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NATO and Turkey in the post-Cold War world: between abandonment and entrapment

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For the last two decades, two fears have largely shaped Turkey's view of NATO. These are fears of entrapment and abandonment. Both are symptoms of a type of security dilemma that is peculiar to military alliances and coalitions. Both fears had their origins in the Cold War in the context of Turkey's 60-year-old NATO membership. They also led to the pursuit of autonomy in Turkish foreign policy both as a response strategy and as a strategic choice in its own right. While the former version featured a heavy dose of reliance on military means or hard power, the latter version de-emphasized the military option in foreign policy and relied instead on soft power. A multitude of dynamics accounts for variations in the Turkish approach to NATO for the last two decades: Geography and regional considerations, the transatlantic dynamics, NATO's restructuring and transformation and Turkey's domestic dynamics. It may be suggested that NATO membership now looms large in the strategic calculations of the new Turkish elite in the aftermath of the Arab Awakening. This development might be the harbinger of the end of an era marked by fears and the pursuit of autonomy in Turkey's approach to NATO.

Keywords: NATO; Turkey; US; transatlantic relations

In April 2011, while NATO's bombing campaign against pro-Gaddafi targets in Libya was in full swing, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu engaged in a pointed exchange with his Czech counterpart, Karel Schwarzenberg, in Berlin over Turkey's veto on Cyprus' participation in NATO-EU meetings. Reportedly, the exchange was triggered by Davutoğlu's remark that admitting Cyprus into the EU was a mistake. Schwarzenberg, in return, protested that the EU did not need to be lectured by others on its decisions and would not accept non-members' interference in its affairs. In other words, Turkey should mind its own business. The transcript of this conversation that was published in (or leaked to) *Hürriyet* indicated that the Turkish Foreign Minister reacted very strongly to this exclusionary language Schwarzenberg used in a NATO meeting. In his reply, Davutoğlu used a narrative that represents a remarkable change in his conceptualization of Turkey's place in the Western security community. He reminded his Czech counterpart that, '(W)e are a family here. We are one of the oldest members of this family. We were here when you were not' (*Hürriyet*, 17 April 2011).[1] The point that Davutoğlu was actually trying to make was that Turkey did not ever consider vetoing the admission of

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Central and Eastern European countries to NATO, even in exchange for a promise of EU membership. However, he remained adamant that Ankara would not allow the Greek administration of the island Republic to sit around the table in what Turkey considers its home turf until the long-festering Cyprus problem was resolved.

Embracing NATO as Turkey's home turf in such strong terms was a novelty in Davutoğlu's foreign policy thinking. Considering Turkey a long time member of the Western security community marked a profound change in his (and by extension the ruling Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi [AKP's] - Justice and Development Party) thinking on where Turkey belonged in security matters. In a way, Davutoğlu reaffirmed the identity-based choice his predecessors made and pursued for decades, as family membership argument implies organic presence in a community (See Aydın 1999, 170–6 and Yanık 2012, 29–50). For much of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) rule in Turkey since 2002, the new Turkish political elite with Islamist roots rejected the old 'westernization' paradigm. It should be granted that this rejection did not necessarily result in disowning each and every aspect of this paradigm. For instance, the AKP stuck to Turkey's EU membership bid mostly for pragmatic purposes until 2005 (McDonald 2011, 520–4 and Saatçioğlu 2011, 23–44). However, in terms of international identity of their country, the AKP 'has developed a new and rival identity … that places Turkey in a different civilization – that is, Islamic – and yet in harmony with Western civilization' (Altunışık 2009, 188). In this respect, Davutoğlu's family analogy for NATO is a departure, pragmatic or otherwise, from the AKP's initial conceptualization of Turkey's international identity. This dramatic change in rhetoric in fact weakens the argument that Ankara now sees NATO membership through purely an interest based rather than an identity-based prism (Oğuzlu 2012a, 153–64).

The new Turkish political elite's change of mind about Turkey's NATO membership predates this heated exchange between Davutoğlu and his Czech counterpart in Berlin. Earlier, the Lisbon Summit in November of 2010, when NATO decided to adopt the Missile Shield Project and Ankara signed on to it, compelled Turkey to redefine itself squarely as a NATO member. The Arab Spring or awakening provided further impetus to Turkish re-discovery of NATO. After nearly two decades of frustration with and alienation from the allies, NATO membership has finally begun to make military sense to Turkey. In other words, Davutoğlu's remarks in Berlin arguably spelled the end of two decades of ambiguity in Turkey–NATO relations. This ambiguity has a longer history than AKP's rule. It began immediately after the end of the Cold War. It was exacerbated by the absence of an overarching strategic consensus in the alliance that was split down the middle on the eve of the US occupation of Iraq in 2003.

This paper traces the evolution of Turkey's views on post-Cold War NATO in the context of a security dilemma that is peculiar to alliance politics. The principal concepts for this security dilemma are called 'fear of abandonment' and 'fear of entrapment'. These concepts were brought to use to explain the behaviour of the allies during the nuclear arms reduction talks between the two superpowers. Reliance on the US nuclear umbrella engendered two types of fears among other NATO allies. The fear of being entrapped in a nuclear confrontation beyond (even against) their will, and the fear of being abandoned by the USA who might be tempted to cut a deal with the Soviet Union on nuclear weapons. When the USA and the Soviet Union agreed to dismantle a whole category of nuclear weapons (the Intermediate Nuclear Forces: INF), other NATO members had to confront the fear

of abandonment (Sharp 1985/1986, 649–52). Almost concomitantly, the US' shift of its strategic focus to the Middle East triggered yet another debate on the 'out of area' roles for NATO which in turn introduced a new risk of entrapment for the members. To tackle both aspects of the alliance security dilemma, the European members of NATO reinvigorated the Western European Union that had been left to hibernate since the early 1950s (Aybet 1997, 142–56).

Both these fears also shaped Turkey's view of the alliance for the remainder of the Cold War and even beyond (see Oğuzlu 2012b, 99–124). Yet unlike other members, the two decades that followed the end of the Cold War also witnessed a determined Turkish quest for autonomy. This pursuit of autonomy, that we could dub 'the lone wolf syndrome', was at the beginning a natural strategic response to both fears. It was designed as merely a response to either abandonment or entrapment because of an interplay of global, regional and domestic dynamics. However, under AKP's watch, it gradually grew into a principal strategic choice. Davutoğlu's family analogy, therefore, may indicate that in the new decade those three impulses may no longer characterize Turkey's view of NATO and her relation to the Alliance.

In this paper, we trace the Cold War origins of the fears of entrapment and abandonment. Then we move to the post-Cold War period to identify the root causes and manifestations of the quest for autonomy in Turkish foreign policy that was both a response strategy and a strategic choice in its own right. Whereas the response strategy featured a heavy dose of reliance on military means or hard power, the strategic choice version de-emphasized the military option in foreign policy and instead relied almost exclusively on soft power. We argue that a multitude of dynamics account for variations in Turkish approach to NATO. These are: (a) geography and regional considerations; (b) transatlantic dynamics; (c) NATO's reorganization, transformation and enlargement; and (d) domestic dynamics.

The Cold War origins of the fears of entrapment and abandonment

In the last decade of the Cold War, the INF negotiations between the two superpowers raised the issue of the credibility of US nuclear guarantees for the European members of the Alliance. Turkey had already learned to live with the fear of abandonment though. During the Turkish military operations in Cyrus in 1974, the vehicles of US nuclear guarantees had been practically removed from Turkey when Washington decided to put them back in storage. After the end of the hostilities, Ankara did not allow their return first, in retaliation to the US arms embargo between 1975 and 1978. Later on because of lengthy negotiations to reach an agreement on a new legal framework that would regulate US access to bases and installations located in Turkey their return was delayed. This second dimension was also relevant to the out of area debate in NATO. Owing to its proximity to (or its real estate value for) the new geographical focus in US strategy, the challenge to Ankara to adapt was greater than that of other allies.

As a result of these concerns, Turkish policy-makers grew apprehensive of US contingency planning in the Middle East that would inevitably rely on the bases in Turkey (Evriviades 2001, 25–43). These in turn revived Turkish fears of entrapment in what Deringil (1996) calls 'the Ottoman twilight zone of the Middle East'. Ankara took great strides in linking and confining the functions of the bases to its NATO commitments only. Yet, Aykan invokes speculations that the Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement of March 1980 included clauses that allowed for

a far more liberal and broader interpretation of NATO commitments by the USA in Middle Eastern contingencies (Aykan 1994, 31–7; Stork 1980, 3).

The INF Treaty's impact on the Turkish sense of abandonment was rather indirect. When the INF Treaty mood contributed to the renewal of superpowers' interest in the reduction of conventional forces in Europe (CFE) though, the perceptions and reactions changed drastically. In previous futile attempts, Turkey did not mind being sidelined as a flank member along with Norway and Greece. An observer remarks, 'Turkey was often late in coming to grips with CFE issues' (Herman 1994, 13). When Britain drafted a new negotiating position that introduced a geographical categorization of NATO members, Ankara finally reacted. Under the British proposal, the negotiations would involve only members in the enlarged central zone excluding Turkey, Greece and Norway in NATO and Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary in the Warsaw Pact. Turkish position began to change with the gradual realization that the Soviets might shift their conventional equipment and forces from the so-called enlarged central zone to the flanks after a conventional forces agreement. As a result, the new situation, if unattended, could expose Turkey, alone and isolated, to increased Soviet conventional threat in the flanks. In this new frame of mind, Ankara opposed the British draft on the grounds that it could culminate in asymmetric deterrence or discriminatory solidarity among NATO allies, a concern vocally shared at least by another flank member, Norway (Erkaya and Baytok 2001, 70; Falkenrath 1995, 231). Hence, Turkey and other flank members of NATO were subsequently included in the CFE negotiations' geographical scope extending from the Atlantic to the Urals.

During these negotiations, Ankara demanded a zone of exclusion from the CFE limitations in southeastern Anatolia. The Turkish demand sounded reasonable and justifiable, as all NATO members, except one, granted that this part of Turkish territory would be more relevant to Middle Eastern than to European security challenges (Herman 1994, 15). This zone would cover about 190,000 km^2, or 24.4% of Turkish territory, corresponding in broad terms to the Turkish Second Field Army's area of responsibility. In other words, that part of Turkey could be made available for out of area contingencies.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 was a profound challenge to Turkey's status as a member of the Western security community. Since its status was mainly defined by the country's real estate value as a western outpost, the coming end of the Cold War threatened Turkey's tenuous or contingent ties to the West. In December 1989, the Commission of the then European Community (EC) delivered its opinion on Turkey's full membership application that was submitted back in April 1987. It was a flat out rejection, though Turkey's eligibility for full membership was affirmed at least in principle. This rejection exacerbated Turkish fears of isolation and abandonment by the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance.

With the East–West division in the ashbin of history, Turkey's Chief of the General Staff, General Necip Torumtay outlined Turkey's new military priorities in 1990. For him, Turkey had to deal with threats in a multitude of regions. Peace in Europe would require a shift of Turkish military attention towards the Middle East and other regions (*Milliyet* 8 March 1990). The key question at this juncture was if or to what extent Turkey could rely on its long-time allies or NATO in tackling these emerging regional threats. Would NATO be willing and able to extend support and assistance to Turkey in case of need against regional threats? This lingering

question featured two aspects. One was related to the overall credibility of the NATO alliance. The second referred to the material side of the coin. Having rid themselves of the Soviet threat, the allies might see no need to maintain NATO capabilities at their Cold War levels and seek benefits from the 'peace dividend' instead. In either case, Turkey could be in a position of having to defend itself alone against regional threats. From the Turkish perspective, the world had quickly degenerated into a true state of self-help.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait caught Ankara in the middle of a heated domestic debate on the credibility of the NATO alliance in defending Turkey against post-Cold War regional threats. The US force reductions and base closures in Europe reinforced the Turkish fear of isolation. By mid-1994, the number of operational US bases and facilities in Turkey was down to four. Similarly, there was a dramatic drop in the number of dual-key nuclear weapons deployed in Turkey as well (Aykan 1996, 345). Just before the invasion, Ankara was at odds with Baghdad and Damascus over the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The Iraqi leader implicitly threatened Turkey during Turkish Prime Minister Yıldırım Akbulut's visit to Baghdad. He openly challenged Akbulut on NATO's commitment to Turkish security (Ersan and Bostanoğlu 2001, 26).

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was a blessing in disguise for Ankara as its 'real estate value' was reaffirmed and its militarily strongest neighbour found itself in serious trouble (Güner 2000, 98). The Iraqi challenge to the status quo in the Middle East was not acceptable and therefore would be neutralized. However, the extent and scope of Turkey's involvement in the effort became a highly contested and controversial issue at home. President Turgut Özal's enthusiasm for high-profile military engagement in the crisis was not shared by other key political and military leaders. Indeed some of them resigned in protest. Moreover, Ankara found itself in an unpleasant and undesirable position to deal with the US demands to use the bases in Turkey within a bilateral framework in the absence of NATO involvement. Policy-makers in Ankara thus looked for more institutionalized ways of dealing with the unfolding situation. Shortly after the resignation of General Torumtay on 3 December 1990, Ankara requested the deployment of NATO Allied Command Europe Mobile Force (AMF) in Turkey for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the AMF was supposed to serve as a vehicle of showing solidarity with any member or members of NATO in a military crisis situation. It was just a token force that could contribute only symbolically to an allied country's defence. In other words, its deployment was meant to boast Turkey's deterrent rather than defensive capabilities. Last but not least, the AMF deployment would introduce the missing multilateral framework into the decision calculus both in Ankara and Washington. NATO was expected to dramatically alter the context within which both Özal's enthusiasm and the US pressures for greater Turkish military involvement in Iraq could be contained (Efegil 2002, 198).

The initial reluctance of some allies hastened the erosion of NATO's credibility in Turkey. Among those ambivalent NATO members, Germany figured prominently. Although German Chancellor Kohl later reassured President Bush that in case of an unlikely Iraqi assault on Turkey, Germany would be there to fight, he did so after pointing to potential political costs to him and his party. Bush later wrote that Kohl's assurance was a 'courageous promise', rather than simply a manifestation of allied solidarity (Bush and Scrowcroft 1998, 457). Eventually, Belgium, Germany and Italy sent combat aircraft to Turkey as part of the AMF Air Element, whereas

the USA and the Netherlands deployed Patriot air defence batteries against the ballistic missile threat from Iraq (Egeli and Güvenç 2012, 22).

Overall, NATO's poor performance in solidarity during the Gulf War was disappointing and alarming for the Turkish political and military leadership. After that experience, Turkish security policy was driven by the desire to accumulate military capabilities in order to reduce dependence on allies. As such, Turkey and its European partners in NATO began to diverge in strategic choices and security practices. Turkey continued to perceive territorial threats and therefore maintained threat-based military capabilities, while its European allies gradually switched to capability-based force structures in the absence of major threats to their territorial security. Thus, the gulf between Turkish and European views on the utility of force in international politics grew until 2003 (See Aybet and Müftüler-Baç 2000, 567–80; Kösebalaban 2002, 130–46; Oğuzlu 2002, 579–603). In contrast to the relations with European allies, the Gulf War experience turned Turkey into a frontline state in the new US strategy and culminated in the setting-up of the foundations of an ill-fated strategic partnership between the two countries.

Geography and regional considerations

Turkey's NATO membership owed a great deal to the country's geographical position. Thus, the end of the Cold War significantly discounted Turkey's geopolitical value for western security interests. After the Gulf War in 1991, European and US assessments of the strategic environment did not overlap in many respects. For instance, they differed on Turkey's geopolitical value in the emerging security architecture. For Washington, Turkey moved from being a flank member to a frontline member as it sat at a critical crossroads to the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus, all zones of instability and insecurity. In contrast, the Europeans tended to view Turkey's close proximity to all these regions not as an advantage but as a potential liability. Therefore, whereas Turkey's location continued to matter in US strategic calculations, it hardly mattered for the Europeans who tended to judge Turkey by what it was or by its adherence to democratic norms and human rights standards. At best, Turkey could serve as a buffer insulating the European island of peace, stability and prosperity from the Middle Eastern and Caucasian zones of ethnic conflict, instability and corruption. Although the situation in the Balkans was similar, it was considered Europe's backyard where Turkey's involvement was neither encouraged nor initially welcomed.

As for the impact of Turkey's geographical position on its approach to NATO and to the wider European security community, a number of cases may be offered to support the main argument of this paper. For instance, for much of the 1990s, the situation in Iraq had mixed impact on Turkey's NATO membership. The Turkish mood reflected the strong sense of abandonment caused by the fact that they were left on their own to deal with the power vacuum in Northern Iraq. In other words, due to the uncertainty of Iraq's future, Turkey had to endure the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK) - The Kurdistan Workers' Party challenge to its territorial integrity and mounting economic losses associated with its low intensity warfare against the organization. On the other hand, the same uncertainty provided Turkey with a relatively solid leverage against the risk of abandonment. Ankara agreed to host an allied air effort to enforce a UN resolution that instituted a no-fly zone above the 36th parallel in Iraq shortly after the Gulf War in 1991. Despite vocally

expressed Turkish suspicions regarding the true nature of the mission, US, British and French aircraft assigned to Operation Provide Comfort and subsequently to Northern Watch continued to operate out of Incirlik Air Force Base in Adana (incidentally located in the CFE zone of exclusion) until the US occupation of Iraq in 2003 (Eralp 2003, 115–6).

In the first half of the 1990s, Turkey also sought to put its geographic location into lucrative use as a transit country for connecting the oil and natural gas from the newly independent Central Asian republics to world markets. Ankara eventually received Washington's endorsement of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline project that finally materialized in 2005. Interestingly, Turkey's NATO membership was played up to gain advantage in an economic competition. In 1998, Foreign Minister İsmail Cem argued that Turkey's edge as a transit country lied in its NATO membership whose security assurances would naturally cover the BTC pipeline, despite the obvious advantages of a route through Iran (Güvenç 1998, 165).

In the 1990s, the Balkans offered a validation ground for NATO's transformation and continued relevance as the single most important provider of security in the western world. During the Yugoslav conflict, NATO was called upon to serve an instrument of collective security first in missions to enforce a UN-sanctioned naval blockade in the Adriatic and a no-fly zone over Yugoslavia. When these efforts proved futile to stop the Serbian offensive that caused intolerable levels of human casualties in Sarajevo, NATO launched a sustained air bombing campaign (the Operation Deliberate Force) against the Bosnian-Serb targets in 1995 (see Ripley 1999). For the first time in its history, NATO was committed to combat. This operation also marked a shift in NATO's function from a rather static deterrent posture (a dictate of collective defence in mutually assured destruction environment) to an active offensive posture (a requirement in performing collective security missions). Therefore, NATO crossed the threshold of armed conflict. In the initial phase NATO involved in the Yugoslav conflict; Turkey's geographic location was not much of a consideration. However, in the second phase when NATO launched a larger air bombing campaign (the Operation Allied Force) against Yugoslavia during the Kosovo War in 1999, allies relied on air bases in Turkey as part of their plans to intensify the air effort. Hungary, a newcomer to NATO, also agreed to make its bases available to NATO aircraft. While Hungary offered direct access to Yugoslav air space, Turkish bases could be useful for NATO's interoperability requirements. By the time air bases in Balikesir, Bandirma, Çorlu and İncirlik began to receive NATO aircraft to open a second front though, the Yugoslav government relented (Larson et. al. 2003, 103–4). This last phase in NATO's combat operations in the Balkans in a sense validated Turkey's geographical value for the Alliance.

In two instances in the first decade of the 2000s, however, Turkey's fear of entrapment and abandonment was heightened. After 9/11, Washington, or the neocons – to be precise – saw a window of opportunity to bring to closure the unfinished business of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Their military planners assumed the availability of Turkey and its military bases to open a northern front for the planned round two in Iraq. Some key neocon figures like Richard Perle were personally involved in the negotiations for the renewal of the bases agreement with Turkey with the Middle East contingencies in mind (Perle 1999). In the first Iraqi War, the Turkish government permitted the USA to deploy and operate combat aircraft from the İncirlik base. So, given that precedent Washington expected Ankara to repeat its 1991 performance.

Ankara seriously questioned the wisdom of the American war against Iraq. Yet, Washington's pressure was relentless. Whereas the US pressure presented a serious risk of entrapment (not necessarily anathema to everyone in the Turkish security establishment), the growing rift between the two sides of the Atlantic over the war unearthed the fear of abandonment. In fact a number of European allies opposed the deployment of NATO's air defence and Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) protection assets to Turkey before the US operations. Defying all expectations, on 1 March 2003, the Turkish Parliament denied the US access to Turkish territory to open a Northern front in the Iraqi War. This was a turning point in the US–Turkey relations and shattered Ankara's image as a staunch Atlanticist in NATO (see Bölükbaşı 2008). The requested NATO assets were eventually deployed and remained in Turkey until the termination of US combat operations in Iraq. The eight-year US occupation of Iraq posed a huge security problem for Ankara. The American military presence in Turkey's southern neighbour fundamentally altered regional balances of power. The US occupation also put an end to Turkish unilateral military activism in Iraq. A combination of these factors prompted Turkey to employ non-military means and soft power strategies in the region to pursue its interests. As such Turkey, particularly a Europeanized Turkey seemed to provide an attractive alternative for Middle Eastern countries. Turkey's bid for EU membership thus began to appeal to countries like Iran and Syria, the perennial rogue states from the US foreign policy perspective.

During the Russian–Georgian War in 2008, Ankara refused to allow the passage through the Turkish Straits of NATO warships into the Black Sea. The ships' presence there would have meant a violation of the tonnage and duration requirements of the Montreux Convention and could complicate Ankara's relations with Moscow. In that case, guided by the fear of entrapment Ankara did not want to be dragged into a direct conflict with Russia. Turkey was already busy dealing with the destabilizing consequences of extra regional powers' involvement in Iraq. It could not afford to see another one unfolding in the north. The highly developed bilateral trade and economic links, and Turkey's dependence on Russia for energy account for Turkey's restraint in not allowing NATO or some of its eager members to fan the flames of conflict in the Caucasus (Çelikpala 2010, 296–7). On this occasion, Turkey did not stand alone in NATO. Members like Germany and France were no less determined than Turkey in keeping NATO away from another zone of hot conflict.

The transatlantic dynamics

From the onset of its NATO membership, Turkey was considered to belong in the Atlanticist camp in the alliance. This was pretty much the case for the period under study. However, the relative weight of the European or the EU dimension grew in time in defining Turkey's position in transatlantic relations. Thus, Turkey's relations with NATO (and the USA) turned into a triangular relationship after the end of the Cold War. The ebbs and flows in Turkey's EU membership prospects generally had an immediate impact on Turkey's approach to NATO and the USA as well. There are a number of instances that punctuate the oscillations in Turkey's strategic choices between Washington and Brussels within the western security community. The rejection of Turkey's EC bid right at the end of the Cold War in 1989 gave an Atlanticist momentum to Turkish foreign policy. The Gulf War strengthened this

momentum immensely. In the 1990s, Ankara attempted to refine the US–Turkey relations around a new concept, 'strategic partnership'. Washington proved reluctant to qualify its relations with Turkey along these lines until the late 1990s. The choice of the USA as a strategic partner reflected a Turkish desire to escape from the fear of abandonment by its European allies. Ironically, the US reserved strategic partnership status for countries like Romania or Ukraine in order to make up for their non-membership in NATO. In the case of Turkey, a long time NATO member, the strategic partnership with the USA was meant to substitute for the absence of a credible EU promise (Aydın 2009, 99–101).

In fact, the EU reiterated its 1989 decision in even stronger terms in 1997. At the Luxemburg summit at the end of that year, it denied Turkey candidate status and thereby excluded it from the process of enlargement. This turn of events consolidated Washington's position as the centre of gravity in Turkey's western links. However, for Washington, only a successfully transformed Turkey could play a constructive role in the transatlantic community. Therefore, the EU membership promise was the only way to help Turkey transform itself. The EU decision two years later to grant candidacy to Turkey in 1999 represented in part a reward for Washington's lobbying in the EU capitals on behalf of Ankara. Although the Helsinki EU summit was optimistically interpreted to be the beginning of Turkey's normalization, the US support for Turkey's EU bid reinforced its image as a potential Trojan horse for Washington in the EU. Reluctance on the part of some core members of the EU to admit Turkey into the Union was explained with this counter-productive aspect of Washington's support for Turkey.

After 9/11, Turkey's position within the transatlantic community came to another crossroads. Turkey's NATO membership and its Muslim-majority population turned it into a sought after member in the coalitions of the willing. However, Ankara saw little if any strategic benefit in joining such US-led coalitions in the aftermath of 9/11. It agreed to deploy a modest number of troops to Afghanistan and only in the context of its NATO commitments. The Turkish troops have not been committed to combat there. The US plans to occupy Iraq set in motion the unravelling of the so-called US–Turkey strategic partnership just when the term was finally incorporated into the official vernacular of Washington. In a short span of time, Turkey went through cycles of confidence crises with its allies on both sides of the Atlantic.

On the eve of the Iraq war, NATO's Secretary General requested the deployment of AWACS aircraft, Patriot missile batteries and equipment to Turkey as a precaution against possible Iraqi aggression or a retaliation attempt. His request, however, failed to clear NATO's 'broke silence' procedure as France, Germany and Belgium spoke against it before the deadline (Castle 2003). The resulting rupture in NATO was a tell-tale sign of what was in store for the Europeans, old and new. The US unilateralism not only caused a major rift within the alliance, but it also revived the Turkish fears of abandonment by NATO, again in the context of another Iraqi War. Turkey was caught right in the eye of the Atlanticist–European divide.

NATO's contribution to Turkey's security could no longer be taken for granted. This was a lesson already learnt before the first Gulf War in 1991 and confirmed yet again on the eve of the Iraq War of 2003. There is no doubt that this particular episode eroded whatever credibility NATO had left in Turkey. Even the most ardent supporters of Turkey's western links expressed disappointment with NATO's indifference to Ankara's security needs. For instance, veteran foreign policy commentator İdiz (2003) argued that this indifference underscored NATO's shift

from 'collective' to 'selective' defence. Such a consequence would inevitably compel Turkey to reconsider its strategic choices and alliance commitments. Such line of thinking implied that Ankara was more likely to throw its lot with Washington than Brussels. The US administration had every reason to believe that this would be the case. An airtight arrangement was made with Ankara to secure access to Iraq through Turkish territory (see Bila 2003 and Bölükbaşı 2008).

However, on 1 March 2003, the newly elected Turkish Parliament voted down the bill for deployment of US troops in Turkey. As far as the relations with the EU were concerned, the vote shattered Turkey's image as a potential Trojan horse of Washington in the EU. In fact, Turkish behaviour stood in stark contrast to the pro-US stand of the 'New Europeans' who lined up for membership in both the EU and NATO on the eve of the US occupation of Iraq. The possibility of a war caused a rift in the western alliance. Interestingly, Turkey ended up on the same side with the 'Old Europeans' not by design but by contingency. If or to what extent Ankara's turn to Brussels from Washington was appreciated by the old Europeans such as Germany and France is open to question. What followed was renewed enthusiasm or appetite for political and economic reforms to meet the Copenhagen Criteria in Turkey under the AKP government (McDonald 2011, 530–4; Özbudun and Yazıcı 2004).

The reform process would also weaken the political role of the military whose relation with the Pentagon was severely damaged as a result of the 1 March vote. Three months later, the US–Turkey military relations received yet another blow. The Turkish special forces compound in Suleymanieh was stormed by US troops who arrested and hooded the Turkish troops on 4 July 2003. This incident literally added insult to the injury already sustained by the Turkish General Staff. 'The hood incident' was (and is still) construed by the Turkish military and the public as a deliberate act committed to humiliate Turkey and its military. The hood incident continues to cast its long shadow over the US–Turkey military relations (Özel, Yılmaz, and Akyüz 2009, 38). Its psychological impact on Turkish thinking may be compared to that of the Johnson Letter of 1964.[2] This crisis of confidence unleashed a wave of anti-American statements from the Turkish military.

The EU momentum culminated in a dramatic change of Turkish policy in Cyprus as well under the AKP. When the UN plan to reunite the island was approved by the Turkish–Cypriots and voted down by their Greek counterpart, Turkey cleared one major hurdle on its way to opening accession negations. The reform process and Ankara's accommodation in Cyprus paid off in terms of the EU's decision to open accession negotiations in 2005. The promise of negotiations was as short lived as the promise of candidacy back in 1999. Despite their rejection of the Annan Plan, the Greek Cypriots were admitted to the EU as a full member in April 2004. Their membership complicated both the settlement of the Cyprus problem and Turkey's EU prospects. Moreover, elections in Germany and France brought to power new political leaders whose vision for the EU had no place for Turkey. Therefore, negotiations ran out of steam nearly as soon as they were launched. Loss of the EU anchor in a way emancipated the AKP from an external constraint on its ability to pursue an independent foreign policy of zero problems with neighbours. Even a semi- or half-transformed Turkey became a centre of political, economic and diplomatic attraction for its neighbourhood. Its refusal to take part in the Iraqi coalition of the willing already changed its posture from a US proxy to an independent middle power in the Middle East. A third factor that had

expanded latitude for regional activism in Turkish foreign policy was the enduring rift in the transatlantic community. Until and unless NATO allies found a way to iron out their differences, Ankara would not be pressed to make hard choices in the Alliance and would be able to decouple from both European and US positions in regions of interest to it.

In discussing Turkey's position in the transatlantic divide, one issue looms large; that is the European attempts to develop an independent security identity and capability since the end of the Cold War. Ironically, before Turkey was declared a candidate 'destined to join the European Union' in December 1999, it was successfully accommodated into the Western European Union, a stepping stone towards the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Yet, the ESDP was designed for full members only. The exclusive nature of the new European defence initiative that had to rely on NATO's existing capabilities met with Turkey's resistance. Moreover, Turkish–Greek, Turkish–Cypriot and finally Turkish–French differences have stood in the way of NATO–EU cooperation (Valasek 2007).

A senior NATO official draws attention to what he considers a unique feature of the organization. For him, 'NATO is the international institution par excellence for developing networks of trust between individuals from different countries and from different agencies. It is precisely on this basis of trust that information and intelligence is most readily shared' (Donnelly 2004, 89). The Turkish experience in the first decade of the new millennium, however, suggests otherwise, in terms of NATO's contribution to the development of networks of trust. Particularly, after the EU launched the ESDP, Turkish behaviour was driven by distrust in NATO allies. For instance, Turkish representatives in NATO Headquarters in Brussels viewed secret British–German talks on NATO–EU cooperation with a wary eye. All these unauthorized contacts confirmed the worst Turkish fears that they might be left out of the new security architecture in Europe (Saygın 2012, 231–3). This time the risk of isolation was aggravated or complemented by the fear of entrapment. Denied the means of even participating in ESDP decision-making, Ankara was concerned that the EU's military involvement in the neighbouring zones of instability could propel Turkey into hot conflicts against its will.

NATO's military relevance to Turkey was outweighed by its political relevance as the country's strongest remaining bond with the Western security community. In much of the 1990s, Ankara supported a stronger NATO to make up for the EU's reluctance to admit Turkey into the newly emerging political and security architecture in Europe. Hence, during the first decade of the ESDP, Ankara displayed all the symptoms of the 'lone wolf syndrome' in NATO (See Saygın 2012, 234). Turkey's obstruction of NATO–ESDP cooperation in a way improved its nuisance value within the Alliance. This nuisance value could be occasionally translated into gains. The best-known example is the institution of an additional deputy secretary general post to be filled by a Turkish diplomat in exchange for Turkey's grudging assent to Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen's appointment as NATO's Secretary General. In short, its assertiveness and stubbornness in NATO enhanced Turkey's bargaining position within the alliance significantly.

Finally, the Turkish–Greek rivalry should be mentioned in this context. By the mid-1990s, Turkey and Greece came to the brink of war in the Aegean several times. Obviously their NATO membership did not automatically extend the boundaries of the 'pluralistic security community' of Western Europe to the eastern Mediterranean (See Krebs 1999, 343–77). According to Moustakis (2003, 94–128),

a 'hybrid region' developed instead due to late and/or incomplete democratization of Greece and Turkey. The two countries were long locked in a 'security dilemma' that perpetuated a 'zero-sum' mentality on both sides of the Aegean. In the 1990s, both were busy with new challenges surrounding their common pursuit of Europeanization. A member of the EU since 1981, Greece was of course well ahead of Turkey and aimed to be a core member of the enlarged Union through participation in the Eurozone, whereas Turkey had a much more modest aim to secure EU candidacy status.

Ankara and Athens had been at odds over a long list of issues including continental shelf, territorial waters, Greek airspace and FIR responsibilities. Their disagreements also found their way into NATO in the form of questions regarding the demilitarized status of Greek islands, and the distribution of NATO command and control responsibilities in the Aegean after Greece's return to the integrated military command. For instance, NATO's first post-Cold War military restructuring could not be implemented as a result of a lack of consensus on the activation on the planned command in Larissa (Faith 1999, 276). The mood of rivalry was so great that Athens never gave overflight permissions to Turkish aircraft en route to the bases in Italy when they were deployed for NATO missions over Yugoslavia.

In the 1990s, the disputes related to the airspace and FIR control over the Aegean continuously pitted the Turkish and Greek fighter aircraft against each other almost on a daily basis. The dogfights over the Aegean constituted the most flammable aspect of the Turkish–Greek rivalry. Both sides lost a number of aircraft in such dogfights due to accidents or accidental shooting incidents. By sheer luck or prudence, those incidents did not spark a major armed confrontation, but their contending claims of sovereignty over two rocks in the Aegean nearly did in 1995/1996. The Kardak/Imia crisis was prevented from turning into a full-scale war between the two allies by a last minute US intervention. Although the crisis involved an EU member and an EU aspirant, the EU's performance in diffusing the tension was dismal at best. Indeed, Greece's membership made the EU less than an ideal framework to help Athens and Ankara work out their problems. NATO was the only institutional setting where the two allies could discuss and implement confidence building measures. In 1997, the Turkish and Greek foreign ministers came together in the margins of the NATO meeting in Madrid to discuss the CBMs in and over the Aegean. This initiative would lead to concrete measures in reducing tensions in the Aegean. The process of rapprochement was also greatly aided by the humanitarian link that was formed between the two societies in the wake of the earthquakes that hit both countries within weeks of one another. Turkey's EU candidacy and Greece's admission to the Eurozone for a while seemed to harness the rapprochement onto a sustainable track of Europeanization.

The process eventually led to the introduction of a number of practical measures. For example, since 2002 Ankara submits daily flight plans of all Turkish military aircraft to NATO Headquarters in Brussels which in turn distributes this information to all other members, including Greece (*Radikal* 7 February 2002). Greece had been requesting such plans from Turkey in the context of its FIR responsibilities and Ankara had been refusing them on the grounds that such submission might be construed as recognition of Greek claims of sovereignty. This arrangement indeed represents a practical solution without prejudice to their respective legal claims.

The legacy of NATO's involvement in Turkish–Greek disputes looms large in Turkish thinking. Turkish officers do not trust their counterparts from other member states. Their published memoirs include accounts that are presented as evidence of the others' readiness to present Turkey with faits accomplis or even to conspire against Turkey in the alliance. NATO's command structure had long been a bone of contention between Turkey and Greece since the latter's return to the integrated military command. The Turkish side argues that Ankara dropped its opposition to Greece's return on General Rodger's pledge that NATO command responsibilities in the Aegean would be re-arranged. General Rodgers' subsequent failure to deliver on his pledge further undermined NATO's reliability in the eyes of the Turkish military. When in the late 1990s, NATO decided to restructure NATO command, the Turkish representatives did not give their approval to the proposed changes until they were given written assurances by the then Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Wesley Clark (Saygın 2012, 240).

Restructuring and transformation

The quick succession of events after the end of the Cold War convinced Turkish decision-makers on the futility of relying solely on NATO for security. First, the dramatic change in the security environment dictated a shift of geographic focus on regional threats and sources of instability around Turkey. Second, the nature of threats was changing and evolving. Unlike other NATO allies, particularly in Europe that began to reap the benefits of a peace dividend as a result of the disappearance of the Soviet threat, Ankara devoted larger portions of its budget to defence and security. In other words, Turkey experienced and assessed the end of the Cold War rather differently than most of its NATO allies. As a multiregional power, Turkey was sitting at the crossroads to the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East, all identified with conflict, instability and insecurity. Terrorism, ethnic conflicts and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction found their way into Turkey's post-Cold War security agenda. The contours of its post-Cold War strategy featured a striking resemblance to NATO's new strategic concept adopted in Rome in 1991 (NATO 1991). The new Turkish military strategy emphasized four objectives: deterrence, forward defence, military contribution to crisis management and intervention in crises and collective defence/security (Karaosmanoğlu and Kibaroğlu 2002, 140).

In the 1990s, the economic transformation that Turkey embarked upon in the 1980s was beginning to bear fruit. It became possible to allocate sizeable funds for defence and security in the national budget. While Turkey emerged as a buyer in the world arms markets, its dependence on foreign military assistance gradually decreased. Finally, major military modernization programmes originating from the mid-1980s enabled Turkey to close the generational gap in weapons systems with its NATO allies. The Air Force and the Navy were the main beneficiaries of modernization. The result was nearly in the magnitude of a quantum leap in overseas deployment and operational capabilities. In other words, Turkey was nearly self-sufficient in tackling a wide spectrum of conventional threats. However, in some areas such as countering the ballistic missile threat it continued to rely on the allies' help. In the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, the defence establishment contemplated the purchase of several batteries of Patriot missiles with funds that were made available by the Gulf countries in return for Turkey's support in the allied campaign.

However, the Air Force decided to use about one billion US dollars in the fund to buy a new batch of F-16 fighter aircraft to boost its offensive capabilities. The choice of offensive over defensive capabilities naturally gave away another aspect of Turkey's strategic priorities (Egeli and Güvenç 2012, 22).

Improvement in military capabilities hence contributed to Turkey's autonomy from its allies. On the other hand, the methods Turkey used in dealing with the PKK insurgency and the militarization of its foreign policy were criticized by its western allies. Some of these imposed overt or covert arms embargos on Ankara in the 1990s. In this context, the years of military cooperation with Israel should also be counted among the contributing factors to Turkish military autonomy. Alignment with Israel had offered an array of military, political and strategic advantages to Turkey. Israel figured as a convenient alternative to Turkey's more traditional and human rights-sensitive suppliers of arms. Second, the improved relations with Israel secured the support of the strongest ethnic lobby in Washington. This lobby could be counted on in neutralizing certain forces in American domestic politics (such as the Greek and Armenian lobbies) that wanted to block the ability of US administrations to develop relations with Turkey at a strategic level. Finally, the military cooperation with Israel, dubbed the Phantom Alliance, provided a remedy to Turkey's regional security concerns. At the time, the nightmare scenario was a two-front war with Greece and Syria and the PKK insurgency at home simultaneously. Overall, the alignment with Israel became one of the main pillars of Turkish strategic adjustment to its sadly diminished status in the western security community (Bengio 2004, 80–101). Despite that, this alignment did not represent a move away from the West in Turkish foreign and security policy. To the contrary, it was meant to solidify those links through an alternative actor located in the margins of the Western security community.

While the European allies and to a lesser extent the US questioned if Turkey was becoming more of a liability than an asset for NATO, Ankara strove to build a new niche for itself as a security provider rather than a security consumer in the alliance. Ankara committed a mechanized division to NATO's Reaction Force under the new NATO force structure. It should be noted that the Turkish Army had switched to brigade-based structure from regiment division based one soon after the Iraq War for improved mobility and streamlined command and control. An exception was made in the force restructuring and one mechanized infantry division was preserved in order to provide a link with NATO whose members essentially maintain division-based armies.[3] Turkish concern for equality in the Alliance also underpinned the decision to retain the ability to field a division as any other member in case of a major NATO operation (Okçu 1995, 43).

Again driven by the fear of isolation as a result of the ESDP–NATO debacle, Ankara took great strides in increasing the costs of its marginalization within the alliance. If becoming a nuisance offered one way of enhancing Turkey's hand in NATO, the other, and more conventional, method is to increase the country's contributions to NATO's budget. In terms of the number of troops committed to NATO, Turkey was (and is) second only to the USA. Yet, it also discovered that troop contributions or commitments did not necessarily translate into a greater say in NATO decision and policy-making processes. However, even a marginal increase in Turkey's annual contributions to the budget would yield a higher return than a substantial increase in troop commitments. In 2012, Turkey ranked among the top 10 contributors to the NATO budget (eighth). Its contribution accounts for 3.68% of

the total NATO budget (*Zaman*, 2 February 2012). Leaving aside the US contributions that account for 75% of the NATO budget, Turkey alone indeed provides about 15% of the balance.

Despite a qualitative decline in NATO's perceived contribution to Turkey's defence and security, Ankara paid utmost attention to maintaining its NATO links up to date and functional. For instance, it welcomed the Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiative which provided an institutional framework in establishing links with the former communist bloc. Of particular interest to Ankara were the newly independent states in Central Asia where the PfP was expected to help Turkey militarily reach out to its long lost kin states. The countries around the Black Sea were another priority. Ankara's desire to establish a ring of friendly countries around Turkey could be accomplished without directly dealing with Russia. In the same frame of mind, Turkish military and political leaders publicly expressed support for the idea of enlarging NATO eastward (see Karadayı 1995, 12). Turkish enthusiasm for the PfP was so great that Ankara volunteered to host a NATO PfP training centre in Ankara. It was the first of many similar steps taken in the direction of raising the stakes if NATO ever entertained the abandonment of Turkey.

Similarly, as a result of NATO's emphasis on rapid deployment and rapid response, the value of troop contributions began to be measured by their deployability rather than by sheer numbers. It was one of the main objectives of NATO's transformation. In the future, the member states with transformed and deployable military organizations would weigh more heavily in NATO's decisions. NATO's requirement for three high readiness force (HRF) corps and two forces for lower readiness (FLR) corps was a case in point. Seeking such an enhanced status within the Alliance, Turkey bid to host a lower readiness (FLR) and one HRF corps headquarters of NATO under the new military structure. Ankara nominated the IV Corps in Ankara and the III Corps in Istanbul, respectively (Mönch 2000, 95). The competition to host such forces was fierce among members who were attempting to reposition themselves in the Alliance as well. Turkey's nomination of its III Corps to host one of the three HRF headquarters was endorsed by the USA in April 2002 (Yetkin 2002). Hence, the US endorsement added impetus to the transformation of this national command to NATO's HRF requirements. It went through its initial operational capability evaluation in May 2012. Subsequently, a British division, a Spanish division, a Greek division, the Turkish 52nd Armoured Division and the Southeastern Europe Brigade were assigned to its command. The III Corps was granted NATO HRF status by the Military Committee in 2003 and began to report directly to the SACEUR (Saygın 2012, 49–51). In terms of developing deployable military assets, this investment paid off. However, Turkey probably spent several hundred million dollars for the transformation of the III Corps. It was a great sacrifice to make when the country was struggling to recover from a home-grown financial meltdown since the winter of 2000–2001 (Saygın 2012, 49–51).

Domestic transformation in Turkey

In the 1990s, the militarization of Turkish foreign policy progressed in tandem with the securitization of domestic politics. Boundaries of political debate were limited in the name of security at home, while the military-dominated National Security Council ascended as the principal decision-making body in the country. These processes set Turkey politically apart from the rest of Europe. At one point, Turkey

was even referred to as a potential rogue state within NATO in some studies (Sandler and Hartley 1999, 183). The evident unilateralist momentum of Turkish military activism reduced the value of its contribution to Western security in the eyes of some NATO member states.

Ankara was frustrated over the EU's foot-dragging in opening accession negotiations with Turkey. In this frame of mind, the Secretary General of the National Security Council General Tuncer Kılınç spelled out what might be termed the Eurasian option that was gaining ground among some civilian and military establishment figures. Kılınç suggested that, since Turkey was not wanted in the EU, it should turn towards its old enemies Russia and Iran instead, without turning its back on the USA. This was a bold proposal and taken seriously as a manifestation of the anti-EU stand of the Turkish military and the National Security Council (*The Economist*, 14 March 2002). A succession of events including the landslide victory of a party with Islamist roots, the AKP, in the 2002 elections contributed to the popularity of the Eurasian option among Turkish officers. This line of thinking even advocated eventual withdrawal from NATO (Özel, Yilmaz and Akyüz 2009, 31).

The irony in all of this was that those that were turning their back on the West were actually inside the most pro-western security establishment. They did so once, they came to the conclusion that NATO's and Turkey's interests were ultimately incompatible in the post-Cold War era. This position had implications for domestic politics as well in that giving up on the EU and turning to Russia and Iran would also do away with the necessity of democratizing Turkey since that undermines the immense political powers of the military establishment.

The freshness and the subsequent education of AKP

The AKP came to power in 2002 with an overwhelming Parliamentary majority due to the peculiarities of the Turkish electoral system. From its first day in power, the Party had to deal with three enormous files: Cyprus, EU candidacy and the pending American war in Iraq. Having come from the margins of the Turkish political system the AKP needed founts of legitimacy other than its insufficient electoral base. The militant pursuit of the EU project was the most effective way of building such legitimacy in a country where the public was overwhelmingly in favour of membership and sought a much more liberal and democratic political system. This course incidentally would help the Party to reorganize the political and administrative structures of Turkey in a way that would weaken the grip its detractors, notably the military and its close associate – the judiciary, had on Turkey's politics.

In its struggle to demilitarize Turkey's politics the AKP government was aided by a number of factors. First, it worked with a chief of the General Staff, General Hilmi Özkök, who was arguably the most democratically inclined military official to ever reach that position. Over the course of his term, as subsequent developments and most notably the trial of many retired and serving officials showed, General Özkök was instrumental in stopping coup attempts on their track. The second factor that immensely helped the AKP government in its quest to demilitarize the polity and consolidate its power was the rejection by the Turkish National Assembly of the government decree to allow the deployment of American troops on Turkish territory to open a northern front against Iraq. The Pentagon held the Turkish military responsible for this debacle and withdrew its critically important support from the Turkish military and hence weakened the latter's political position. The administration also

believed that it had a willing partner in the AKP. In fact in the wake of the Parliament's rejection that won immediate prestige both from a domestic public dead set against the Iraq war and the resentful publics of the region's countries, the AKP went out of its way to cooperate with the USA as we noted earlier.

The next few years were pretty challenging for the AKP in terms of fending off attempts by the military-judiciary alliance to block its growing power. In addition to coup attempts and conspiracies, the Party also faced a closure case. Yet, given the brilliant performance of the economy, the inclination of a content public to see the end of military tutelage and the lack of any support for military meddling in politics by the Allies, all such attempts floundered. Indeed the AKP went from strength to strength, increased its electoral support in all subsequent Parliamentary elections and established a monopoly of power over the political and administrative power structure of the country. It is important to note here that the court cases that were brought against retired and serving military personnel (the famous/infamous Ergenegon and Sledgehammer cases in particular) had, in addition to breaking the military's prestige and ability to continue in its tutelary role in Turkish politics, another effect. The cases became a conduit to restructure the Turkish military for a third time in the last 100 years, consolidated the power of the Atlanticist officers and finished off the Eurasianist line in the army.

Although the AKP pursued the EU process with great enthusiasm for a while, and so long as it served its primary interest in domestic power consolidation and paid attention not to stray too far from the USA, its foreign policy had priorities that reflected the Party's vision of Turkey's identity. In the words of Davutoğlu, Turkey did not have priorities in its foreign policy but the EU and NATO were its parameters. Both as a function of its reluctance to give the military any reason to be in a leading position and its own aversion to rely on force in foreign policy, the AKP governments pursued a strategy of extending Turkey's influence through its soft power. To that end. Turkey risked to run afoul of its allies at times in particular in its policies towards Iran and Syria and in the wake of its brutal war in Gaza, towards Israel.

Having picked Syria as the centrepiece of its engagement policy in the Middle East, the AKP governments improved relations with Damascus both politically and economically. At critical junctures like the murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, they gave cover and protection to the Baath regime and refused to disengage. Although this policy as well as Turkey's policies in Iraq that stressed Ankara's ability to keep equidistant to all parties and engage with them all as an honest broker, were also meant to balance and at times undermine Iranian influence in these countries Turkey had increased its engagement with Iran considerably as well. Not only did the relations improve economically, Turkey assigned to itself the role of a broker in the Iranian nuclear programme standoff. Very often the actions and rhetoric emanating from Ankara made it look as an ally of the Islamic republic and when combined with deteriorating relations of the West with Iran this led to the publication of too many nonsensical commentaries and analyses on a presumed 'shift of axis' away from the West.

While it can be ascertained that Turkey used the period from the American invasion of Iraq till mid-2010 to pursue an autonomous foreign policy and did not feel compelled to toe the line of its allies in NATO in all matters for fear of entrapment, as we showed earlier in this article it also made sure to render itself indispensable for the Alliance. This dual game of being both inside and outside the security policy framework of the Alliance, most notably on the issue of Iran came to a head

in May and June of 2010. The Arab Awakening that on the one hand increased Turkey's political importance for the West as a model or example, also drastically changed and rendered unpredictable the geostrategic realities of the region (see Özel and Güvenç 2012, 10–18). This was further compounded by the American withdrawal from Iraq that opened the field to Iranian intervention as well as Russian assertiveness most vividly in Syria.

Ankara's agreement to the new strategic concept at Lisbon in November 2010 was a function of these changing circumstances. Indeed that decision had set in train a reassessment that inevitably placed NATO at the top of Turkey's security agenda. In Lisbon, the Turkish government was indeed compelled to make a choice between two diametrically opposed alternatives: NATO and Iran. While the former choice would mean voluntary acceptance of loss of *autonomy* in Turkey's foreign policy with an attendant increase in the risk of *entrapment*, the latter would probably result in *abandonment* by NATO. There were strong indicators that Ankara's choice could not be taken for granted. Its foreign policy activism and assertiveness set off a debate on whether Turkey was shifting its axis away from the West. Particularly, its stand and policy priorities had been dramatically at odds with those of the USA and the EU over Iran's nuclear programme that the new Turkish political elite had carefully refrained from framing it as a threat to Turkey publicly.

In particular, the nuclear fuel swap deal that Turkey and Brazil brokered with Iran in May 2010 did not go down well with Washington. Ankara and Washington ended up in opposing camps when the United Nations Security Council voted a new round of sanctions on Iran. Despite President Obama's personal appeal to Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, Ankara did not abstain but voted against the US-sponsored resolution. Reportedly President Obama made his disappointment known to Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu when they met in Toronto in June 2010 (Ignatius 2012). Ankara then gave its approval to NATO's development and deployment of a ballistic missile shield against the threat from 'the Gulf'. Eclipsed by the shift of axis debate, the significance of the Turkish decision to approve NATO's new strategic concept could not be fully appreciated at the time. Then the Turkish government went a step further and declared that it would host an X-Band radar site in southeastern Turkey which offers a sufficient margin of early warning advantage over previously considered sites in Eastern Europe. This decision was made public on the same day when Ankara downgraded its diplomatic relations with Israel in reaction to the findings of the UN report on the Flotilla incident.[4] Such careful timing suggests that Ankara was not interested in a revival of the shift of axis debate in the West. In essence, Turkey's decision to host the radar site demonstrated that Ankara is aware of the revival of its 'real estate value' for NATO and is fully intent in using it for its own security (Egeli and Güvenç 2012, 19–30). At the same time, the AKP government finally and fully recognized that Turkey's security needs called for more than just national resources. NATO connection's usefulness could no longer be denied. Turkey enjoys a greater stay in NATO today due to the strategic choice it made in November 2010 at Lisbon and reaffirmed in May 2011 by hosting an X-band radar as part of NATO's ballistic missile defence.

Conclusion

From 2007 to 2010, Turkey under the AKP sought to carve out the role of an order setter for itself at regional and even global levels. After 2011, the AKP seems

content with an agenda-setting role in the NATO alliance. It could shape decisions as regard to who was going to be invited to the Chicago Summit. While Israel was left out, Pakistan was invited at Turkey's request. Also Ankara claims to have given a shape to the final communique's wording in a way that made Armenia uncomfortable as regards to borders and territories. Earlier, Turkey reportedly played an instrumental role in the new Strategic Concept's emphasis on civilian capabilities. France viewed this as a direct challenge to the emerging niche of the CSDP but could not block its inclusion.

After two decades of deepening ambivalence towards the Atlantic Alliance and its strategic orientation Turkey therefore made its final choice for the relevant future to stay in the Western security community. From here on, the challenge for the country would be to tame the ambitions of the ruling AKP to act unilaterally on matters that are dear to its regional vision. The Syrian debacle and Turkey's insufficiency to deal either by itself or with regional partners with this enormously destabilizing situation undoubtedly raised the importance of NATO in Ankara's security calculations. Under existing circumstances, there is no reason to expect the current trends and tendencies to change unless NATO itself, unable to fully define its purpose, goes out of business.

Notes

1. 'Bakın biz burada bir aileyiz. Biz bu ailenin en eski üyelerindeniz. Siz burada yokken biz vardık.' It should be noted that a few days earlier, the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan addressed the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. His long and controversial address did not feature a similar claim of ownership although Turkey had a longer history of membership in that organization. See İdiz (2011).
2. A retired high-ranking Turkish army officer who prefers to remain anonymous argued that the US troops not only broke the protocol for conduct among allied troops in Suleymanieh but they also deliberately violated unwritten rules of behaviour among the world's special forces. He explained that special forces of all countries consider each other peers who deserve to be treated with due respect even in captivity (Interview with a retired High Ranking Turkish Officer, 7 January 2009).
3. The same exception was made for the two full-strength infantry divisions stationed in Cyprus since 1974.
4. On 31 May 2010, Israeli commandos raided a Turkish aid ship, Mavi Marmara, that was leading a flotilla, taking material to the Gaza strip with the intent to break the Israeli blockade there. Israel Defense Forces attacked the ship in international waters early in the morning and when faced with unarmed resistance ended up killing eight Turkish citizens and one Turkish-American. The matter was taken to the United Nations and a panel headed by Sir Geoffrey Palmer found the Israeli restrictions legal but its military actions disproportionate and aggressive.

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