁵ The PKK uses safe havens in areas of northern Iraq under the nominal authority of Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The Turkish military's approach to neutralizing the PKK has been routinely criticized by Western governments and human rights organizations for being overly hard on ethnic Kurds—thousands have been imprisoned and hundreds of thousands have been displaced or had their livelihoods disrupted for suspected PKK involvement or sympathies.

Amid internal conflict in Syria since 2011, the PKK's Syrian sister organization, the Democratic Union Party (*Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat*, or PYD), has gained a measure of control over some swaths of Kurdish-populated territory near Syria's border with Turkey. Initially, this development mainly raised questions for Turkey about the possibility of another base of support for PKK training, leadership, and operations.⁴⁶ However, as the PYD's militia, the People's Protection Units (*Yekineyen Parastina Gel*, or YPG), has arguably become the most effective U.S. partnered anti-IS ground force in Syria, and has consolidated its territorial control further in 2014 and 2015,

⁴³ In footnote 2 of a September 2011 report, the International Crisis Group stated that Turkish government figures estimate that close to 12,000 Turks had been killed since fighting began in the early 1980s. This figure includes Turkish security personnel of various types and Turkish civilians (including Turkish Kurds who are judged not to have been PKK combatants). The same report stated that Turkish estimates of PKK dead during the same time period ran from 30,000 to 40,000. International Crisis Group, *Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency*, Europe Report No. 213, September 20, 2011.

⁴⁴ Kurdish nationalist leaders demand that any future changes to Turkey's 1982 constitution not suppress Kurdish ethnic and linguistic identity. The first clause of Article 3 of the constitution reads, "The Turkish state, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity. Its language is Turkish." Because the constitution states that its first three articles are unamendable, even proposing a change could face judicial obstacles. Kurds in Turkey also seek to modify the electoral law to allow for greater Kurdish nationalist participation in Turkish politics by lowering the percentage-vote threshold (currently 10%) for political parties in parliament.

⁴⁵ U.S. Department of the Treasury Press Release, "Five PKK Leaders Designated Narcotics Traffickers," April 20, 2011.

⁴⁶ However, northern Syria's more open terrain and comparably small and dispersed Kurdish population may make it a less plausible base of operations than Iraq. Syria hosted the PKK's leadership until 1998, and historical and personal links persist among Syrian Kurds and the PKK.

these events also have contributed to a dynamic of ethnic Turkish-Kurdish retrenchment in Turkey fed by, among other things,

- how the prospects for Kurds in Syria and Iraq of greater autonomy or independence impact relations and mutual perceptions of leverage among Turkey’s Kurds and its government; and
- security and socioeconomic concerns Turkey faces—in the same border areas where large Kurdish populations are concentrated—stemming from the Syrian refugees Turkey hosts and the militants that might use or transit its territory.

Since mid-2014, direct PKK military action to help repel the Islamic State and defend northern Iraqi territory controlled by the KRG has complicated Turkish efforts to obtain outside support for reducing the group’s potency. The PKK’s role in countering the Islamic State and its track record of not targeting Americans has periodically led some commentators to question whether it should remain a U.S.-designated terrorist group.⁴⁷

PKK Designations by U.S. Government	
Designation	Year
Foreign Terrorist Organization	1997
Specially Designated Global Terrorist	2001
Significant Foreign Narcotics Trafficker	2008

Recent Violence and Future Prospects After the July Failed Coup

It is still not clear how the failed coup will affect Erdogan’s stance toward Turkey’s Kurds, which has changed in recent years. Until the spring of 2015, Erdogan appeared to prefer negotiating a political compromise with PKK leaders over the prospect of armed conflict.⁴⁸ However, against the backdrop of PKK-affiliated Kurdish groups’ continued success in Syria, and a June 2015 election in Turkey in which the pro-Kurdish party (Peoples’ Democratic Party, Turkish acronym HDP) made substantial gains, Erdogan adopted a more nationalistic rhetorical stance criticizing the PKK and HDP.

Around the same time, the PKK was reportedly preparing for a possible renewal of conflict in southeastern Turkey.⁴⁹ The balance of leverage between the government and the PKK was at least partly affected after late 2014 by growing U.S. support for the PYD/YPG.⁵⁰ Although the United States has considered the PKK to be a terrorist group since 1997, it does not apply this characterization to the PYD/YPG.⁵¹

⁴⁷ David L. Phillips, “Why the US should take PKK off the terror list,” CNBC, October 9, 2014; Michael Rubin, “The US should reconsider PKK terror designation,” American Enterprise Institute, November 12, 2013.

⁴⁸ As prime minister, Erdogan had led past efforts to resolve the Kurdish question by using political, cultural, and economic development approaches, in addition to the traditional security-based approach, in line with the AKP’s ideological starting point that common Islamic ties among Turks and Kurds could transcend ethnic differences. For more information on the various Kurdish groups in Syria and their relationships with Turkey-based groups and the Turkish state, see CRS In Focus IF10350, *The Kurds in Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Iran*, by Jim Zanotti and Bolko J. Skorupski.

⁴⁹ Ugur Ergan, “Attacks reveal PKK prepared for war during peace talks: Analyst,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, August 21, 2015; Aliza Marcus, “Turkey’s Kurdish Guerrillas Are Ready for War,” *Foreign Policy*, August 31, 2015.

⁵⁰ Semih Idiz, “US support of Syrian Kurds ruffles Turkey’s feathers,” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, August 4, 2015.

⁵¹ In a September 21, 2015, daily press briefing, the State Department spokesperson said that the United States does not (continued...)

A complicated set of circumstances involving IS-linked terrorist attacks against pro-Kurdish demonstrators, PKK allegations of Turkish government acquiescence to or complicity with the attacks, and a deadly ambush of Turkish security personnel led to a resumption of violence between government forces and the PKK in the summer of 2015. The return to violence helped Erdogan in the short term, with some Kurds presumably moving back to the AKP from the HDP in November 2015 elections because of the PKK's return to conflict.⁵²

The resurgent Turkey-PKK violence led Turkish authorities to take emergency measures to overcome PKK-affiliated redoubts in key southeastern urban areas.⁵³ Since December 2015, at least 350,000 people have been displaced and the region's infrastructure has suffered significant damage, according to the Turkish Ministry of Health.⁵⁴ The violence has fueled international concerns about possible human rights abuses.⁵⁵ Figures are difficult to verify, but Erdogan claimed in March 2016 that 5,000 PKK militants and 355 state security forces had been killed in the offensive⁵⁶ and the U.S. State Department reported "dozens" of civilian deaths as of December 2015.⁵⁷ In 2016, the PKK or affiliated groups have carried out a number of attacks in key urban areas that have killed and injured both civilians and security personnel. U.S. officials, while supportive of Turkey's prerogative to defend itself from attacks, have advised Turkey to show restraint and proportionality in its actions against the PKK.⁵⁸

The military effort against the PKK in the southeast has been led by Turkey's Second Army, whose commander has been detained in connection with the coup plot.⁵⁹ Some analysts assert that post-coup changes involving commanders and personnel could affect force readiness.⁶⁰ The Turkish military launched air strikes against PKK targets in northern Iraq in the days following the coup, possibly at least partly to project a sense of continuity and stability.⁶¹

In late 2015, some Turkish observers alleged that remarks by HDP leaders supported armed Kurdish resistance. Erdogan called for action revoking parliamentary members' immunity from expulsion and prosecution.⁶² In May 2016, legislators (largely from the AKP and the Nationalist Action Party—Turkish acronym MHP) approved this change by amending the constitution.⁶³

(...continued)

consider the YPG to be a terrorist organization, and in a February 23, 2016, press briefing, the Defense Department spokesperson said that "we will continue to disagree with Turkey [with] regard [to] ... our support for those particular [Kurdish] groups that are taking the fight to ISIL, understanding their concerns about terrorist activities." In an April, 28, 2016, Senate hearing, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter appeared to answer "yes" to a question on whether the YPG has ties to the PKK, but he later reiterated that the YPG is not a designated terrorist organization.

⁵² Piotr Zalewski, "Turkey's pro-Kurdish party reels as AKP storms back into power," *Financial Times*, November 2, 2015.

⁵³ Orhan Coskun, "Turkish warplanes strike northern Iraq after Ankara bombing blamed on Kurdish militants," Reuters, March 14, 2016.

⁵⁴ Zia Weise, "Turkey's 'like Syria,'" *Politico Europe*, March 21, 2016.

⁵⁵ Suzan Fraser, "Turkey's military has ended a three-month operation against Kurdish militants in the largest city in the country's mostly Kurdish southeast," Associated Press, March 9, 2016.

⁵⁶ Seyhmus Cakan, "More than 5,000 Kurdish militants killed since July: Turkey's Erdogan," Reuters, March 28, 2016.

⁵⁷ State Department, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015, op. cit

⁵⁸ See, e.g., "Obama calls Erdogan to discuss Ankara attack, Syria," Anadolu Agency, February 19, 2016.

⁵⁹ Kadri Gursel, "Turkey's failed coup reveals 'army within an army,'" *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, July 22, 2016.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Aaron Stein, "Inside a failed coup and Turkey's fragmented military," *War on the Rocks*, July 20, 2016.

⁶¹ "Turkey air strikes kill PKK fighters in northern Iraq," Al Jazeera, July 20, 2016.

⁶² "Turkey's Erdogan: Demirtas Kurdish autonomy plea is 'treason,'" BBC News, December 29, 2015.

⁶³ "Turkey passes bill to strip politicians of immunity," Al Jazeera, May 20, 2016.

Before the failed coup, many analysts anticipated action against parliamentary members from the HDP and perhaps some from the main opposition CHP (Turkish acronym for Republican People's Party), at least partly as a way to advance Erdogan's quest for a favorable parliamentary supermajority to establish a presidential system. They speculated about how a virtual disenfranchisement of Kurdish nationalist voters might affect prospects for heightened or extended Turkey-PKK violence.⁶⁴

In the aftermath of the failed coup, next steps regarding the PKK and HDP and prospects for resuming Turkey-PKK negotiations are uncertain. Despite the HDP's quick condemnation of the plot, along with all other parties in parliament, Erdogan continues to exclude HDP leaders from cross-party meetings and events.⁶⁵ Some HDP figures have voiced concern that CHP and MHP solidarity with the AKP might isolate them or leave them prone to a future government crackdown.⁶⁶ According to August 2016 reports, prosecutors have reportedly prepared indictments against key HDP figures.⁶⁷

The future trajectory of Turkey-PKK violence and political negotiation may depend on a number of factors, including:

- Which Kurdish figures and groups (imprisoned PKK founder Abdullah Ocalan [profiled in **Appendix A**], various PKK militant leaders, the professedly nonviolent HDP) are most influential in driving events.
- Erdogan's approach to and influence on Turkish government policy regarding the Kurdish issue. Previously considered by most domestic and international observers to be the only Turkish leader strong enough to deliver a peaceful solution, many now question this assumption in light of his recent nationalistic tone.
- How violence since 2015 might affect Turkey's internal stability, governing institutions, and ability to administer the southeast, particularly in light of the military's shakeup after the failed coup attempt.
- The extent to which the United States and perhaps European actors might—based on their view of the issue's priority—offer incentives to or impose costs on Turkey and the PKK in efforts to mitigate violence and promote political resolution of the parties' differences.

Economy

General Overview

The AKP's political successes have been aided considerably by robust Turkish economic growth since the early 2000s. Growth rates, fueled by diversified Turkish conglomerates (such as Koc and Sabanci) from traditional urban centers as well as "Anatolian tigers" (small- to medium-sized export-oriented businesses) scattered throughout the country, have been comparable at times since 2000 to those of China, India, and other major developing economies. A March 2014 analysis

⁶⁴ Kadri Gursel, "Ouster of Kurdish MPs threatens to fuel separatism in Turkey," *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, May 23, 2016.

⁶⁵ See, e.g., "No invitation to Turkish leaders' summit angers HDP," *Hurriyet Daily News*, July 25, 2016.

⁶⁶ Diego Cupolo, "The state of emergency for Turkey's opposition," *dw.com*, July 25, 2016.

⁶⁷ "Indictment drawn up against HDP leaders for terrorist propaganda in Turkey," *Anadolu Agency*, August 14, 2016.

stated that Turkey's citizens were 43% better off economically then than when Erdogan became prime minister in 2003.⁶⁸ According to the World Bank, Turkey's economy ranked 18th worldwide in annual GDP in 2015.

The dependence of Turkey's economy on foreign capital and exports led to challenges in recent years stemming from the economic slowdown in the EU, Turkey's main trading partner, and from the U.S. Federal Reserve's tightening of monetary policy. Growth has slowed from about 9% in 2011 to between 2% and 4.2% in the years since.⁶⁹

Government regulation and intervention have the potential to affect Turkey's economic trajectory. Although Turkey's central bank cut its key policy interest rate from 10% in early 2014 to 7.5% in 2015, President Erdogan has publicly called for larger cuts. The politicization of the issue appears to have factored into the continued fall of Turkey's lira against the dollar, along with security concerns that have led to a significant decline in tourism,⁷⁰ and downward pressure on the lira (among a number of emerging market currencies) in anticipation of future Federal Reserve interest rate hikes.⁷¹ Most analyses of Turkey's economy express optimism about its fiscal position and banking system, while noting that Turkey's relatively large current account deficit makes it more vulnerable than most economies to higher U.S. borrowing costs.

The July 2016 failed coup has exacerbated concerns about political uncertainty in Turkey. After the coup attempt, an already weak lira has fallen lower, and Standard and Poor's lowered its credit rating for Turkey, citing the potential for instability to limit the capital flows necessary to sustain the country's balance of payments.⁷² However, the long-term implications remain to be seen. The Turkish government maintains that the coup attempt's impact will be minimal, and that the greatest potential risk is the negative effect on Turkey's image among international investors.⁷³ Accordingly, the Turkish government has since been vigorous in its pursuit of foreign direct investment, which may have partly motivated its recent rapprochement with Russia.⁷⁴

Going forward, some observers assert that the "low-hanging fruit"—numerous large infrastructure projects and the scaling up of low-technology manufacturing—that largely drove the previous decade's economic success is unlikely to produce similar results.⁷⁵ For example, one observer argues that Turkey's real economic challenge is not physical or political security but structural weaknesses.⁷⁶ Structural economic goals for Turkey include incentivizing greater research and development to encourage Turkish technological innovation and global competitiveness, harmonizing the educational system with future workforce needs, encouraging domestic savings, and increasing and diversifying energy supplies to meet ever-growing consumption demands.

⁶⁸ Christopher de Bellaigue, "Turkey Goes Out of Control," *New York Review of Books*, April 3, 2014.

⁶⁹ Data from the IMF's World Economic Outlook database.

⁷⁰ Isobel Finkel and Constantine Courcoulas, "Airport Attack Hits Turkey Tourism Industry When It's Down," Bloomberg, June 30, 2016.

⁷¹ Constantine Courcoulas and Tugce Ozsoy, "Lira Weakens Past 3 per Dollar Sending Stocks Falling With Bonds," Bloomberg, August 20, 2015.

⁷² Gabrielle Coppola, "S&P Cuts Turkey Credit Rating, Citing Political Uncertainty," Bloomberg, July 20, 2016.

⁷³ Kerim Karakaya, "Turkish deputy PM: Coup's economic wounds 'easy to manage,'" *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, August 9, 2016.

⁷⁴ Nuran Erkul, "Turkey in pursuit of \$24B in foreign investment," Anadolu Agency, August 11, 2016.

⁷⁵ See, e.g., World Bank, *Turkey's Transitions: Integration, Inclusion, Institutions*, December 2014.

⁷⁶ H. Akin Unver, "The Real Challenge to Turkey's Economy Isn't Terrorism," *Harvard Business Review*, July 8, 2016.

Energy⁷⁷

Turkey's importance as a regional energy transport hub elevates its increasing relevance for world energy markets while also providing Turkey with opportunities to satisfy its own growing domestic energy needs. Turkey's location has made it a key country in the U.S. and European effort to establish a southern corridor for natural gas transit from diverse sources.⁷⁸ However, Turkey's dependence on external sources—particularly oil and natural gas from Russia and Iran—may constrain its foreign policy somewhat.⁷⁹ Turkey has preliminarily agreed to a proposed Russian project known as “Turkish Stream,” in which a pipeline would traverse Turkish territory and/or territorial waters, reportedly in exchange for discounts to Turkey on purchases of Russian natural gas. The likelihood of implementing this proposal is a subject of ongoing speculation, though perceptions of its viability are closely tied to the state of broader Turkish-Russian relations (see “Russia” below).⁸⁰

As part of a broad Turkish strategy to reduce the country's current dependence on a few foreign sources, Turkey appears to be trying to diversify its energy imports. In late 2011, Turkey and Azerbaijan reached deals for the transit of natural gas to and through Turkey⁸¹ via a proposed Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP), with gas projected to begin to flow by 2018. The deals have attracted attention as a potentially significant precedent for transporting non-Russian, non-Iranian energy to Europe. In June 2013, the consortium that controls the Azerbaijani gas fields selected to have TANAP connect with a proposed Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) to Italy.⁸² Turkey has also sought to increase energy imports from Iraq, including through dealings with the KRG involving northern Iraqi oil and gas reserves and pipelines.

⁷⁷ Michael Ratner, Specialist in Energy Policy, contributed to this subsection.

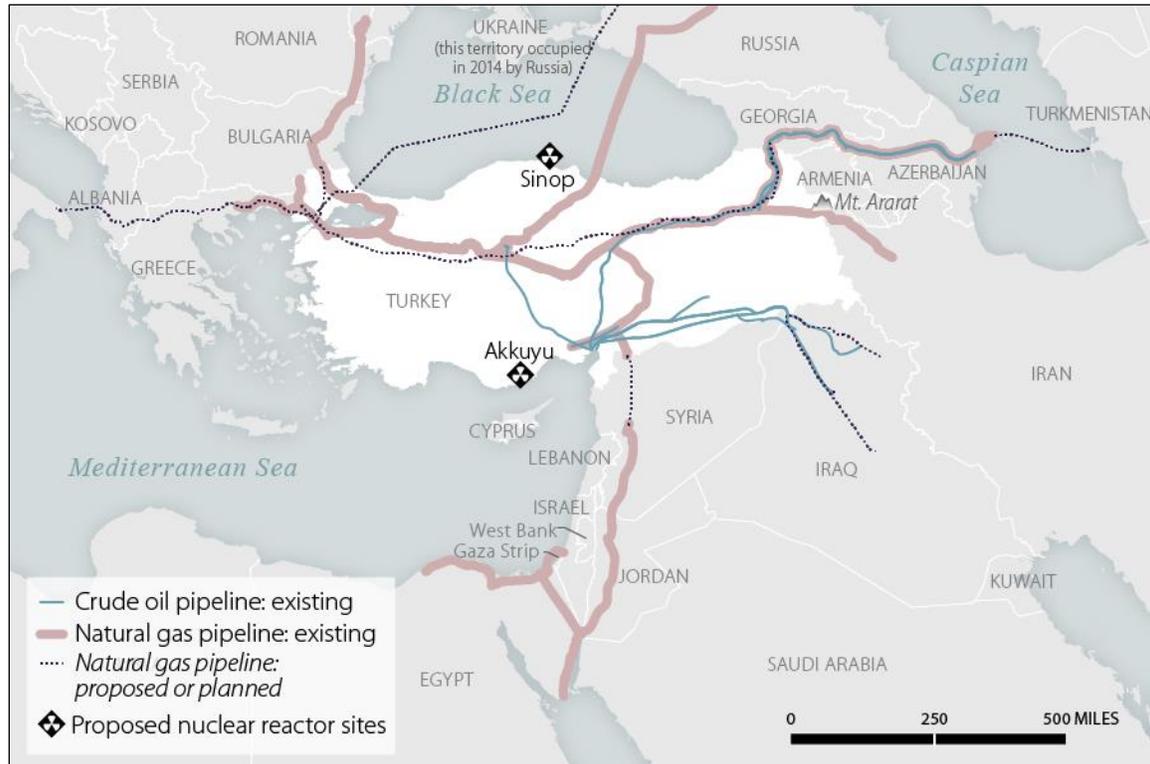
⁷⁸ The U.S. energy strategy in Europe is designed to work together with European nations and the European Union to seek ways to diversify Europe's energy supplies. The focus of U.S. efforts has been on establishing a southern corridor route for Caspian and Middle Eastern natural gas supplies to be shipped to Europe, generally through pipelines traversing Turkey. See H.Res. 188, “Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives with respect to promoting energy security of European allies through the opening of the Southern Gas Corridor.”

⁷⁹ Russia supplies about 20% of Turkey's energy consumption. “Russia v Turkey: Over the borderline,” *Economist*, November 28, 2015. Turkey has become less dependent on Iranian oil in recent years, but—according to 2015 government figures—still receives about 22% of the oil it imports from Iran (with more than 45% now coming from Iraq) and 15.3% of the natural gas it imports from Iran (with more than 58% coming from Russia). See <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkeys-energy-strategy.en.mfa>. For U.S. government information on the main sources of Turkish energy imports, see <http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.cfm?iso=TUR>.

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Barin Kayaoglu, “Turkey treads carefully on new gas pipeline with Russia,” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, August 12, 2015.

⁸¹ The terms of Turkish-Azerbaijani agreement specified that 565 billion-700 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas would transit Turkey, of which 210 bcf would be available for Turkey's domestic use.

⁸² BP press release, “Shah Deniz targets Italian and Southeastern European gas markets through Trans Adriatic Pipeline,” June 28, 2013. The consortium did not rule out subsequently adding a connection with a proposed Nabucco West pipeline to Austria at a later date when more natural gas is developed, but such an eventuality may be less likely in light of the selection of TAP. For more information, see CRS Report R42405, *Europe's Energy Security: Options and Challenges to Natural Gas Supply Diversification*, coordinated by Michael Ratner.

Figure 3. Major Pipelines Traversing Turkey and Possible Nuclear Power Plants

Source: Graphic created by CRS. Map boundaries and information generated by Hannah Fischer using data from the Department of State (2015); Esri (2014); IHS Pipeline Data (June 2015 and August 2015); Gazprom (http://www.gazprom.com/fl/posts/64/656707/map_tur_potok_eng.jpg, undated); BOTAS map (http://www.botas.gov.tr/images/maps/BotasGenel_full.png, undated).

Notes: All locations are approximate.

Another part of Turkey’s strategy to become more energy independent is to increase domestic energy production. Turkey has entered into an agreement with a subsidiary of Rosatom (Russia’s state-run nuclear company) to have it build and operate what would be Turkey’s first nuclear power plant in Akkuyu near the Mediterranean port of Mersin. Construction, which had been planned for several years but was delayed by safety considerations raised at least in part by the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi incident in Japan, began in April 2015. According to a media report, “A second plant is due to be built by a French-Japanese consortium in the northern Black Sea city of Sinop, while a third plant, the location of which is yet to be finalized, is also planned.”⁸³

⁸³ Burak Akinci with Stuart Williams, “Protests as Turkey starts work on first nuclear power plant,” Agence France Presse, April 14, 2015.

U.S.-Turkey Relations

There have been many situations in which the United States and Turkey have made common cause during their decades-long alliance in NATO, but their strategic cooperation also has a history of complications. This is based largely on divergences in how the two countries' leaders have assessed their respective interests given different geographical positions, threat perceptions, and roles in regional and global political and security architectures. Domestic politics in both countries have also played a role. Yet, both countries have continued to affirm the importance of an enduring strategic relationship. A number of policy differences have arisen in the past few years. It remains unclear whether these differences are mainly the latest manifestations of structural tension, or whether they signal a more substantive change in the bilateral relationship.

Failed Coup Aftermath and the Gulen Extradition Question

The July 2016 failed coup and Turkey's trajectory in its aftermath could significantly impact U.S.-Turkey relations given Turkey's regional importance and membership in NATO.⁸⁷ Among NATO allies, only the U.S. military has more active duty personnel than Turkey's.⁸⁸

Some Turkish officials and media have accused the United States of prior knowledge of or involvement in the July 2016 coup attempt.⁸⁹ President Obama dismissed such accusations on July 22 as "unequivocally false" and threatening to U.S.-Turkey ties.⁹⁰ These claims may partly stem from popular Turkish sensitivities about historical U.S. closeness to Turkey's military. Concerns that U.S. officials have raised about how post-plot military personnel changes might affect U.S.-Turkey cooperation have prompted criticism from Erdogan that has further fed speculation in

Incirlik Air Base

Incirlik (pronounced *in-jeer-leek*) air base has long been the symbolic and logistical center of the U.S. military presence in Turkey. Over the past 15 years, the base has been critical in supplying U.S. military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. It currently hosts U.S.-led coalition aircraft carrying out anti-IS strikes in Syria and Iraq, and around 1,500 U.S. personnel. Dependents of U.S. military and government personnel were ordered to leave Incirlik and other U.S. installations in Turkey in March 2016.⁸⁴

During and shortly after the July coup attempt, power to the base was shut off and the airspace over it was closed to some U.S. aircraft after pro-coup forces were revealed to have been using the airfield and assets based there. U.S. personnel and assets at Incirlik continued to function on backup generators.⁸⁵ U.S. anti-IS sorties have since resumed. The arrest of the base's Turkish commander for alleged involvement in the coup plot has raised suspicions among some in Turkey about whether the United States knew about the coup in advance.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Andrew Tilghman, "U.S. military dependents ordered to leave Turkey," *Military Times*, March 29, 2016.

⁸⁵ Michael S. Schmidt and Tim Arango, "In a Bid to Maintain Ties, Turkey Changes Its Tone," *New York Times*, August 2, 2016; Selin Nasi, "Turbulence in Turkish-US ties: The Incirlik crisis," *Hurriyet Daily News*, July 21, 2016.

⁸⁶ Oriana Pawlyk and Jeff Shogol, "Incirlik has power again, but Turkey mission faces uncertain future," *Military Times*, July 22, 2016.

⁸⁷ Tim Arango and Ceylan Yeginsu, "Erdogan Triumphs After Coup Attempt, but Turkey's Fate Is Unclear," *New York Times*, July 18, 2016.

⁸⁸ "Turkey: Executive Summary," *IHS Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - Eastern Mediterranean*, July 25, 2016.

⁸⁹ Tim Arango and Ceylan Yeginsu, "Turks Can Agree on One Thing: U.S. Was Behind Failed Coup," *New York Times*, August 2, 2016.

⁹⁰ White House, Remarks by President Obama and President Pena Nieto of Mexico in Joint Press Conference, July 22, 2016.

Turkey about alleged U.S. connections with the plot.⁹¹ These dynamics may exacerbate anti-American sentiments in Turkish society.⁹²

As mentioned above, an apparent disconnect between many Turks and Western observers regarding Turkey's post-coup response may be one factor complicating U.S.-Turkey relations.⁹³ Secretary of State John Kerry warned on July 16 that a wide-ranging purge "would be a great challenge to [Erdogan's] relationship to Europe, to NATO and to all of us."⁹⁴

Further complicating U.S.-Turkey relations, in the plot's aftermath the Turkish government has intensified its calls (which date back to 2014)⁹⁵ for the United States to extradite Gulen.⁹⁶ According to polls, calls for Gulen's extradition have widespread public support in Turkey.⁹⁷ In a July 19 phone call with Erdogan, President Obama said that the United States is "willing to provide appropriate assistance to Turkish authorities investigating the attempted coup" while urging that Turkish authorities conduct their investigation "in ways that reinforce public confidence in democratic institutions and the rule of law."⁹⁸ The State Department acknowledged in August 2016 that Turkey has formally requested Gulen's extradition for matters predating the coup attempt,⁹⁹ with Turkey possibly still working to prepare additional documentation in connection with coup-related allegations. For more information on U.S.-Turkey dynamics regarding the extradition issue, see CRS In Focus IF10444, *Fethullah Gulen, Turkey, and the United States: A Reference*, by Jim Zanotti. For more information on the U.S. extradition process in general, see CRS Report RS22702, *An Abridged Sketch of Extradition To and From the United States*, by Charles Doyle.

Some Turkish officials have sought to portray U.S. extradition of Gulen as critical for positive U.S.-Turkey relations,¹⁰⁰ though the potential consequences if he is not extradited quickly or at all remain unclear. In early August 2016, during a visit to Turkey by General Joseph Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, top Turkish officials reassured Dunford that the United States would continue to enjoy access to Incirlik air base and other bases in Turkey.¹⁰¹ Turkey maintains the right to cancel U.S. access to Incirlik with three days' notice.

U.S./NATO Presence in Turkey

U.S. civilian and military installations and personnel in Turkey were unharmed during the July 2016 attempted putsch. However, concerns surrounding plot-related events that transpired at Incirlik air base (see textbox above) have fueled discussion among analysts about the advisability

⁹¹ Dion Nissenbaum and Paul Sonne, "Turkish President Rebukes U.S. General," *Wall Street Journal*, July 30, 2016; David Ignatius, "A reality check on the Middle East from America's spy chief," *Washington Post*, July 21, 2016.

⁹² William Armstrong, "Turkey and the West Are Heading for a Breakup," *War on the Rocks*, August 1, 2016; "Turkey's New Anti-Americanism," *New York Times*, August 4, 2016.

⁹³ See, e.g., Unluhisarcikli, op. cit.

⁹⁴ Gardiner Harris, "John Kerry Rejects Suggestions of U.S. Involvement in Turkey Coup," *New York Times*, July 17, 2016.

⁹⁵ Gulsen Solaker, "Turkey's Erdogan calls on U.S. to extradite rival Gulen," Reuters, April 29, 2014.

⁹⁶ Jessica Durando, "Turkey demands extradition of cleric Fethullah Gulen from U.S.," *USA Today*, July 19, 2016.

⁹⁷ "Most Turks believe a secretive Muslim sect was behind the failed coup," *Economist*, July 28, 2016.

⁹⁸ White House, Readout of the President's Call with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, July 19, 2016.

⁹⁹ State Department Daily Press Briefing, August 23, 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Schmidt and Arango, op. cit.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Erin Cunningham, "Pentagon's top general seeks to cool anti-American sentiment in Turkey," *Washington Post*, August 1, 2016.

of continued U.S./NATO use of Turkish bases,¹⁰² including the reported storage of aircraft-deliverable nuclear weapons at Incirlik.¹⁰³ For more information, see CRS Insight IN10542, *U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Turkey*, by Amy F. Woolf.

Strategic Assessment

Turkey's location near several global hotspots makes the continuing availability of its territory for the stationing and transport of arms, cargo, and personnel valuable for the United States and NATO. Turkey's hosting of a U.S./NATO early warning missile defense radar and the transformation earlier this decade of a NATO air command unit in Izmir into a ground forces command appear to have reinforced Turkey's strategic importance for the alliance. Turkey also controls access to and from the Black Sea through its straits pursuant to the Montreux Convention of 1936. Turkey's embrace of the United States and NATO during the Cold War came largely as a reaction to post-World War II actions by the Soviet Union seemingly aimed at moving Turkey and its strategic control of maritime access points into a Soviet sphere of influence.

¹⁰² Rathke and Samp, *op. cit.*

¹⁰³ Aaron Stein, "Nuclear Weapons in Turkey Are Destabilizing, but Not for the Reason You Think," *War on the Rocks*, July 22, 2016; Sharon Behn, "How Safe Are US Nuclear Weapons in Turkey?" *Voice of America*, August 5, 2015; Tobin Harshaw, "Why the U.S. should move nukes out of Turkey," *Bloomberg*, July 25, 2016; Jeffrey Lewis, "America's Nukes Aren't Safe in Turkey Anymore," *Foreign Policy*, July 18, 2016; Eric Schlosser, "The H-Bombs in Turkey," *New Yorker*, July 17, 2016.

Figure 4. Map of U.S. and NATO Military Presence in Turkey



Sources: Department of Defense, NATO, and various media outlets; adapted by CRS.

Notes: All locations are approximate. All bases are under Turkish sovereignty, with portions of them used for limited purposes by the U.S. military and NATO. The U.S. and German Patriot missile batteries are scheduled to be withdrawn by October 2015 and January 2016, respectively.

As the military’s political influence within Turkey has declined, civilian leaders have assumed primary responsibility for national security decisions, and have taken even more control in the wake of the failed coup. Changes in the Turkish power structure present a challenge for U.S. officials accustomed to military interlocutors in adjusting future modes of bilateral interaction.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ The challenge for U.S. officials to manage cooperation with Turkey could be magnified by the way the U.S. government is structured to work with Turkey. Former U.S. ambassador to Turkey Mark Parris has written, “For reasons of self-definition and Cold War logic, Turkey is considered a European nation. It is therefore assigned, for purposes of policy development and implementation, to the subdivisions responsible for Europe: the European Bureau (EUR) at the State Department; the European Command (EUCOM) at the Pentagon; the Directorate for Europe at the [National Security Council (NSC)], etc. Since the end of the Cold War, however, and progressively since the 1990-91 Gulf War and 9/11, the most serious issues in U.S.-Turkish relations – and virtually all of the controversial ones – have arisen in areas outside ‘Europe.’ The majority, in fact, stem from developments in areas which in Washington are the responsibility of offices dealing with the Middle East: the Bureau for Near East Affairs (NEA) at State; Central Command (CENTCOM) at the Pentagon; the Near East and South Asia Directorate at NSC.” Omer Taspinar, “The (continued...)”

Moreover, the Turkish parliamentary decision in 2003 not to allow U.S. forces to use its territory to open a northern front in Iraq significantly affected U.S.-Turkey relations and showed the United States that it could no longer rely primarily on past legacies of cooperation and close ties with the Turkish military.

On a number of occasions throughout the history of the U.S.-Turkey alliance, events or developments have led to the withdrawal of U.S. military assets from Turkey or restrictions on U.S. use of its territory and/or airspace. These include:

- U.S. withdrawal of Jupiter missiles with nuclear warheads following the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.
- Turkish closure of most U.S. defense and intelligence installations in Turkey following the 1975 U.S. arms embargo imposed by Congress in response to Turkey's military intervention in Cyprus. (After the embargo ended in 1978, the restoration of these installations in 1980 took place under NATO auspices.)
- The parliamentary vote (mentioned above) that did not allow U.S. use of Turkish territory to open a second front in the 2003 war in Iraq.

Additionally, on some occasions when Congress has considered resolutions characterizing World War I-era actions by the Ottoman Empire (Turkey's predecessor state) against Armenians as "genocide," Turkish officials have threatened to curtail U.S. access to Turkish bases.

Calculations regarding the costs and benefits to the United States of a U.S./NATO presence in Turkey, and how changes or potential changes in U.S./NATO posture might influence Turkish calculations and policies, revolve to a significant extent around the following two questions:

- To what extent does the United States rely on the use of Turkish territory or airspace to secure and protect U.S. interests?
- To what extent does Turkey rely on U.S./NATO support, both in principle and in functional terms, for its security and its ability to exercise influence in the surrounding region?

The cost to the United States of finding a temporary or permanent replacement for Incirlik air base would likely depend on a number of variables, including the functionality and location of alternatives, the location of future U.S. military engagements, and the political and economic difficulty involved in moving or expanding U.S. military operations elsewhere.

Political Assessment

Any reevaluation of the U.S./NATO presence in and relationship with Turkey would take a number of political considerations into account alongside strategic and operational ones. Certain differences between Turkey and its NATO allies, including some related to Syria in recent years, may persist irrespective of who leads these countries given their varying (1) geographical positions, (2) threat perceptions, and (3) roles in regional and global political and security architectures. Turkey's historically and geopolitically driven efforts to avoid domination by outside powers—sometimes called the "Sèvres syndrome"¹⁰⁵—resonate in its ongoing attempts to

(...continued)

Rise of Turkish Gaullism: Getting Turkish-American Relations Right," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 13, no. 1, winter 2011, quoting an unpublished 2008 paper by Mark Parris.

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g., Nick Danforth, "Forget Sykes-Picot. It's the Treaty of Sèvres That Explains the Modern Middle East," foreignpolicy.com, August 10, 2015.

achieve greater military, economic, and political self-sufficiency and to influence its surrounding environment.

The potential for the United States to use its political relationship with Turkey to boost U.S. influence in the greater Middle East remains inconclusive. Regardless of some difficulties with the United States and other NATO countries, Turkey remains a key regional power that shares linkages and characteristics with the West,¹⁰⁶ which may distinguish Turkey from other Muslim-majority regional powers such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Therefore, cooperation with Turkey, along with other actors, is likely to remain relevant for the advancement of U.S. interests in the volatile area.¹⁰⁷

However, recent foreign and domestic policy developments may have constrained Turkey's role as a shaper of regional outcomes, a model for neighboring countries, and a facilitator of U.S. interests.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, as Turkey's energy consumption grows along with its economy, its dependence on Russia and Iran for significant portions of its energy (see "Energy" above) may contribute to constraints on some aspects of its security cooperation with the United States and NATO. Turkey engages with a wide range of non-NATO actors as part of its efforts to cultivate military and defense industrial links and to exercise greater regional and global influence politically and economically.¹⁰⁹

For the time being, Turkey lacks comparable alternatives to its security and economic ties with the West, with which it shares a more than 60-year legacy of institutionalized cooperation.¹¹⁰ Turkey's NATO membership and economic interdependence with Europe appear to have contributed to important Turkish decisions to rely on, and partner with, sources of Western strength. However, as Turkey has prospered under these circumstances, its economic success has driven its efforts to seek greater overall self-reliance and independence in foreign policy.

U.S. Arms Sales and Aid to Turkey

Turkey continues to seek advanced U.S. military equipment (e.g., fighter aircraft and helicopters—see more information in **Appendix C**), and its defense industry participates in joint ventures with the United States (e.g., on F-35 next generation fighter aircraft). Turkey's growing defense industry appears increasingly willing to engage in arms import-export transactions or with non-NATO countries, such as China, Russia, Pakistan, and South Korea. This suggests that

¹⁰⁶ "Foreign policy: Alone in the world," *Economist*, February 6, 2016.

¹⁰⁷ See, e.g., M. Hakan Yavuz and Mujeeb R. Khan, "Turkey Treads a Positive Path," *New York Times*, February 12, 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Crowley, "Did Obama get Erdogan wrong?" *Politico*, July 16, 2016. Soli Ozel of Kadir Has University in Istanbul, quoted in Liz Sly, "Turkey's increasingly desperate predicament poses real dangers," *Washington Post*, February 20, 2016.

¹⁰⁹ For example, in a now-discontinued effort to seek a foreign partner for a multibillion-dollar air and missile defense system, Turkish officials in 2013 indicated a preliminary preference for a Chinese state-controlled company's offer until reported problems with negotiations, criticism from NATO allies, and competing offers from European and U.S. companies apparently led the Turks to move away from this preference. Lale Sariibrahimoglu, "Turkey begins T-Loramids talks with Eurosam," *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, September 8, 2014. Soner Cagaptay, "How the U.S. Military Lost Its Favor for Turkey," *Foreign Policy Concepts*, September 24, 2015.

¹¹⁰ In one prominent example, as of July 2016, Turkey has 523 personnel serving in NATO's Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan, and leads the Train, Advise, and Assist Command – Capital; the Afghanistan-Turkish Task Force; and the contingent at Hamid Karzai International Airport near Kabul. Turkish troops served in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan from shortly after its inception in 2001 to its transition to Resolute Support in 2014. <http://www.rs.nato.int/>

Turkey is interested in maximizing its acquisition of technology, diversifying its defense relationships, and decreasing its dependence on the United States. In making progress on these goals, it has also boosted its arms exports—aiming to have them reach \$2 billion in 2016.¹¹¹ It is unclear how U.S.-Turkey tensions over the July 2016 coup attempt, Turkey’s involvement in active military operations against the Islamic State organization and the PKK, and Turkey’s procurement relationships with other countries might affect its requests and prospects for receiving additional U.S. military equipment.

U.S. military and security assistance programs for Turkey are designed to cultivate closeness in relationships and practices between Turkish military officers and security officials and their U.S. counterparts. These programs also seek to counter terrorist and criminal networks that are active in the region, including those which historically have operated within and across Turkey’s borders.¹¹² In recent years, Turkish authorities have sought to address increasing challenges related to terrorists and foreign fighters. Reports indicate that Turkish personnel sometimes detain conspirators who plot violence against U.S. targets in Turkey or who seek to reach Europe.¹¹³

Since 1948, the United States has provided Turkey with approximately \$13.8 billion in overall military assistance (nearly \$8.2 billion in grants and \$5.6 billion in loans). Current annual military and security grant assistance, however, is limited to approximately \$3-\$5 million annually in International Military Education and Training (IMET); and Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR) funds.

State Department FY2017 Aid Request for Turkey

IMET: \$3.2 million
NADR: \$600,000
Total: \$3.8 million

Specific Middle Eastern Considerations

In the early years of AKP rule, Erdogan and his advisors built their foreign policy upon a vision that emphasized Turkey’s historical, cultural, and religious knowledge of and ties with other Middle Eastern actors, as well as its soft power appeal.¹¹⁴ Turkish leaders often indicated to the United States and other countries that Turkey’s unique regional status as a Muslim-majority democracy with a robust economy and membership in NATO could help maintain stability in surrounding geographical areas, and also promote greater political and trade liberalization in neighboring countries.

Domestic political changes since 2002 from a military-guided leadership to a civilian one based largely on conservative Sunni Muslim majority sentiment may have heightened Turkish leaders’ reluctance to support Western military action (such as ongoing action in Syria and Iraq), which many Turks describe as targeting Sunni Muslims.¹¹⁵ According to one U.S.-based analyst, “Sunni

¹¹¹ Guy Anderson, “Briefing: Turkish transformation,” *IHS Jane’s Defence Weekly*, June 10, 2015.

¹¹² State Department FY2017 Congressional Budget Justification, Foreign Operations, Appendix 3, pp. 114-116.

¹¹³ Sebnem Arsu, “U.S. Embassy in Turkey Said to Be Targeted,” *New York Times*, April 12, 2013; “Turkey attacks: Deadly violence in Istanbul and Sirnak,” BBC News, August 10, 2015; Leda Reynolds, “Fears ISIS gang posing as refugees after police seize hand-drawn map of route to Germany,” *Express* (UK), November 19, 2015; “Turkey arrests ISIS militant suspected of planning attack on US Consulate,” *Associated Press*, December 15, 2015.

¹¹⁴ See, e.g., Ahmet Davutoglu, “Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring,” International Policy and Leadership Institute and Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), Turkey Policy Brief Series, 2012 – Third Edition.

¹¹⁵ See, e.g., Gonul Tol, “Is Turkey finally ready to aid military strikes against ISIS?,” CNN, September 25, 2014.

sectarianism and Islamic romanticism in pursuit of Muslim Brotherhood priorities”¹¹⁶ have helped drive Turkish foreign policy in recent years. Such perceptions may have led to or reinforced differences between Turkey and the United States on issues such as:

- Possible Turkish support or permissiveness regarding the use of Turkish territory for the supply and transit of Syrian jihadists and foreign fighters opposing the regime of Syrian President Bashar al Asad.
- General Abdel Fattah al Sisi’s ousting of Egypt’s elected president Muhammad Morsi (a Muslim Brotherhood figure) in 2013 and his subsequent steps as Egypt’s new ruler to weaken the Muslim Brotherhood.
- Turkey’s political support for Hamas, reported harboring of Hamas operational leaders,¹¹⁷ and regular denunciations of Israel.¹¹⁸
- U.S. and international support since late 2014 for the Syrian Kurdish PYD/YPG to help it counter the Islamic State organization.

When popular Arab uprisings broke out in a number of countries in 2011, Turkey largely aligned itself with the U.S. policy of supporting nascent regional democratic movements. Subsequent Turkish policy differences with the United States may stem in part from Turkish leaders’ apparent claims that the United States abandoned this initial democratic support for a stance that seems to prioritize stability and the avoidance of direct military intervention—leaving Turkey largely isolated.¹¹⁹ Turkish leaders also manifest concern that U.S. expectations of Turkish cooperation regarding Syria and Iraq are insufficiently sensitive to Turkey’s domestic pressures and security vulnerabilities.

Yet, as described below, Turkey is partnering with the U.S.-led anti-Islamic State coalition in a number of ways. Also, Turkey appears to be in the process of adjusting its regional policy somewhat. Whether such changes or potential changes are tied to the May 2016 departure of Prime Minister Davutoglu, they appear to reflect a less sectarian or ideological approach with regard to improvements or possible improvements in ties with Syria, Iran, Russia, Israel, and Egypt.¹²⁰ It is unclear how far-reaching or durable these adjustments will be and to what extent they portend greater closeness to or independence from U.S. policies. In August 2016, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu departed significantly from previous Turkish policy when he stated that Turkey could accept an interim role for President Asad of Syria during a post-conflict transition.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Omer Taspinar, “From Neo-Ottomanism to Turkish Gaullism,” *todayzaman.com*, March 15, 2015 (accessed October 2015).

¹¹⁷ Transcript of September 9, 2014, hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, entitled “Hamas’ Benefactors: A Network of Terror”; Tulin Daloglu, “Israel accuses Turkey of aiding Hamas coup plan,” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, October 22, 2014.

¹¹⁸ “Erdogan calls Israel more barbaric than Hitler,” *Times of Israel/Associated Press*, July 19, 2014; Sena Alkan, “Turkey Takes Action to Ensure a Permanent Ceasefire,” *dailysabah.com*, July 18, 2014.

¹¹⁹ Semih Idiz, “Some see snubs, Erdogan sees envy,” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, February 17, 2015.

¹²⁰ See, e.g., Amberin Zaman, “Do Ankara, Damascus perceive common Kurdish threat?” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, August 22, 2016; Semih Idiz, “Turkey is part of the Western system,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, August 23, 2016.

¹²¹ Nabih Bulos, “Kurds blur lines in Syrian conflict,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 2016.

Syria

The Islamic State and Syrian Kurdish Forces

In late July 2015, Turkish officials approved the use of Turkish territory and airspace for anti-IS airstrikes in Syria and Iraq by the U.S.-led coalition, significantly easing the logistical burdens of coalition operations.¹²² Turkish officials had previously limited Turkey-based coalition operations to surveillance flights, reportedly as a means of insisting on a “safe zone” in Syria and seeking U.S. support for more aggressive efforts to oust the Iranian-backed Syrian government. In addition to hosting anti-IS coalition operations, Turkey has taken its own direct military action against the Islamic State in Syria and detained hundreds of terrorism-related suspects. Turkey has suffered four major terrorist attacks in 2016 that appear to be ISIS-linked—two in popular tourist areas of Istanbul, one at Istanbul’s Ataturk International Airport, and one in Gaziantep.

Even as periodic IS-linked terrorist attacks and cross-border rocket attacks have killed dozens in Turkey in recent months, various factors contribute to Turkish leaders’ continuing concerns about Kurdish groups¹²³ and the Syrian government and its allies. Turkey is reportedly worried about U.S. coordination with and recent gains by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an umbrella grouping of various Kurdish, Arab, and other Syrian militias largely led by the YPG. SDF gains raise the possibility of effective YPG control over most, if not all, of Syria’s northern border. For more information see CRS Report R44513, *Kurds in Iraq and Syria: U.S. Partners Against the Islamic State*, coordinated by Jim Zanotti. Turkey claims to have received a promise from the United States that YPG forces will not occupy territory west of the Euphrates River, a proposition that is being tested in the wake of the YPG’s participation in the capture of the Syrian town of Manbij from the Islamic State in August 2016.¹²⁴

Overall, Turkish priorities are likely to depend on perceived threats and the options Turkish leaders discern for minimizing them.¹²⁵ As with Turkey’s efforts against the PKK, Turkey’s capacity to influence events in Syria appears to be affected by the July 2016 failed coup and military shakeup.¹²⁶ These, in turn, may be impacting the calculations of the Syrian government and other key actors.¹²⁷

In August 2016, U.S. and Turkish aircraft supported an incursion by Turkish tanks and special forces into the Syrian town of Jarabulus just across the border (see **Figure 5** below). The operation, which also involved some Syrian militias that oppose both the Islamic State and the Asad regime, was nominally intended to clear Jarabulus of IS fighters. However, a U.S. official has been cited as saying that the operation also sought to “create a buffer against the possibility of the Kurds moving forward.”¹²⁸ During his August 2016 visit to Turkey, Vice President Joe Biden

¹²² Chris Kozak, “Turkey Expands Campaign Against ISIS and the PKK,” Institute for the Study of War, July 25, 2015.

¹²³ For more information, see CRS Report R44513, *Kurds in Iraq and Syria: U.S. Partners Against the Islamic State*, coordinated by Jim Zanotti.

¹²⁴ “Turkey expects Syrian Kurdish forces to withdraw after Manbij operation: minister,” Reuters, August 15, 2016.

¹²⁵ See, e.g., Liz Sly and Karen DeYoung, “Ignoring Turkey, U.S. backs Kurds in drive against ISIS in Syria,” *Washington Post*, June 1, 2016; Soner Cagaptay, “Turkey’s Istanbul attack vengeance will be like ‘rain from hell,’” CNN, June 29, 2016; Nick Ashdown, “Turkey’s Tourism Plummets amid Bombings and Crisis with Russia,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 14, 2016.

¹²⁶ See, e.g., Yaroslav Trofimov, “Fallout from Turkey Coup Leaves Syria Rebels in the Lurch,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 4, 2016.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ “IS conflict: Turkey-backed Syrian rebels take Jarabulus,” BBC News, August 24, 2016.

said that failure by YPG forces to go back to the east side of the Euphrates would endanger U.S. support for the Syrian Kurdish group.¹²⁹

Turkey has dubbed the operation “Euphrates Shield,” and presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin has stated that it is aimed at neutralizing threats that Turkey perceives from both the Islamic State and the YPG.¹³⁰ Amid reports that the YPG was leaving Manbij to affiliated Arab forces, Turkish fire apparently targeted some Syrian Kurdish positions west of the Euphrates.¹³¹ The *New York Times* noted in late August that before Turkey’s July coup attempt led to greater government control over the military, many military commanders opposed government proposals for direct Turkish action in Syria, including an alleged plotter who was killed during the coup attempt and had headed Turkey’s special forces.¹³²

Going forward, it is unclear to what extent:

- the Turkish military might maintain forces over the border in Jarabulus in hopes of monitoring IS and/or YPG fighters and preventing any advances;
- U.S., Turkish, and other anti-IS coalition forces might coordinate rules of engagement for administering areas occupied inside Syria, both generally and in relation to specific state and non-state armed groups;
- direct Turkish operations might extend beyond the Jarabulus area to other places along the border, either with or without U.S. support; and
- Turkey’s actions are connected to its objectives regarding broader outcomes in Syria and to its dealings with other key stakeholders, including Russia, Iran, and the Asad regime.

¹²⁹ “US urges PYD to not cross Euphrates, lends support to Turkish ops,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, August 24, 2016.

¹³⁰ Amberin Zaman, “Turkish Troops Enter Syria to Fight ISIS, May also Target U.S.-Backed Kurdish Militia,” Woodrow Wilson Center, August 24, 2016.

¹³¹ Emre Peker, et al., “Turkey Secures Grip on Syria Border Zone,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 26, 2016.

¹³² Tim Arango, “Syria Operation Points to a Shift in Turkey,” *New York Times*, August 26, 2016.

Figure 5. Northern Syria: Areas of Control

Sources: CRS, based on data from IHS Conflict Monitor (last revised August 22, 2016), UN OCHA, and Esri; and adapted pursuant to media accounts as of August 25, 2016.

Note: All designations are approximate and subject to change.

Foreign Fighters and Smuggling

Congress and other U.S. policymakers, along with many international actors, have shown significant concern about the use of Turkish territory by various groups and individuals involved in Syria's conflict—including foreign fighters from around the world—for transit, safe haven, and smuggling.

In the initial stages of the Syrian conflict, Turkey and various Arab Gulf states reportedly provided direct support to Syrian opposition groups, in some cases reportedly with U.S. facilitation or consultation. At that point, Turkish authorities were allowing use of their territory for arms shipments and personnel movements.¹³³ During 2013 and 2014, as the makeup of the Syrian opposition became increasingly complex, with jihadist groups emerging as among the most effective fighters, Turkey and other regional states were reportedly slower than the United

¹³³ See, e.g., C.J. Chivers and Eric Schmitt, "Arms Airlift to Syria Rebels Expands, With Aid From C.I.A.," *New York Times*, March 24, 2013.

States and other international actors in curtailing activities seen as bolstering Sunni Islamist radicals.¹³⁴

Most sources and U.S. officials acknowledge that, in response to international pressure¹³⁵ and growing Turkish official recognition of threats posed to Turkish security by the Islamic State and other jihadists, Turkey introduced or bolstered existing initiatives aimed at (1) preventing potential foreign fighters from entering Turkey, (2) preventing those who enter Turkey from traveling to Syria, and (3) curbing illicit oil smuggling used to finance jihadist activities.¹³⁶ According to a Turkish government source,¹³⁷ these measures include:

- Enforcing a no-entry list (created in 2011) for individuals suspected of traveling to join radical groups in Syria.
- Establishing “risk analysis units” for the detection of travelers’ possible intent to join Syrian extremist organizations.
- Enhanced security at the Syrian border, including the general closure of most border gates, the deployment of additional army units and special operations battalions to border areas, and the creation of physical impediments to counter illegal crossings and smuggling.
- Employing and enhancing “forceful and ongoing measures” (dating from 2012) to curb oil smuggling, including the capture of oil stores and destruction of illegal pipelines.¹³⁸

However, Turkey faces ongoing challenges in pursuing policies that can simultaneously provide a humanitarian corridor for refugees and humanitarian assistance while clamping down on foreign fighter flows and smuggling. To some extent, Turkish authorities may feel constrained in the vigorousness with which they counter the Islamic State because of potential retaliatory moves via sleeper cells or other means. Turkish officials have sought greater intelligence sharing from foreign fighters’ countries of origin, with some success.¹³⁹

According to one source, around 7% of foreign fighters in Syria were Turkish as of late 2015.¹⁴⁰ Some media reports have claimed that radical Salafist sects have appealed to a number of young Turkish recruits (including ethnic Kurds) for the Islamic State organization on the basis of both ideology and offers of material gain.¹⁴¹ Some observers have raised questions regarding the

¹³⁴ Sariibrahimoglu, “On the borderline...,” op. cit.; “UK jihadist prisoner swap reports ‘credible,’” BBC News, October 6, 2014; Alison Smale, “Turkey’s Role as Migrant Gateway Is Source of New Urgency for E.U.,” *New York Times*, November 18, 2015.

¹³⁵ U.N. Security Council Resolutions 2170 and 2178 (passed in August and September 2014, respectively) call upon member states to curtail flows of weapons, financing, and fighters to various terrorist groups.

¹³⁶ For information on oil smuggling from Syria into Turkey, see CRS Report R43980, *Islamic State Financing and U.S. Policy Approaches*, by Carla E. Humud, Robert Pirog, and Liana W. Rosen.

¹³⁷ March 17, 2015, factsheet provided to CRS by the Turkish government.

¹³⁸ See also Desmond Butler, “Turkey cracks down on oil smuggling linked to IS,” *Associated Press*, October 6, 2014.

¹³⁹ Greg Miller and Souad Mekhennet, “Undercover teams, increased surveillance and hardened borders: Turkey cracks down on foreign fighters,” *Washington Post*, March 6, 2016.

¹⁴⁰ “Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq,” The Soufan Group, December 2, 2015.

¹⁴¹ Ceylan Yeginsu, “ISIS Draws a Steady Stream of Recruits from Turkey,” *New York Times*, September 15, 2014; Mahmut Bozarlan (translated from Turkish), “The Islamic State’s secret recruiting ground in Turkey,” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, July 23, 2015.

Turkish government's level of commitment to countering domestic radicalization and recruitment, and have warned of the potential "Pakistanization" of Turkey.¹⁴²

The Turkish government insists that counter-radicalization programs exist throughout the country—with special emphasis on at-risk areas—and that authorities monitor Turkish-language recruitment websites.¹⁴³ Turkey's religious affairs directorate has published a report asserting that the Islamic State defames the name of Islam.¹⁴⁴

Iraq

Turkey's first priority in Iraq appears to be countering, mitigating, and preventing threats or potential threats to Turkey's security and political unity from Kurds based in northern Iraq. Such threats or potential threats include the PKK's safe haven, but also probably the possibility that a potential KRG declaration of independence could worsen Turkey-PKK violence by further emboldening nationalist or irredentist sentiment among Kurds in Turkey. Outright Iraqi Kurdish independence became a greater long-term possibility when the oil-rich city of Kirkuk came under KRG control in June 2014. However, for now KRG leaders may prefer using the threat of independence to maximize their privileges within a federal Iraq to taking on the full responsibilities of sovereignty while sandwiched between considerably larger and more powerful countries (Turkey, Iran, Iraq) in a generally inhospitable and largely chaotic region.

Despite—or perhaps because of—Turkish concerns regarding Kurdish threats emanating from Iraq, the importance to Turkey of its political and economic partnership with the KRG and of northern Iraq's territorial buffer appears to have motivated Turkey to ensure the KRG's continued viability in the face of both the IS threat and unpredictability with Iraq's central government, even though this could aid eventual KRG independence.¹⁴⁵ To that end, Turkey provides material assistance to the KRG and various minority groups in Iraq (especially Turkmen) to help them endure and repel the Islamic State. Turkey also facilitates the KRG's transport of oil through pipelines to Turkish ports for international export.¹⁴⁶ In 2014, the United States had helped block Turkey-facilitated KRG oil exports because of claims that they undermined Iraq's sovereignty, but U.S. objections to the practice appear not to have resurfaced after the KRG resumed oil exports in 2015. In the meantime, the late 2014 Baghdad-KRG deal under which oil would be pooled and revenue shared appears to have collapsed, and the KRG has become more important to the U.S.-led anti-IS effort.

Some observers speculate that continued Turkish attacks on PKK targets in northern Iraq could strain the Turkey-KRG relationship, especially if Iraqi Kurds perceive that Turkey is increasingly weakening Kurdish anti-IS capacity or threatening civilians. However, the KRG—in line with its

¹⁴² Shamil Shams, "What Turkey can learn from Pakistan," *dw.com*, May 19, 2016. The term refers to the way in which Pakistan's own internal security and civil society have been undermined in recent decades by its use as a way station and safe haven for parties to Afghanistan's various conflicts.

¹⁴³ March 17, 2015, factsheet provided to CRS by the Turkish government.

¹⁴⁴ Mustafa Akyol, "Turkey takes on the Islamic State ... in 40-page report," *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, September 2, 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Turkey may seek to ensure that any sovereign Iraqi Kurdish state would be functionally dependent on it and would therefore be constrained from abetting Turkish Kurdish separatism. According to a 2009 book, the Turkish "nightmare scenario" regarding the Kurds is that they "take Kirkuk, use its oil to purchase an air force, and in short order start stealing swaths of southeastern Turkey." Quil Lawrence, *Invisible Nation: How the Kurds' Quest for Statehood Is Shaping Iraq and the Middle East*, New York: Walker & Company, 2008, p. 185.

¹⁴⁶ Anjli Raval and David Sheppard, "Kurds defy Iraq to establish own oil sales," *ft.com*, August 23, 2015.

longtime rivalry with the PKK for loyalties and preeminence among Kurds across borders—has had a “generally limp reaction” to Turkish military strikes against the PKK.¹⁴⁷

Turkish Foreign Policy: Other Issues with Import for U.S. Relations

Turkey’s relations with key neighbors could have significant implications for U.S.-Turkey relations as well. In the weeks prior to the coup attempt, Turkey had undertaken efforts to reconcile or improve its troubled ties with both Israel and Russia, and had stated an interest in improving its relations with other nearby countries. Both before and after the coup attempt, these efforts may reflect Turkish leaders’ desires to (1) bolster Erdogan’s position domestically and internationally in light of various national security threats, economic concerns (including a major decline in foreign tourism), and recent criticism of his rule;¹⁴⁸ (2) address Turkey’s growing demand for external sources of energy;¹⁴⁹ and (3) improve Turkey’s prospects of influencing regional political-military outcomes, particularly in Syria and Iraq.¹⁵⁰

Israel

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Turkey and Israel enjoyed close military ties that fostered cooperation in other areas, including a free trade agreement signed in 2000. In recent years, however, Turkey-Israel relations have worsened. This downturn can be attributed to a number of factors, ranging from Turkish domestic political changes to specific incidents that increased tensions. In terms of change within Turkey, the slide in Turkey-Israel relations reflected the military’s declining role in Turkish society, and the greater empowerment of Erdogan and other AKP and national leaders. These leaders seem to view criticism of Israel as both merited and popular domestically and regionally. They often characterize Israeli security measures in the West Bank and especially the Gaza Strip as institutionalized mistreatment of Palestinians. Turkish leaders also have argued that Israel relies too heavily on military capabilities and deterrence (including its undeclared but universally acknowledged nuclear weapons arsenal) in addressing regional problems.

After nearly five years of downgraded diplomatic ties (relations worsened after the May 2010 Gaza flotilla, or *Mavi Marmara*, incident),¹⁵¹ in late June 2016, Turkey and Israel announced the full restoration of diplomatic relations. Reportedly, Vice President Joe Biden facilitated the rapprochement in part due to potential mutual benefits anticipated by both sides from the construction of a natural gas pipeline from offshore Israeli fields to Turkey.¹⁵² According to media reports, the rapprochement includes Israeli compensation to the families of those killed in the flotilla incident in exchange for an end to legal claims, as well as opportunities for Turkey to

¹⁴⁷ Amberin Zaman, “The Iraqi Kurds’ waning love affair with Turkey,” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, September 1, 2015.

¹⁴⁸ Yaroslav Trofimov, “Turkey Changes Tack on Foreign Policy to Win Back Friends,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 7, 2016.

¹⁴⁹ Soner Cagaptay and James Jeffrey, “Turkey’s Regional Charm Offensive: Motives and Prospects,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 27, 2016.

¹⁵⁰ Laura Pitel, “Flurry of diplomatic activity marks Turkey foreign policy shift,” *Financial Times*, June 28, 2016.

¹⁵¹ The incident took place in international waters under disputed circumstances and resulted in the death of nine Turks and an American of Turkish descent.

¹⁵² Many analysts assert that a Turkey-Israel pipeline would probably traverse Cypriot waters, thus necessitating an improvement in Turkish-Cypriot relations, if not a resolution to the decades-long dispute between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. For information on ongoing diplomacy regarding Cyprus, see CRS Report R41136, *Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive*, by Vincent L. Morelli. Discussion of a pipeline may also attract the attention of Russia, currently Turkey’s largest natural gas supplier.

assist with humanitarian and infrastructure projects for Palestinian residents in the Gaza Strip. It is unclear to what extent Turkey might—as part of the rapprochement—contemplate limiting its ties with Hamas or the activities of some Hamas figures reportedly based in Turkey.¹⁵³ One Israeli journalist asserts that the Turkish and Israeli intelligence heads have established a positive working relationship that might facilitate Turkish mediation of Israel-Hamas prisoner and body exchanges, but a return to previous levels of Turkey-Israel military and intelligence cooperation appears to be unlikely.¹⁵⁴

Turkey's deteriorated relationship with Israel had presented problems for the United States because of the U.S. desire to coordinate its regional policies with two of its regional allies. According to a Turkish newspaper report, Turkey's reported disclosure to Iran in 2011—in apparent retribution for the flotilla incident—of the identities of Iranians acting as Israeli intelligence sources led to congressional rejection (presumably informal) of a long-standing Turkish request to purchase U.S. drone aircraft to counter the PKK.¹⁵⁵

Obama Administration officials and some Members of Congress have criticized negative statements by Erdogan and other Turkish leaders about Israel, Zionism, and apparently in some cases broader groups of Jewish people in relation to the flotilla incident, Israel's treatment of Palestinians (including during the July 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict), and Turkey's June 2013 domestic protests,¹⁵⁶ among other domestic and international events. In periodic attempts to counter concerns that their statements may sometimes reflect anti-Semitic rhetoric or views, Erdogan and his close advisors emphasize that their criticisms of the Israeli government and its policies are not directed to the Jewish people as a whole or to Jews in Turkey. Concerns about possible Turkish anti-Israel animus are exacerbated by Turkey's cultivation of ties with Hamas and refusal to characterize it as a terrorist organization.¹⁵⁷

Turkey-Israel trade has continued to grow despite the countries' political differences. Additionally, Turkey has used Israel's port at Haifa as a point of transit for exports to various Arab countries after the conflict in Syria cut off previously used overland routes.

Russia

Turkey has made significant strides toward repairing relations with Russia that had been strained since November 2015, when a Turkish F-16 downed a Russian Su-24 aircraft near the Turkey-Syria border under disputed circumstances. In June 2016, Erdogan wrote a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin expressing regret for the November incident. In response, Russia has

¹⁵³ Rory Jones, et al., "Turkey, Israel Trumpet Benefits of Deal to Normalize Relations," *Wall Street Journal*, June 27, 2016.

¹⁵⁴ Yossi Melman, "A long way off," *Jerusalem Report*, August 8, 2016.

¹⁵⁵ "Report: US canceled delivery of Predators to Turkey," *Today's Zaman*, October 21, 2013 (accessed in October 2013), citing a report in *Taraf*. For information on the reported disclosure, see David Ignatius, "Turkey blows Israel's cover for Iranian spy ring," *Washington Post*, October 16, 2013.

¹⁵⁶ According to the State Department's International Religious Freedom Report for 2013, "In June and July, in response to the Gezi Park anti-government protests, Prime Minister Erdogan and several senior government officials repeatedly and publicly blamed 'shadowy' international groups for the unrest, including claimed involvement by an 'international Jewish conspiracy,' the 'interest-rate lobby,' and 'the Rothschilds.' In July Deputy Prime Minister Besir Atalay blamed the 'Jewish diaspora' for the unrest. These statements by senior political leaders were accompanied by anti-Semitic reports and commentaries in media outlets friendly to the government. The chief rabbi and the Jewish community lay board issued a joint press release condemning statements blaming Jewish groups for the unrest."

¹⁵⁷ See footnote 117.

lifted various economic sanctions it had imposed after the incident,¹⁵⁸ and state-owned Gazprom subsequently announced that work that had reportedly been put on hold regarding the planned Turkish Stream natural gas pipeline between the two countries would resume.¹⁵⁹ Concerns about possible Russian retaliation prevented Turkey from carrying out air sorties over Syria after the incident,¹⁶⁰ and reported Russian support or enabling of Syrian Kurdish forces may have also been partially motivated by bilateral tensions.¹⁶¹

Some analysts posit that in light of Western criticism of the Turkish government response to the July coup attempt, Erdogan may opt to seek closer relations with Russia, possibly at the expense of Turkey's relations with the United States and Europe.¹⁶² However, Turkey has a long history of tension with Russia,¹⁶³ and the differences between the two nations on Syria reportedly remain wide.¹⁶⁴ In August 2016, Turkish Prime Minister Yildirim indicated that Incirlik could possibly be made available for Russian use against the Islamic State in Syria, though the likelihood of this happening is unclear.¹⁶⁵

Iran

Turkey's approach to Iran seems to alternate between competing with it for geopolitical influence and seeking relatively normal political and economic ties with it to maintain regional stability and ensure Turkish access to Iranian oil and gas. Turkey-Iran tensions center on Syria and Iraq, though they have also competed for the admiration of Arab and Muslim populations in championing the Palestinian cause. Iranian ties with the Syrian and Iraqi governments and with various Kurdish groups provide it with a number of potential points of friction and leverage with Turkey.

The security guarantees Turkey has as a NATO member may partly explain Turkish leaders' cautious openness toward the June 2015 international deal on Iran's nuclear program and the sanctions relief that accompanies it.¹⁶⁶ Turkish leaders may anticipate that a potential improvement in U.S.-Iran relations could reduce constraints on Turkish trade with Iran. Yet, Turkish concerns persist about potential Iranian emboldenment in the region.

A U.S. forward-deployed early warning radar was activated in December 2011 at the Kurecik base near the eastern Turkish city of Malatya as part of NATO's Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (ALTBMD) system.¹⁶⁷ Most analysts interpret this system as an attempt to counter potential ballistic missile threats to Europe from Iran.¹⁶⁸

¹⁵⁸ "Russia closes 'crisis chapter' with Turkey," Al Jazeera, June 29, 2016.

¹⁵⁹ Dmitry Solovyov, "Russia, Turkey reach 'political decision' on TurkStream, nuclear power plant: agencies," Reuters, July 26, 2016.

¹⁶⁰ Deniz Zeyrek, "Turkey suspends Syria flights after crisis with Russia," *Hurriyet Daily News*, November 27, 2015.

¹⁶¹ Trofimov, op. cit.; Fabrice Balanche, "The Struggle for Azaz Corridor Could Spur a Turkish Intervention," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, PolicyWatch 2532, December 11, 2015.

¹⁶² Soner Cagaptay, "If tensions increase with the west, Erdogan might find a friend in Putin," *Guardian*, July 23, 2016.

¹⁶³ Soner Cagaptay, "When Russia Howls, Turkey Moves," *War on the Rocks*, December 2, 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Colum Lynch, "Exclusive: Behind Closed Doors at the U.N., Russia and Turkey Are Still Battling," *Foreign Policy*, August 15, 2016.

¹⁶⁵ John Vandiver, "Turkey open to Russian planes at US Incirlik hub," *Stars and Stripes*, August 23, 2016.

¹⁶⁶ For more information, see CRS Report R43333, *Iran Nuclear Agreement*, by Kenneth Katzman and Paul K. Kerr.

¹⁶⁷ The radar is reportedly operated by U.S. personnel from a command center in Diyarbakir, with a Turkish general and his team stationed in Germany to monitor the command and control mechanisms headquartered there for the entire missile defense system. "Malatya radar system to be commanded from Ramstein," *Hurriyet Daily News*, February 4, (continued...)

European Union¹⁶⁹

Overview

Turkey first sought to associate itself with what was then the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959, and Turkey and the EEC entered into an agreement of association in 1963. Since the end of 1995, Turkey has had a full customs union with the EU, which is viewed by many observers as one of the primary drivers of the competitive surge of Turkey's economy in subsequent years.¹⁷⁰ Turkey also is a member of the Council of Europe, along with several other non-EU states (including Russia), and is subject to the jurisdiction of the Council's European Court of Human Rights.

EU accession talks, which began in 2005, stalled shortly thereafter owing to the opposition of key EU states—most notably France and Germany—to Turkey's full membership. Opponents generally give empirical reasons for their positions, but many analysts argue that resistance to Turkish EU accession is rooted in a fear that Turkey's large Muslim population would fundamentally change the cultural character of the EU and dilute the power of the EU's founding Western European states to drive the policy agenda. As mentioned below, Turkey's unwillingness to normalize diplomatic and trade relations with EU member Cyprus presents a major obstacle to its accession prospects.¹⁷¹ Other EU concerns over Turkey's qualifications for membership center on the treatment of Kurds and religious minorities, media freedoms, women's rights, and the proper and transparent functioning of Turkey's democratic and legal systems.¹⁷² Debate regarding Turkey's alignment with EU standards has intensified in recent years in light of domestic controversies since 2013, including the July 2016 coup attempt and government response.

Turkish domestic expectations of and support for full accession to the EU were apparently already waning before then, and before fundamental concerns arose over the economic and political soundness of the EU as a result of the eurozone crisis.¹⁷³ Despite the general lack of progress in Turkey's accession negotiations with the EU, the EU provides Turkey hundreds of millions of dollars in annual pre-accession financial and technical assistance aimed at

(...continued)

2012.

¹⁶⁸ September 15, 2011, White House press release available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/15/fact-sheet-implementing-missile-defense-europe>. Remarks by then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance Frank Rose, Warsaw, Poland, April 18, 2013, available at <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/2013/207679.htm>.

¹⁶⁹ For more information on this subject, see archived CRS Report RS22517, *European Union Enlargement: A Status Report on Turkey's Accession Negotiations*, by Vincent L. Morelli; and CRS Report RS21344, *European Union Enlargement*, by Kristin Archick and Vincent L. Morelli.

¹⁷⁰ Council on Foreign Relations, *U.S.-Turkey Relations: A New Partnership*, Madeleine K. Albright and Steven J. Hadley, Co-Chairs, Independent Task Force Report No. 69, 2012, p. 18.

¹⁷¹ Turkey's unwillingness to open its ports to Greek Cypriot trade according to the Additional Protocol that it signed at the outset of the accession process in 2005 prompted the EU Council to block eight out of the 35 chapters of the *acquis communautaire* that Turkey would be required to meet to the Council's satisfaction in order to gain EU membership. France blocked five additional chapters in 2007 and the Republic of Cyprus blocked six in 2009. Three chapters have subsequently been unblocked from 2013 to 2016, leading to some guarded optimism among analysts about Turkey's long-term accession prospects. Thus far, one of the chapters has been fully negotiated, and 15 others have been opened.

¹⁷² European Commission, Turkey 2015 Report, op. cit.

¹⁷³ Dan Bilefsky, "For Turkey, Lure of Tie to Europe Is Fading," *New York Times*, December 4, 2011. According to the *Transatlantic Trends* surveys of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the percentage of Turks who think that Turkish EU membership would be a good thing was 73% in 2004 and 53% in 2014.

harmonizing its economy, society, bureaucracy, and political system with those of EU members.¹⁷⁴

Refugee Issue and EU Deal

Since 2011, approximately 3 million refugees or migrants from Syria and other countries have come to Turkey, posing significant humanitarian, socioeconomic, and security challenges. Turkey has spent approximately \$9 billion on refugee assistance.¹⁷⁵ Turkey does not grant formal refugee status to non-Europeans,¹⁷⁶ but has adjusted its laws and practices in recent years to provide greater protection and assistance to asylum-seekers, regardless of their country of origin. With the imminent return of most refugees unlikely due to continuing conflict in Syria, Turkey is focusing more on how to manage their longer-term presence in Turkish society—including with reference to their legal status,¹⁷⁷ basic needs, employment,¹⁷⁸ education, and impact on local communities—and on preventing additional mass influxes. After the July 2016 failed coup in Turkey, some observers question Turkey’s ability to manage the situation.¹⁷⁹

In response to hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants leaving Turkey for the Greek islands in 2015 and the first three months of 2016, Turkey and the European Union (EU) reached an arrangement in March 2016 providing for the return from Greece to Turkey of “irregular migrants or asylum seekers whose applications have been declared inadmissible.”¹⁸⁰ In exchange, the EU agreed to resettle one Syrian refugee for every Syrian readmitted to Turkey, and additionally promised to (1) speed up the disbursement of a previously allocated €3 billion in aid to Turkey and provide up to €3 billion more to assist with refugee care in Turkey through 2018, (2) grant visa-free travel to Turkish citizens if Turkey meets certain requirements, and (3) “re-energize” Turkey’s EU accession process.¹⁸¹

The deterrent effect of the arrangement appears to have contributed to a dramatic reduction in the number of people crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands, leading some observers to characterize it to date as a pragmatic success.¹⁸² Ongoing Turkey-EU disputes and questions about the deal’s compatibility with international legal and human rights standards, however, call its long-term viability into question. Turkish officials want the EU to pay assistance funds directly

¹⁷⁴ For further information, see http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/instruments/funding-by-country/turkey/index_en.htm and http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20140919-csp-turkey.pdf.

¹⁷⁵ “Turkey has spent \$9 bn on refugees: Erdogan,” Agence France Presse, February 1, 2016; Mac McClelland, “How to Build a Perfect Refugee Camp,” *New York Times Magazine*, February 13, 2014.

¹⁷⁶ See http://www.geneva-academy.ch/RULAC/international_treaties.php?id_state=226.

¹⁷⁷ See, e.g., Zia Weise, “Turkey plans to offer citizenship to Syrian refugees,” *telegraph.co.uk*, July 3, 2016; Soner Cagaptay, et al., “The Impact of Syrian Refugees on Turkey,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, PolicyWatch 2681, August 25, 2016.

¹⁷⁸ For information on a recently introduced work permit option for Syrian refugees registered in Turkey, see Daryl Grisgaber and Ann Hollingsworth, *Planting the Seeds of Success? Turkey’s New Refugee Work Permits*, Refugees International, April 14, 2016.

¹⁷⁹ See, e.g., Michael Birnbaum and Erin Cunningham, “Migrant deal with Europe may fail,” *Washington Post*, August 24, 2016; Jessica Brandt, “Turkey’s failed coup could have disastrous consequences for Europe’s migrant crisis,” Brookings Institution, July 29, 2016.

¹⁸⁰ European Commission Fact Sheet, “Implementing the EU-Turkey Statement – Questions and Answers,” June 15, 2016, available at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-1664_en.htm.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² See, e.g., James Traub, “If the Refugee Deal Crumbles, There Will Be Hell to Pay,” *Foreign Policy*, June 7, 2016. Around the time of the March 2016 deal, the closure of various migration routes from Greece to other European countries via the Western Balkans probably also contributed to the drop in maritime crossings from Turkey.

to the government, rather than to third-party organizations,¹⁸³ and there are questions over whether Turkey is willing to meet the EU's precondition that it narrow the scope of a key anti-terrorism law in order for the visa waiver to go into effect.¹⁸⁴ The EU announced in June that the visa waiver determination would be delayed to October, though doubts have arisen about that timeline and the durability of the overall deal in light of EU criticism of post-coup developments in Turkey.¹⁸⁵

Additionally, a number of international organizations and other observers claim that the Turkey-EU deal does not or may not meet international norms and laws.¹⁸⁶ Some reports from 2016 claim that Turkish officials have expelled some Syrian refugees and that security forces have shot or beaten others at the border to prevent them from entering.¹⁸⁷ Some displaced persons unable to reach Turkey are in makeshift camps on the Syrian side of the border.¹⁸⁸ Owing to concerns regarding Turkey's "safe country" status, Greek asylum adjudicators are returning fewer claimants to Turkey than was generally expected at the time of the deal,¹⁸⁹ while disputes within and between EU countries additionally cloud the prospects of large-scale refugee resettlement from Turkey.

Armenia

From 1915 to 1923, hundreds of thousands of Armenians died through actions of the Ottoman Empire (Turkey's predecessor state). U.S. and international characterizations of these events influence Turkey's domestic and foreign policy, and are in turn influenced by developments in Turkey-Armenia relations. Turkey and Armenia initially agreed in 2009 on a set of joint protocols to normalize relations, but the process stalled shortly thereafter and there has been little or no momentum toward restarting it.¹⁹⁰

Congress has considered how to characterize the events of 1915-1923 on a number of occasions. In 1975 (H.J.Res. 148) and 1984 (H.J.Res. 247), the House passed proposed joint resolutions that referred to "victims of genocide" of Armenian ancestry from 1915 and 1915-1923, respectively.¹⁹¹

¹⁸³ Laura Pitel and Alex Barker, "Turkey demands EU hands over €3bn for refugees," *Financial Times*, May 11, 2016.

¹⁸⁴ Lorne Cook, "Turkey open to conditional terror law talks," Associated Press, August 11, 2016; Semih Idiz, "Turkish-EU ties in throes of a slow death," *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, June 21, 2016.

¹⁸⁵ Birnbaum and Cunningham, op. cit.; Rem Korteweg, "Can the EU-Turkey Migration Deal Survive Erdogan's Purges?" Centre for European Reform, August 2, 2016; Michelle Martin and Humeyra Pamuk, "Give us EU visa freedom in October or abandon migrant deal, Turkey says," Reuters, August 15, 2016.

¹⁸⁶ See, e.g., Amnesty International, *No Safe Refuge: Asylum-Seekers and Refugees Denied Effective Protection in Turkey*, June 2016; Medicins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders), "EU States' dangerous approach to migration places asylum in jeopardy worldwide," June 17, 2016.

¹⁸⁷ Amnesty International, "Turkey: Illegal mass returns of Syrian refugees expose fatal flaws in EU-Turkey deal," April 1, 2016; Human Rights Watch, "Turkey: Border Guards Kill and Injure Asylum Seekers," May 10, 2016; Ceylan Yeginsu, "11 Syrian Refugees Reported Killed by Turkish Border Guards," *New York Times*, June 20, 2016.

¹⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Turkey: Open Border to Displaced Syrians Shelled by Government," April 20, 2016.

¹⁸⁹ Nektaria Stamouli, "EU's Migration Plan Hits Snag in Greece," *Wall Street Journal*, May 20, 2016. In May, a European Commission spokesperson said, "No asylum seeker will be sent back to Turkey under the EU-Turkey agreement if, in their individual case, Turkey cannot be considered a safe third country or safe first country of asylum." Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Another source of tension between Turkey and Armenia, beyond the 1915-1923 events, is the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan (which is closely linked with Turkey through ethnolinguistic ties) over the Armenian-occupied region of Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan's internationally recognized borders.

¹⁹¹ Unlike most proposed resolutions on the matter in recent years, neither H.J.Res. 148 nor H.J.Res. 247 explicitly identified the Ottoman Empire or its authorities as perpetrators of the purported genocide. H.J.Res. 247 stated that "one (continued...)"

Neither proposed joint resolution came to a vote in the Senate. A number of other proposed resolutions characterizing these World War I-era events as genocide have been reported by various congressional committees (see **Appendix D** for a list). All U.S. Presidents since Jimmy Carter have made public statements lamenting the events, with President Ronald Reagan referring to a “genocide of the Armenians” during a Holocaust Remembrance Day speech in 1981.¹⁹²

In annual statements in April, President Obama routinely says that the events were “one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century” and that “1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths.” He also says that he has consistently stated his own view of what occurred, that his view of that history has not changed, and that “a full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts is in all our interests.”¹⁹³ While a Senator and presidential candidate, Obama had a statement printed in the *Congressional Record* on April 28, 2008, which read, “The occurrence of the Armenian genocide is a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming collection of historical evidence.” In a January 2008 statement, then-Senator Obama had written that were he to be elected President, he would recognize the “Armenian Genocide.”¹⁹⁴

In the 114th Congress, resolutions have been introduced in both the House (H.Res. 154, March 2015) and Senate (S.Res. 140, April 2015) that would characterize the events as genocide and—selectively quoting from President Obama’s past statements—call for Turkey’s “full acknowledgment of the facts.”

In addition to past statements or actions by U.S. policymakers, the website of the Armenian National Institute, a U.S.-based organization, asserts that at least 25 other countries (not counting the United States or Armenia) have characterized the events as genocide in some way, including 13 of the 28 EU member states.¹⁹⁵

(...continued)

and one-half million people of Armenian ancestry” were “the victims of the genocide perpetrated in Turkey”.

¹⁹² Additionally, in a May 1951 written statement to the International Court of Justice, the Truman Administration cited “Turkish massacres of Armenians” as one of three “outstanding examples of the crime of genocide” (along with Roman persecution of Christians and Nazi extermination of Jews and Poles). International Court of Justice, *Reservations on the Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: Advisory Opinion of May 28, 1951: Pleadings, Arguments, Documents*, p. 25.

¹⁹³ See, e.g., White House, Statement by the President on Armenian Remembrance Day, April 24, 2014.

¹⁹⁴ Text of January 19, 2008, statement by then-Senator Obama at http://armeniansforobama.com/armenian_issues.php; “Recognize the Armenian genocide,” PolitiFact.com; Olivier Knox, “Obama breaks promise (again) to commemorate Armenian ‘genocide,’” Yahoo News, April 24, 2014;

¹⁹⁵ The EU states listed as having recognized a genocide are Austria, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Greece, and Cyprus. The European Parliament has also referred to the deaths as genocide. The non-EU states are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Lebanon, Paraguay, Russia, Switzerland, Uruguay, Vatican City, and Venezuela. In April 2015, the Republic of Cyprus’s ethnic Greek parliament passed a resolution making it a crime to deny that the events constituted genocide. In 2007, Switzerland criminally fined an ethnic Turkish politician for denying that the events constituted genocide, and in 2012 France passed a law making it a crime to deny that the events constituted genocide—though the law was subsequently invalidated by the French Constitutional Council. Long-standing Turkish law criminalizes characterization of the events as genocide. Countries not listed by the ANI as having recognized the events as genocide include the United Kingdom, China, Israel, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, India, and Mexico.

Cyprus¹⁹⁶

Since Cyprus became independent of the United Kingdom in 1960, Turkey has viewed itself and has acted as the protector of the island's ethnic Turkish minority from potential mistreatment by the ethnic Greek majority.¹⁹⁷ Responding to Greek and Cypriot political developments that raised concerns about a possible Greek annexation of Cyprus, Turkey's military intervened in 1974 and established control over the northern third of the island, prompting an almost total ethnic and de facto political division along geographical lines. That division persists today and is the subject of continuing international efforts aimed at reunification.¹⁹⁸ Additionally, according to a *New York Times* article, "after the 1974 invasion, an estimated 150,000 Turkish settlers arrived in the north of Cyprus, many of them poor and agrarian Turks from the mainland, who Greek Cypriots say are illegal immigrants used by Turkey as a demographic weapon."¹⁹⁹ The ethnic Greek-ruled Republic of Cyprus is internationally recognized as having jurisdiction over the entire island, while the de facto Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the northern third has only Turkish recognition. Congress imposed an embargo on military grants and arms sales to Turkey from 1975 to 1978 in response to Turkey's use of U.S.-supplied weapons in the 1974 conflict, and several Members remain interested in Cyprus-related issues.²⁰⁰

The Republic of Cyprus's accession to the EU in 2004 and Turkey's refusal to normalize political and commercial relations with it are seen as major obstacles to Turkey's EU membership aspirations. The Cyprus dilemma also hinders effective EU-NATO defense cooperation. Moreover, EU accession may have reduced incentives for Cyprus's Greek population to make concessions toward a reunification deal. The Greek Cypriots rejected by referendum a United Nations reunification plan (called the Annan plan after then Secretary-General Kofi Annan) in 2004 that the Turkish Cypriot population accepted. Turkey and Turkish Cypriot leaders claim that the Turkish Cypriot regime's lack of international recognition unfairly denies its people basic economic and political rights, particularly through barriers to trade with and travel to countries other than Turkey.

¹⁹⁶ For more information on this subject, see CRS Report R41136, *Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive*, by Vincent L. Morelli.

¹⁹⁷ Turkey views its protective role as justified given its status as one of the three guaranteeing powers of the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee that was signed at the time Cyprus gained its independence. The United Kingdom and Greece are the other two guarantors.

¹⁹⁸ Turkey retains between 30,000 and 40,000 troops on the island (supplemented by approximately 5,000 Turkish Cypriot soldiers and 26,000 reserves). "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," *IHS Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - Eastern Mediterranean*, August 23, 2012. This is countered by a Greek Cypriot force of approximately 12,000 with reported access to 50,000 reserves. "Cyprus - Army," *IHS Jane's World Armies*, August 22, 2016. The United Nations maintains a peacekeeping mission (UNFICYP) of approximately 900 personnel within a buffer zone headquartered in Cyprus's divided capital of Nicosia (known as Lefkosa in Turkish). Since the mission's inception in 1964, UNFICYP has suffered 179 fatalities. The United Kingdom maintains approximately 3,000 personnel at two sovereign military bases on the southern portion of the island at Akrotiri and Dhekelia.

¹⁹⁹ Dan Bilefsky, "On Cyprus Beach, Stubborn Relic of Conflict," *New York Times*, August 3, 2012. According to 2011 estimates, about 840,000 people live in the predominantly Greek south, and 260,000 in the predominantly Turkish north. "Cyprus - Executive Summary," *IHS Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - Eastern Mediterranean*, January 20, 2016.

²⁰⁰ See, e.g., from the 112th Congress, H.Res. 676 (To expose and halt the Republic of Turkey's illegal colonization of the Republic of Cyprus with non-Cypriot populations, to support Cyprus in its efforts to control all of its territory, to end Turkey's illegal occupation of northern Cyprus, and to exploit its energy resources without illegal interference by Turkey.); S.Con.Res. 47 (A concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress on the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus over all of the territory of the island of Cyprus [sic].); and H.R. 2597 (American-Owned Property in Occupied Cyprus Claims Act).

Turkey and Turkish Cypriots have opposed efforts by the Republic of Cyprus to explore and develop offshore energy deposits without a solution to the question of the island's unification. The Republic of Cyprus appears to anticipate considerable future export revenue from drilling in the Aphrodite gas field off Cyprus's southern coast.²⁰¹ For more information, see CRS Report R44591, *Natural Gas Discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean*, by Michael Ratner.

Other International Relationships

As Turkey continues to exercise increased political and economic influence, it seeks to establish and strengthen relationships with non-Western countries through trade and defense ties.

Turkey additionally seeks to expand its influence within its immediate surroundings, with its officials sometimes comparing its historical links and influence with certain countries—especially former territories of the Ottoman Empire—to the relationship of Britain with its commonwealth. Through political involvement, increased private trade and investment, and public humanitarian and development projects, Turkey has curried favor with Muslim-populated countries not only in the greater Middle East, but also in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. Because Gulen movement-affiliated organizations have spearheaded some of this activity, there are questions about its future direction.

U.S. and International Views on Turkish Domestic Developments

U.S. and EU officials and observers have perhaps become more attuned to concerns regarding civil liberties and checks and balances in Turkey, partly because of these issues' potential to affect internal stability and electoral outcomes in Turkey, as well as the country's economic viability and regional political role. In March 2015, 74 Senators signed a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry protesting media repression and censorship in Turkey,²⁰² following a similar February 2015 letter signed by 89 Representatives.²⁰³

It is unclear to what extent non-Turkish actors will play a significant role in resolving unanswered questions regarding Turkey's commitment to democracy and limited government, its secular-religious balance, and its Kurdish question. Erdogan and his supporters periodically resort to criticism of the West in apparent efforts to galvanize domestic political support against outside influences.²⁰⁴ U.S.-Turkey tensions over Fethullah Gulen's status may further complicate prospects for external actors to influence domestic Turkish developments.

²⁰¹ See, e.g., "Cyprus, Egypt proceed with plans for natural gas deal," *Xinhua*, September 10, 2015.

²⁰² The text of the letter is available at <http://www.schumer.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/schumer-and-70-senate-colleagues-call-on-state-dept-to-address-ongoing-intimidation-of-media-and-censorship-of-the-press-in-turkey-under-president-erdogans-administration>.

²⁰³ Tolga Tanis, "US Congressmen send Kerry letter about Turkey's crackdown on Gulen-linked media," *Hurriyet Daily News*, February 6, 2015. The Senate and House letters both elicited charges from Erdogan and state-run or -linked media outlets that the Fethullah Gulen movement was both responsible for the letters and has material influence on a number of the signers. "Gulen lobby influences US lawmakers letter on Turkey," *Anadolu Agency*, February 15, 2015; Ragip Soylu, "Gülen Movement woos US congressmen with campaign donations and free trips," *dailysabah.com*, February 9, 2015.

²⁰⁴ Mustafa Akyol, "What turned Erdogan against the West?," *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, February 3, 2015.

Bilateral Trade

Turkey is not an EU member, and therefore is not a party to the ongoing Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) negotiations between the United States and the EU. Given its customs union with the EU, Turkey has sought inclusion in the negotiations. Currently, the U.S. position is that the T-TIP negotiations are already complex, and including additional trading partners may further complicate the negotiations and prospects for concluding a comprehensive and high-standard agreement.²⁰⁵ Additionally, Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker publicly identified some specific trade policy “obstacles” to including Turkey in T-TIP negotiations during an October 2014 trip there.²⁰⁶ Therefore, one analyst has suggested that Turkey might consider pursuing other options either to involve Turkey in T-TIP after its creation or to increase trade preferences with the United States and/or EU.²⁰⁷ Given Turkey’s concerns about the potential for T-TIP negotiations to affect its trade relations with both sides, in May 2013 the United States and Turkey agreed to form a High Level Committee (HLC) “to assess such potential impacts and seek new ways to promote bilateral trade and investment, and have since held several working level consultations under the HLC.”²⁰⁸

Status of Religious Minorities in Turkey

While U.S. constitutional law prohibits the excessive entanglement of the government with religion, republican Turkey has maintained secularism or “laicism” by controlling or closely overseeing religious activities in the country. This is partly to prevent religion from influencing state actors and institutions, as it did during previous centuries of Ottoman rule. Sunni Muslims, although not monolithic in their views on freedom of worship, have better recourse than other religious adherents to the democratic process for accommodation of their views because of their majority status. Minority Muslim sects (most prominently, the Alevis) and non-Muslim religions largely depend on legal appeals, political advocacy, and support from Western countries to protect their rights in Turkey.

Christians and Jews

U.S. concerns focus largely on the rights of established Christian and Jewish communities and religious leaderships and their associated foundations and organizations within Turkey to choose leaders, train clergy, own property, and otherwise function independently of the Turkish government.²⁰⁹ Additionally, according to the State Department’s International Religious Freedom Report for 2013, “Jewish leaders expressed growing concern within the Jewish

²⁰⁵ CRS Report R43387, *Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) Negotiations*, by Shayerah Ilias Akhtar, Vivian C. Jones, and Renée Johnson.

²⁰⁶ Abdullah Bozkurt, “Pritzker: Turkey needs reforms to engage further in T-TIP,” *todayzaman.com*, October 2, 2014 (accessed late 2014). In February 2016, 24 Senators sent a letter to Secretary Pritzker raising concerns about possible Turkish “dumping” practices harming U.S. domestic competitiveness in the rebar market. The text of the letter is available at <http://www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-joins-bipartisan-group-of-senators-in-calling-for-action-against-recent-surge-in-cheap-steel-imports-from-turkey>.

²⁰⁷ Kemal Kirisci, “T-TIP’s Enlargement and the Case of Turkey,” Woodrow Wilson Center and Istanbul Policy Center, January 2015.

²⁰⁸ U.S. Trade Representative 2015 Trade Policy Agenda, p. 145.

²⁰⁹ Since 2009, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has given Turkey designations ranging from “country of particular concern” (highest concern) to “monitored.” From 2014 through 2016, Turkey has been included in Tier 2, the intermediate level of concern. For additional information on Turkey’s religious minorities, see the State Department’s International Religious Freedom Report for 2015.

community over the continued expression of anti-Semitic sentiments in the media and by some elements of society.”

Some Members of Congress routinely express grievances through proposed congressional resolutions and through letters to the President and to Turkish leaders on behalf of the Ecumenical (Greek Orthodox) Patriarchate of Constantinople, the spiritual center of Orthodox Christianity based in Istanbul.²¹⁰ On December 13, 2011, for example, the House passed H.Res. 306 — “Urging the Republic of Turkey to safeguard its Christian heritage and to return confiscated church properties”—by voice vote.²¹¹ In June 2014, the House Foreign Affairs Committee favorably reported the Turkey Christian Churches Accountability Act (H.R. 4347), which led to a negative reaction from officials in Turkey.

In a December 2014 interview with a Turkish journalist, an Ecumenical Patriarchate spokesman said the following about Turkey’s attitudes and actions toward the Patriarchate and religious freedom in recent years:

I think that attitudes toward the Ecumenical Patriarchate have overall improved in recent years.... Finally, the Turkish government has also responded to these initiatives by returning numerous properties²¹² to their rightful owners among the minorities in this country, granting Turkish citizenship to bishops with formal positions in our church, while also allowing services in such places as Sumela Monastery in Trabzon.

....

But on the other hand, the signs are not as clear when it comes to converting pronouncements of good will into concrete legislation and practical application.²¹³

The Patriarchate, along with various U.S. and European officials, continues to press for the reopening of its Halki Theological School. Erdogan has reportedly conditioned Halki’s reopening on measures by Greece to accommodate its Muslim community.²¹⁴ Meanwhile, Turkey has converted or is in the process of converting some historic Christian churches into mosques, and may be considering additional conversions.²¹⁵ The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) released a statement in May 2014 calling a bill introduced in Turkey’s parliament to convert Istanbul’s landmark Hagia Sophia (which became a museum in the early

²¹⁰ The Patriarchate traces its roots to the Apostle Andrew. The most commonly articulated congressional grievances on behalf of the Patriarchate—whose ecumenicity is not acknowledged by the Turkish government, but also not objected to when acknowledged by others—are the non-operation of the Halki Theological School on Heybeliada Island near Istanbul since 1971, the requirement that the Patriarch be a Turkish citizen, and the failure of the Turkish government to return previously confiscated properties.

²¹¹ H.Res. 306 was sponsored by Representative Edward Royce, now Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

²¹² According to USCIRF’s 2015 annual report, “The Turkish government reports that since 2003, more than 1,000 properties – valued, at more than 2.5 billion Turkish Lira (1 billion U.S. Dollars) – have been returned or compensated for. Hundreds more applications are still being processed. Nearly 1,000 applications reportedly were denied due to lack of proof of ownership or for other reasons. For example, the Turkish government reports that some applications are duplicates because different religious communities are claiming the same property. However, some communities allege bias, consider the process very slow, and claim that compensation has been insufficient.”

²¹³ “Pope Francis Went To Turkey To Meet Patriarch Bartholomew,” *Huffington Post*, December 19, 2014 (English translation of Cansu Camlibel, “The Pope Came for Bartholomew,” *Hurriyet*, December 8, 2014).

²¹⁴ “Turkey ready to open Halki Seminary in return for a mosque in Greece: report,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, May 8, 2015.

²¹⁵ Peter Kenyon, “Some Turkish Churches Get Makeovers—As Mosques,” NPR, December 3, 2013; Dorian Jones, “Turkish Leaders Aim to Turn Hagia Sophia Back into a Mosque,” *Voice of America*, November 29, 2013.

years of the Turkish republic) into a mosque “misguided.”²¹⁶ Subsequently, similar bills have been introduced, but none have been enacted. In June 2016, the government permitted daily televised Quran readings from Hagia Sophia during Ramadan, prompting criticism from the Greek government,²¹⁷ as well as encouragement from the State Department for the site’s “traditions and complex history” to be respected.²¹⁸

Alevis

Most Muslims in Turkey are Sunni, but 10 million to 20 million are Alevis (of whom about 20% are ethnic Kurds). The Alevi community has some relation to Shiism²¹⁹ and may contain strands from pre-Islamic Anatolian and Christian traditions.²²⁰ Alevism has been traditionally influenced by Sufi mysticism that emphasizes believers’ individual spiritual paths, but it defies precise description owing to its lack of centralized leadership and reliance on oral traditions historically kept secret from outsiders. Despite a decision by Turkey’s top appeals court in August 2015 that the state financially support *cemevis* (Alevi houses of worship), the government still does not do so, and continues to “consider Alevism a heterodox Muslim sect.”²²¹ Alevis have long been among the strongest supporters of Turkey’s secular state, which they reportedly perceive as their protector from the Sunni majority.²²² Recent developments appear to have heightened Sunni-Alevi tensions, including those pertaining to the Syrian conflict. Arab Alawites in Syria and southern Turkey are a distinct Shia-related religious community, but are often likened to Alevis by the region’s Sunni Muslims.

Conclusion

Turkey’s importance to the United States may have increased relative to previous eras of U.S.-Turkey cooperation because of Turkey’s geopolitical and economic importance and more assertive foreign policy. At the same time, domestic developments and trends in Turkey raise questions about future U.S.-Turkey relations, as the nations’ respective values and interests evolve and, at times, diverge. Members of Congress can influence U.S. relations with Turkey via action on arms sales and trade, efforts to counter the Islamic State, and attempts to shape political outcomes in Syria and Iraq. U.S. and Turkish dealings with various Kurdish groups could have implications for the bilateral and NATO alliance, as could the two countries’ dealings with other countries such as Russia, China, Iran, Israel, Armenia, and Cyprus.

²¹⁶ USCIRF website, “Turkey: Statement on Hagia Sophia,” May 21, 2014.

²¹⁷ Pinar Tremblay, “The battle for Hagia Sophia in Istanbul escalates,” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, June 15, 2016.

²¹⁸ Philip Chrysopoulos, “Turkey Should Respect Hagia Sophia Tradition, Says State Dept. Spokesperson,” *usa.greekreporter.com*, June 10, 2016.

²¹⁹ For information comparing and contrasting Sunnism and Shiism, see CRS Report RS21745, *Islam: Sunnis and Shiites*, by Christopher M. Blanchard.

²²⁰ For additional historical background, see Elise Massicard, *The Alevis in Turkey and Europe: Identity and managing territorial diversity*, New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 11-18.

²²¹ State Department International Religious Freedom Report for 2015.

²²² According to a scholar on Turkey, “Alevis suffered centuries of oppression under the Ottomans, who accused them of not being truly Muslim and suspected them of colluding with the Shi’i Persians against the empire. Alevi Kurds were victims of the early republic’s Turkification policies and were massacred by the thousands in Dersim [now called Tunceli] in 1937-39. In the 1970s, Alevis became associated with socialist and other leftist movements, while the political right was dominated by Sunni Muslims. An explosive mix of sectarian cleavages, class polarization, and political violence led to communal massacres of Alevis in five major cities in 1977 and 1978, setting the stage for the 1980 coup.” Jenny White, *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 14.

Appendix A. Profiles of Key Figures in Turkey



Recep Tayyip Erdogan—President

(pronounced *air-doe-wan*)

Born in 1954, Erdogan was raised in Istanbul and in his familial hometown of Rize on the Black Sea coast. He attended a religious *imam hatip* secondary school in Istanbul. In the 1970s, Erdogan studied business at what is today Marmara University, became a business consultant and executive, and became politically active with the different Turkish Islamist parties led by eventual prime minister Necmettin Erbakan.

Erdogan was elected mayor of Istanbul in 1994 but was removed from office, imprisoned for six months, and banned from parliamentary politics for religious incitement after publicly reciting a poem drawing from Islamic imagery. After Erbakan's government resigned under military pressure in 1997 and his Welfare Party was disbanded, Erdogan became the founding chairman of the AKP in 2001. The AKP won a decisive electoral victory in 2002, and has led the government ever since. After the election, a legal change allowed Erdogan to run for parliament in a 2003 special election, and after he won, Erdogan replaced Abdullah Gul as prime minister.

Erdogan and his personal popularity and charisma have been at the center of much of the domestic and foreign policy change that has occurred in Turkey in the past decade. Erdogan's rhetoric and actions have come under even greater scrutiny since June 2013, with his relationship with President Obama apparently becoming more distant since then.

Erdogan became Turkey's first popularly elected president in August 2014. Although he is no longer a formal partisan figure, in practice he retains a large measure of control over the AKP. Most observers believe that his political objectives are largely driven by desires to consolidate power and to avoid the reopening of corruption cases that could implicate him and close family members or associates.

Erdogan is married and has two sons and two daughters. He is not fluent in English but his understanding may be improving.



Binali Yildirim—Prime Minister

(*yill-der-im*)

Born in 1954 in the eastern province of Erzincan, Yildirim was educated and started his political career in Istanbul. After obtaining degrees from Istanbul Technical University, he began working in the administration of Istanbul's shipyards. Though only loosely tied to political Islamist movements, in 1994 he was named the director of the Istanbul Ferry System by Erdogan, who was then Istanbul's mayor. He was removed from office five years later amid corruption allegations.

After winning election to parliament in 2002, Yildirim was named Minister of Transportation, Maritime, and Communication, filling a similar role in national government as he had for Istanbul's municipal administration. Yildirim served in this role for over a decade, overseeing many important parts of AKP rule, including privatization of state industries, rapid infrastructure development, and large construction projects.

In May 2016, Erdogan appointed Yildirim as prime minister after the resignation of Ahmet Davutoglu. Yildirim is seen as generally deferential to Erdogan.

Yildirim is married with three children, and reportedly speaks English and French.



Kemal Kilicdaroglu—Leader of Republican People’s Party (CHP)

(kill-itch-dar-oh-loo)

Born in 1948 in Tunceli province in eastern Turkey to an Alevi background, Kilicdaroglu is the leader of the CHP, which is the main opposition party and traditional political outlet of the Turkish nationalist secular elite. In recent years, the party has also attracted various liberal and social democratic constituencies.

After receiving an economics degree from what is now Gazi University in Ankara, Kilicdaroglu had a civil service career—first with the Finance Ministry, then as the director-general of the Social Security Organization. After retiring from the civil service, Kilicdaroglu became politically active with the CHP and was elected to parliament from Istanbul in 2002. He gained national prominence for his efforts to root out corruption among AKP officials and the AKP-affiliated mayor of Ankara. Kilicdaroglu was elected by the party to replace him. Although the CHP has not made dramatic gains in elections since his installation as leader in 2010, it and the other opposition parties have maintained enough support to prevent the AKP from formalizing major constitutional changes.

Kilicdaroglu is married with a son and two daughters. He speaks fluent French.



Devlet Bahceli—Leader of Nationalist Action Party (MHP)

(bah-cheh-lee)

Born in 1948 in Osmaniye province in southern Turkey, Bahceli is the leader of the MHP, which is the traditional repository of conservative Turkish nationalist sentiment and opposition to greater official accommodation of Kurdish political demands.

Bahceli moved to Istanbul for his secondary education, and received his higher education, including a doctorate, from what is now Gazi University in Ankara. After a career as an economics lecturer at Gazi University, he entered a political career as a leader in what would become the MHP. He became the chairman of the MHP in 1997 and served as a deputy prime minister during a 1999-2002 coalition government. He was initially elected to parliament in 2007.

Bahceli speaks fluent English.



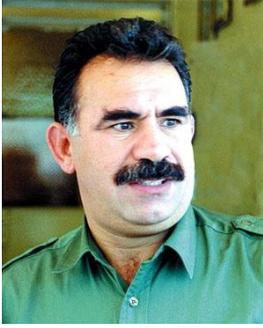
Selahattin Demirtas—Co-Leader of Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP)

(day-meer-tosh)

Born in 1973 to a Kurdish family, Demirtas is co-leader of the HDP (alongside female co-leader Figen Yuksekdag), which has a Kurdish nationalist base but has also reached out to a number of non-Kurdish constituencies, particularly liberals and minorities. The constituency of the party and its various predecessors overlaps with that of the PKK, but the party professes a nonviolent stance and claims an independent identity.

Demirtas was raised in Elazig in eastern Turkey. He attended universities in both Izmir and Ankara and received his law degree from Ankara University. He became a human rights activist leader in Diyarbakir and was elected to parliament for the first time in 2007, becoming co-leader of the HDP’s immediate predecessor party in 2010. His national visibility increased after he ran as one of two candidates opposing Erdogan for the presidency in 2014. His personal popularity and charisma are generally seen as major reasons for the HDP becoming the first pro-Kurdish party to pass the electoral threshold of 10% in June and November 2015 parliamentary elections.

Demirtas is married with two daughters.



Abdullah Ocalan—Founder of the PKK

(oh-juh-lawn)

Born in or around 1949 in southeastern Turkey (near Sanliurfa), Ocalan is the founding leader of the PKK.

After attending vocational high school in Ankara, Ocalan served in civil service posts in Diyarbakir and Istanbul until enrolling at Ankara University in 1971. As his interest developed in socialism and Kurdish nationalism, Ocalan was jailed for seven months in 1972 for participating in an illegal student demonstration. His time in prison with other activists helped inspire his political ambitions, and he became increasingly politically active upon his release.

Ocalan founded the Marxist-Leninist-influenced PKK in 1978 and launched a separatist militant campaign against Turkish security forces—while also attacking the traditional Kurdish chieftain class—in 1984. He used Syrian territory as his safe haven, with the group also using Lebanese territory for training and Iraqi territory for operations. Syria forced Ocalan to leave in 1998 after Turkey threatened war for harboring him.

After traveling to several different countries, Ocalan was captured in February 1999 in Kenya—possibly with U.S. help—and was turned over to Turkish authorities. The PKK declared a cease-fire shortly thereafter. Ocalan was sentenced to death, in a trial later ruled unfair by the European Court of Human Rights, but when Turkey abolished the death penalty in 2002, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He resides in a maximum-security prison on the island of Imrali in the Sea of Marmara, and was in solitary confinement until 2009.

Although other PKK leaders such as Cemil Bayik and Murat Karayilan have exercised direct control over PKK operations during Ocalan's imprisonment, some observers believe that Ocalan still ultimately controls the PKK through proxies. PKK violence resumed in 2003 and has since continued off-and-on, with the most recent cease-fire ending in July 2015.

Appendix B. List of Selected Turkish-Related Organizations in the United States

- Alliance for Shared Values (<http://afsv.org/>)—includes Rumi Forum in Washington, DC
- American Friends of Turkey (<http://afot.us/>)
- American Research Institute in Turkey (<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/ARIT/>)
- American Turkish Society (<http://www.americanturkishsociety.org/>)
- American-Turkish Council (<http://www.the-atc.org/>)
- Assembly of Turkish American Associations (<http://www.ataa.org/>)—component associations in 21 states and the District of Columbia
- Ataturk Society of America (<http://www.aturksociety.org/>)
- Federation of Turkish American Associations
- Institute of Turkish Studies (<http://turkishstudies.org/>)
- SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (<http://setadc.org>)
- Turkic American Alliance (<http://turkicamericanalliance.org/>)
- Turkish Coalition of America (<http://tc-america.org/>)
- Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON)
- Turkish Cultural Foundation (<http://turkishculturalfoundation.org/>)
- Turkish Heritage Organization (<http://turkheritage.org>)
- Turkish Industry & Business Association (TUSIAD) (<http://tusiad.org/>)
- Turkish Policy Center (<http://turkishpolicycenter.org/>)
- Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) (<http://tobb.org.tr/>)

Appendix C. Significant U.S.-Origin Arms Transfers or Possible Arms Transfers to Turkey

(Congressional notifications since 2006)

Amount/Description	FMS or DCS	Cong. Notice	Year		Primary Contractor(s)	Estimated Cost
			Contract	Delivery		
100 F-35A Joint Strike Fighter aircraft	DCS	2006	2014 (for 2)	2017-2026 (estimated)	Lockheed Martin	\$11-16 billion
30 F-16C Block 50 Fighter aircraft and associated equipment	FMS	2006	Signed	2011-2012	Consortium (Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and others)	\$1.8 billion
48 AGM-84H SLAM-ER Air-surface missiles	FMS	2006	2006	2011 (50 estimated)	Boeing	\$162 million
105 AIM-9X SIDEWINDER Air-air missiles (SRAAM)	FMS	2007	Signed	2008 (127 estimated – 2012 notice listed below)	Raytheon	\$71 million
51 Block II Tactical HARPOON Anti-ship missiles	FMS	2007	2008	2011 (25 estimated)	McDonnell Douglas (Boeing)	\$159 million
100 MK-54 MAKO Torpedoes	FMS	2007	2009	2012-2014	Raytheon	\$105 million
30 AAQ-33 SNIPER and AN/AAQ-13 LANTIRN Aircraft electro-optical systems (targeting and navigation pods)	FMS	2008	2009	2011-2012	Lockheed Martin	\$200 million
6 MK 41 Vertical Launch Systems for Ship-air missiles	FMS	2008	Signed	2013-2014 (4 estimated)	Lockheed Martin	\$227 million
107 AIM-120C-7 Air-air missiles (AMRAAM)	FMS	2008	Signed	2013-2014	Raytheon	\$157 million
400 RIM-162 Ship-air missiles (ESSM)	DCS	2009	Signed	2011-2015 (270 estimated)	Raytheon	\$300 million
72 PATRIOT Advanced Capability Missiles (PAC-3), 197 PATRIOT Guidance Enhanced Missiles, and associated equipment	FMS	2009			Raytheon and Lockheed Martin	\$4 billion

Amount/Description	FMS or DCS	Year			Primary Contractor(s)	Estimated Cost
		Cong. Notice	Contract	Delivery		
14 CH-47F CHINOOK Helicopters	FMS	2009	2011 (for 6)	2016 (expected)	Boeing	\$1.2 billion (\$400 million for 6)
3 AH-1W SUPER COBRA Attack Helicopters	FMS	2011	Signed	2012	N/A (from U.S. Marine Corps inventory)	\$111 million
117 AIM-9X-2 SIDEWINDER Block II Air-air missiles (SRAAM) and associated equipment	FMS	2012	2014	(2007 notice listed above)	Raytheon	\$140 million
48 MK-48 Mod 6 Advanced Technology All-Up-Round (AUR) Warshot torpedoes and associated equipment	FMS	2014			Raytheon and Lockheed Martin	\$170 million
145 AIM-120C-7 Air-air missiles (AMRAAM)	FMS	2014			Raytheon	\$320 million
21 MK-15 Phalanx Block 1B Baseline 2 Close-in weapons systems (CIWS) (sale/upgrade)	FMS	2015			Raytheon	\$310 million
Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) and associated equipment	FMS	2015			Boeing	\$70 million

Sources: Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Arms Transfer Database, *Defense News*, *Hurriyet Daily News*, *Global Security*.

Notes: All figures and dates are approximate; blank entries indicate that data is unknown or not applicable. FMS refers to “Foreign Military Sales” contemplated between the U.S. government and Turkey, while DCS refers to “Direct Commercial Sales” contemplated between private U.S. companies and Turkey.

Appendix D. Congressional Committee Reports of Resolutions Using the Word “Genocide” in Relation to Events Regarding Armenians in the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923

Date Reported or of Vote for Report	Proposed Resolution(s)	Committee
April 5, 1984	S.J.Res. 87	Senate Judiciary
September 28, 1984	S.Res. 241	Senate Foreign Relations
July 9, 1985	H.J.Res. 192	House Post Office and Civil Service
July 23, 1987	H.J.Res. 132	House Post Office and Civil Service
August 3, 1987	H.Res. 238	House Rules
October 18, 1989	S.J.Res. 212	Senate Judiciary
October 11, 2000	H.Res. 596 and H.Res. 625	House Rules
May 22, 2003	H.Res. 193	House Judiciary
September 15, 2005	H.Res. 316 and H.Con.Res. 195	House International Relations
March 29, 2007	S.Res. 65	Senate Foreign Relations
October 10, 2007	H.Res. 106	House Foreign Affairs
March 4, 2010	H.Res. 252	House Foreign Affairs
April 10, 2014	S.Res. 410	Senate Foreign Relations

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