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Volume 2 | Issue 4  
Autumn – 2015

## Volume 2 - Issue 4

### Regional security in the Middle East

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**HU ISSN 2064 4051**



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# *NATO's Security Policy: The case of Syria*

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Rita Marques Ferreira

**Abstract:** This paper intends to analyze NATO's security policy, based on the case of the Syrian conflict, started in 2011. Through an historical and critical approach, we will try to understand the Washington Treaty Organization intervention in this specific war, considering the purposes of its creation, back in 1949, the development of its foundational goals in an attempt to adapt to the change of world dynamics and the development of the Syrian conflict from a civil war into a proxy war. We will also try to comprehend if there is a legitimacy or legality in NATO's action or inaction in the much complex Syrian crisis, considering previous missions of the transatlantic organization, namely its involvement in Kosovo and Libya.

**Keywords:** NATO, Syria's civil war, Islamic State, legitimacy, legality

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## **NATO: A brief introduction**

In September 1945<sup>1</sup>, the II World War (1939–1945) came to an end, leaving behind a Europe economically and military devastated. Considered the bloodiest conflict in the history of mankind (Royde-Smith, n.d.), the war ended with the death of almost 50 million people, of which 39 million in Europe, followed by the rising of refugees camps, infant mortality, orphans, homeless and the rationing of basic commodities (nato.int, n.d.). On the other hand, towards the multidimensional crisis, new communist parties began to gain more supporters in

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<sup>1</sup> The official end of the II World War (1939–1945) was established with the surrender of Japan, in August 1945 and the signed of Japanese Instrument of Surrender in September of the same year.

France and Italy, at the same time that Soviet Union, taking advantage of the power vacuum in central and east Europe, started to dominate military these states, expanding its communist influence throughout the orient (Haglund, n.d.). The Old Continent was soon ideologically fragmented. In the words of Winston Churchill,

“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain [had] descended across the continent.”

Churchill speech on 5 March 1946<sup>2</sup>

Two years after the end of the war, Eastern Europe was consumed by the communist influence. In 1947, Greece was one of the few exceptions, thanks to the military and economic help provided by the United Kingdom to the Greek Government in its fight against the communism in the country (BBC Bitesize, n.d.). However, when the British Government announced that it would stop supporting the Greek Government, United States decided to reorient its foreign policy. In an historic speech, on 12 March 1947, President Harry S. Truman asked the American Congress to finance the Greek Government, replacing the gap left by the British (US Department of State, n.d.). This speech has been seen as the milestone of the American foreign policy after the II World War and as the inauguration of the policy of containment that would later led to the foundation of NATO (De Long and Eichengreen, 1991). In that speech, Truman assumed the responsibility of the United States to prevent the expansion of the soviet influence, justifying his claim based on two arguments: first, if the communism won in Greece, the political stability in Turkey would be in danger and, hence, the political stability of the Middle East, a strategic region on the United States national security, would also be vulnerable. Second, the expansion of authoritarian regimes would put in jeopardy the basis of international peace and, consequentially, the security of the United States (US Department of State, n.d.).

“At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guaranties of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms. I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”

Truman’s speech, 12 March 1947<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Speech available at: <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/the-sinews-of-peace>

<sup>3</sup> Speech available <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/coldwar/G3/cs3/cwar.pdf>

Under the Doctrine Truman, name given to the new American security policy, based on the containment of the soviet imperialism, the United States launched a program of economic aid, called European Recovery Program. Also known as the Marshall Plan (1948-1951), the program costed to the American Government 13 billion dollars, given to the European in the form of primary goods (food, feed, fertilizers, industrial materials, semi-finished products), machinery and vehicles, fuel, among other commodities (De Long and Eichengreen, 1991). The original idea was to cover almost all European countries, however, the denial by the Soviet Union was soon followed by the withdrawal of the central and eastern countries under the influence of Stalin government (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). Therefore the aid was distributed between seventeen western and southern European nations<sup>4</sup>, under the condition the helped countries would cooperate between them for a mutual recovery (Haglund, n.d.).

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom, France, Brussels, Netherlands and Luxemburg started to negotiate an agreement for collective defence, with the main goal of Europe's military recovery (Haglund, n.d.). On March 1948, these five nations signed the Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defence, with duration of 50 years. With this, the Brussel Treaty Organization was formed, based on military cooperation in case of a new threat by Germany.

In the summer of the same year, the Soviet Union blocked the access of the Ally troops to Berlin overland, in order to pressure them to withdraw from Western Germany<sup>5</sup>. As response, the Western Allies created an airlift to distribute supplies to the people in West Berlin. This episode, historically called as the Berlin blockade, has been seen as the boost to the United States plans for the development of a common security policy in Europe. In October 1948, the Brussel Treaty Organization, Canada and United States reached an agreement for a defence pact between the North Atlantic countries. In December of the same year, the negotiations for a collective defence started. In the beginning of the following year, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway and Portugal joined the conversations and on 4 April 1949, the twelve countries signed the North Atlantic Treaty, also known as the Washington Treaty, giving birth to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – NATO (Reinalda, 2009).

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<sup>4</sup> Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and Western Germany.

<sup>5</sup> After the II World War and the defeat of Nazi Germany, the country was divided between the Allies and the Soviet Union, as well as the capital Berlin, localized in the Eastern side, under the soviet influence.

## NATO's security policy

“The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live with peace with all peoples and governments. They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area. They are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security.”

The North Atlantic Treaty, 4 April 1949<sup>6</sup>

When NATO was founded, its main purpose was directly related to the political situation in the second half of the 20th century: the expansion of Soviet Union influence. In this way, the goal of its creation, as established on the Washington Treaty, was to ensure the freedom and security of its members, through political and military means against the communist threat. All the states members would protect each other through mutual cooperation, in case of military aggression against any of the members. Hence, an attack against one or more members, would be consider an attack against the entire alliance (Ganem et al, 2011).

The Treaty was composed by fourteen articles that contained the main dispositions of the Organization. Noteworthy, Articles number 4, 5 and 6. Article number 4 proclaims that if a party considers that its territorial integrity, political independence or security is being threatened, any party has the right to request for a consultation meeting with the rest of the parties. As for Article 5, this is considered the core of the North Atlantic Alliance (Haglund, n.d.), stating that

“The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them on Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequentially they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them [...] will assist the Party or Parties.”

Article 5, NATO

This article assumes the collective defence principle of the organization. Article 6 concludes the 5, delimiting the geographical sphere of NATO, in Europe and North America. The rest of the articles are related to NATO's mission and principles, such as strengthening the democratic institutions, being open for new members in Europe, any party cannot engage in an international commitment that compromises the organization and its relation and respect towards United Nations Chart.

However, after 1985, the political and economic reforms imposed by the soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev<sup>7</sup>, that conducted to the fall of the Soviet Union and, therefore, the

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<sup>6</sup> Treaty available on [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm)

communist threat, called into question the maintenance of NATO's existence (Haglund, n.d.). That is why, in 1991, after a meeting with Heads of States and the Governments of the members of the alliance, it was published The New Strategic Concept, defining the goals of NATO for the end of the century.

Considering the political and economic situation at the time, NATO's new main purposes would be to assist the German's reunification, to reintegrate Germany in the international organizations, to develop the relations with the countries once members of the now disintegrated Warsaw Pact<sup>8</sup> and the new countries that raised with the fall of Soviet Union and, finally, to guarantee the European security, especially with the climbing of regional conflicts in Eastern Europe. In this sense, its new tasks would involve crisis management operations, maintenance and preservation of peace, fighting terrorism and the proliferation of mass destruction arms and accession to new members (Ganem, et al, 2011).

This would be achieved through political and military means. Regarding the political dimension, we are talking about the promotion of democratic values and the encouragement to consultation and cooperation in matters of defence and security, in order to build trust among its members and to prevent conflicts. As for the military dimension, NATO believes in the pacific solution for conflicts. However, if the diplomatic efforts seem to fail, and only in that case, the alliance is prepared for military actions. Its military means also involve crisis-management operations under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty or under United Nations' request (nato.int, n.d.).

In November 2010, after a summit in Lisbon with the Head Chiefs and Governments of the alliance, it was published a new Strategic Concept, defining NATO's new guidelines for the next ten years.

“NATO is an unparalleled community of freedom, peace, security and shared values. But the world is changing. We face new threats and new challenges. And this Strategic Concept will ensure that NATO remains as effective as ever in defending our peace, our security and our prosperity.”

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO's Secretary General 2009-2014 (nato.int, n.d.)

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<sup>7</sup> In the 1980's Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev imposed several political and economic reforms, with the goal of opening the Soviet Union. These reforms become known as “perestroika”, literally meaning “restructuring”, and are seen by many authors as one of the responsible for the fall of Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

<sup>8</sup> The Warsaw Pact was a collective defense organization created in 1955, gathering the communist states of Central and Eastern Europe. It was founded as a response of the integration of Western Germany into NATO.



Considering the new threats of the 21st century, NATO is committed to develop new capacities, such as defence against ballistic missile attacks and cyber-attacks. Simultaneously, it is NATO's mission to develop new partnerships, especially with Russia, in matters of common interest, to stay open to new members from European democracies, and to strengthen old partnerships. NATO should also assume an active role in crisis management operations, based in the principle of cooperative security and in a comprehensive approach, relating military power with diplomacy and post-conflict stabilization (nato.int, n.d.).

### **NATO and Syria's civil war**

Syria's civil war started in 2011, when democratic protests, influence by the political context of the Arab Spring<sup>9</sup>, were violently censored by the government. Using open-fire against the protesters, with "license to kill", the response of President Bashar Al-Assad was followed by national protests in favour of his resignation. Consequently, the protests rose, as well as the violence towards the demonstrators by the security forces. Soon the conflict ceased to be a mere struggle for power and started to include aspect of religious and sectarian nature, with the Sunni majority opposing to president's Shia Alawite sect. At the same time, taking advantage of the political and social instability in the country, the Islamic State, an extremist jihadist group, started to claim territories in the north and eastern Syria, with the goal of building a totalitarian Islamic caliphate (BBC, 2015).

According to the United Nations investigation, all parties in the conflict have committed war crimes, including murder, torture and rapes, as well as the three fronts have been accused by the international community to impose civil suffer as a method of war, through blocking the access to food, water and health services.

The war escalated with the involvement of external actors, transforming the national conflict into a proxy war. Iran, the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iraqi government have been showing their support to the regime with military advisers, financial transfers and energy supply. In the same way, Russia and China support Assad regime. On the other hand, the Sunni politicians in Lebanon, tribes and jihadist groups in Iraqi, as well as the Western powers, such as France,

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<sup>9</sup> The Arab Spring was a revolutionary wave that started in 2010 in Tunisia and spread throughout the countries of the Arab League and surroundings. It consisted in several protests, demonstrations, riots and civil war in name of democratic values.

United States and Turkey have been supporting the rebels with logistics and political aid (Asseburg and Wimmen, 2012).

In four years of conflict the results have been dramatic: more than 230 thousand people have been killed and around four million have fled from the country. Turkey is their main destiny, having received 1.8 million refugees, followed by Lebanon (1.2 million) and Jordan (629 thousand). In recent months, Europe has also been facing a refugee crisis, leading António Guterres, the head of the United Nations' refugee agency, to call it the “worst humanitarian crisis of our generation” (BBC, 2015).

Considering the violence of the conflict, and in the light of the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine (R2P), proposed in 2001 by the then United Nations' Secretary General Kofi Annan, an international intervention is urgent (Knapp, n.d.).

The R2P Doctrine, born with the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty report, states that the Human Rights can surpass the sovereignty of a state under certain conditions. This thesis imposes a certain responsibility to the ruler. In this way, sovereignty isn't absolute, but contingent, it changes the emphasis from the outsiders' rights to the victim's rights and justifies an United Nations' intervention in humanitarian matters, when facing an “international default setting” (Knapp, n.d.).

However, as affirmed by the United Nations' Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon in September 2015, the world organization hasn't been able to respond to the humanitarian crisis that Syria is facing, mainly due to the divergences between the members of the Security Council.

“We need some solidarity unity of purpose, particularly among the permanent members of the security council. When they are divided, it is extremely difficult for the United Nations to deliver. That's why I've been urging the members of the Security Council to look beyond national interest. We have to look for the global interest.”

Ban Ki-Moon in an interview for the Guardian [7 September 2015]

Russia and China, supporters of Assad's regime, have vetoed in many occasions the resolutions towards the Syrian government, including an initiative to send peacekeeping forces to the field (Kaim, 2012) and an investigation of the Syrian conflict by the international criminal court, proposal backed by the other 13 permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council (McGreal, 2015). As result, United Nations' credibility is being put into stack.

Towards the United Nations inefficacy to control the humanitarian crisis in Syria, many academics have been debating the perks and disadvantages of a NATO's military intervention, like it happened in Kosovo in 1999 or, more recently, in Libya in 2011 (Knapp, n.d.; Oh, 2012; Kaim, 2012; Asseburg and Wimmen, 2012; Garau, 2013).

For a NATO's military intervention is needed the consensus of the 28 members of the alliance and such mission must be built upon political and moral patterns. The Washington Treaty does not refer any criteria to justify an intervention by the Allies. However, there are some criteria that the officials of the Western Alliance have been using to justify their actions.

After the violence of the much criticized Iraqi War, the United Kingdom presented three conditions that had to be met in order to take NATO to intervene in a humanitarian crisis. The first criterion was demonstrable need, this is, there must be a clear need for intervention, for instance, in case of a serious violation of the Human Rights, under the R2P Doctrine. The second criterion is regional support. This is related to the multilateral approach to a crisis management, when several democracies achieve consensus and get together against the other, under the argument of just cause or legitimacy to use military force and to wage war. Last but not least, there must be a clear legal basis to intervene, this is, the support of the United Nations (Garau, 2013). The "Leslie Criteria", as they were called, were used to justify NATO's presence in Libya 2011.

One can say that, in Syria's case, the first two criteria are met. The rise of the casualties and refugees, as well as the accusations about war crimes from all the parties of the conflict shows that a humanitarian intervention is urgent. On the other hand, the principle of regional support is justify by the threat faced by the borderer countries, such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, a NATO member – we will get to this point later. Only the third criterion, related to the legality of the intervention is not achieved, once again thanks to the power conflicts within the Security Council. According to Commander Pedro Perez-Seoane Garau (2013), Spanish Minister of Defence, the weight of the Security Council is relative. His main arguments are related to the democratic deficit, the cases of paralysis and its incapacity to control its own mandates. The non-support by the Security Council, due to its own internal conflicts, may lead to a humanitarian disaster. One must then ask, what weight more: legitimacy or legality. The author also exposes the possibilities to surpass the Security Council incapacity. One of the means is to promote the authority of the General Assembly, using the procedure of

Uniting for Peace, which allows the General Assembly to use force and recommend a collective action, as it happened with the Suez crisis, in 1956<sup>10</sup>.

In fact, NATO's intervention in Kosovo, in 1999, was guided without the support of the United Nations and considered illegal by the international community. However, it has been seen as a legitimate intervention and a positive step towards the R2P doctrine, considering the violation of Human rights that even today haunted Eastern Europe. On the other hand, the intervention in Libya, in 2011, that led to the deposition and assassination of the dictator Kaddafi, though it had the support of the Security Council, was much criticized by the international community, because once NATO obtained the Resolution 1973, or, let's call it, the green light, the mission was executed ignoring the spirit and atmosphere with which the Security Council promoted the mission (Garau, 2013).

Considering the similarities between Libya and Syria, NATO's intervention in the first could be seen as a precedent for the alliance's intervention in the second (Oh, 2012). Plus, the Turkish involvement in the conflict could reinforce NATO's position towards the Syrian conflict.

### **Turkey's involvement and the Article 5**

Turkey has been involved in the conflict almost since the beginning: its territory is the host of the opposition Syrian National Council<sup>11</sup> and the main basis of the operations of the Free Syrian Army<sup>12</sup>. Besides, due to Turkey's proximity to Syria, the country is directly affected by the fights in the other side of the border. Moreover, the presence of Sunni refugees in the border has been causing social problems with the local Arab Alawit population and with the Kurd situation not resolved, the country fears the lightening up of the separatists tendencies. Turkish participation in the conflict rose in October 2012, when the parliament authorized military operations, including the possibility to enter in Syrian territory. (Asseburg and Wimmen, 2012).

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<sup>10</sup> In 1956, Israel invaded Egypt, with the support of Britain and France, in order to restore the control of the Suez Canal to the West and to unseat Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. This was known as the Suez crisis.

<sup>11</sup> Syrian National Council (SNC) is a Syrian opposition coalition, formed in 2011, during the rising of the civil war. The organism opposes to Bashar al-Assad's government and has its base in Istanbul.

<sup>12</sup> Free Syrian Army is an organization founded in 2011, by defected Syrian officers and soldiers, with the goal of bringing down the regime.

As a member of NATO, and regarding to the Syrian conflict, Turkey has not yet invoked the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, boosting the Allies intervention in the field. However, since the beginning of the civil war, Ankara has requested the Article 4,

“The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened”

for three times.

The first two invocations happened in 2012, after the Syrian forces shot down a Turkish jet and a Syrian shelling killed five Turkish civilians, in June and October of that year respectively (nato.int, n.d.). As result of the meeting, in December 2012, NATO approved Turkey’s request to implement anti-missiles systems in the border (Asseburg and Wimmen, 2012). Plus, Germany, Netherlands and United States agreed to provide two Patriot missiles batteries each to support Ankara’s air defences (nato.int, n.d.).

In July 2015, following several attacks at the Turkish-Syrian border by the Islamic State<sup>13</sup>, Turkish government request another meeting with its NATO partners. Subsequently, NATO agreed with the Turkish proposal to create a secure area in Syrian territory to accommodate civilians fleeing the war. Such project would have the support of the United States, with the goal of avoiding the civilians keep running to Turkish territory – we remind that Turkey is the main escape for the Syrian refugees. In any moment of the meetings, Ankara has requested military help under the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. In this sense, a military intervention by NATO does not seem a possibility, at least in the near future<sup>14</sup> (Emmott and Tattersall, 2015).

“In the meeting there was full agreement on the statement. All allies expressed their strong support for Turkey. We stand all together, united, in solidarity with Turkey. All allies also condemned terrorism in all its forms. Turkey did not ask for any additional military NATO presence in Turkey. What we all know is that Turkey is a staunch ally, Turkey has a very capable armed forces, the second largest army within the alliance.”

Jens Stoltenberg speech in the news conference after the meeting on 28 July 2015

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<sup>13</sup> A car bomb that killed security officers and wounded four other people; shoots from the border by ISIS militants against Turkish soldiers, killing one and wounded two more; and a suicide bomber, identified as a Syrian Kurd associated with ISIS that killed more than thirty people (Whitman, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> One can argue that Turkey’s refuse to invoke the fifth article is related to its attempt to avoid diving more deeply in the conflict. In fact, Turkey has been keeping a “neutral” position regarding an active fight against the Islamic State. That may be justify by the fact that Kurdish militia has been the most effective fighting the Islamic State, but the relations between the Kurdish minority and Turkey have not been peaceful. According to Whitman (2015), “Turkey fears that a stronger Kurdish movement would pose a threat to its own stability” (Whitman, 2015).

## Legitimacy or Legality for a NATO's intervention

The paralysis of the Security Council due to Russia and China's veto in the Syrian case, has made difficult to achieve a mandate by the United Nations for military intervention. However, like stated in this paper, an international intervention without the permission of the United Nations would not be a first time: we remember Kosovo 1999. In this case, there were several allegations about human rights violations committed by Yugoslavia. Also in this scenario, Russia opposed to the Security Council proposal for a military intervention. As result, NATO decided to launch an air attack without the United Nations' permission. According to Andreas Bock, a political scientist specialized in peace research at the University of Augsburg, though illegal, NATO's intervention followed a moral duty to act.

“There were clear human rights violations in Kosovo that justified an intervention.”  
Deutsche Welle, on 28 August 2013

Before Kosovo, NATO also intervened without a United Nations mandate in Liberian civil war, in 1990, following the future criterion of “demonstrable need”. Of course not all interventions without a mandate were justified and internationally applauded. The most demonstrable case was the Iraqi invasion by United States, in 2003, based in the argument without concrete proofs that the Middle East country possessed weapons of mass destruction.

So, the question is: should NATO intervene without a United Nations mandate? The R2P Doctrine, proposed by the Canadian government, was design to enable a potential intervention without being limit by the veto of one of the five permanent members of the Security Council (Lütticke, 2013). Without United Nations permission or the invocation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, R2P can be used as the “legal” basis of the intervention.

Many authors have been debating about the best kind of intervention for NATO. According to Knapp (2012), a military intervention would be a mistake, basing his thesis in five arguments. First, a military attack by NATO would lead to the deepening of the conflict, spreading the war through the Middle East, through Turkey, Iran, Jordan and Iraq. Second, the number of casualties would increase, not only in Syria, but also by NATO. Third, it would only lead to a long war, without any actual winner. Fourth, an attack by the Occident would worsen the relation between the West and Muslim countries, especially in Iranian and Iraqi regions, and could be seen as a third war between United States and Muslim by the international community. Fifth and finally, it would increase the violence by terrorist groups against the

United States, making difficult for the American embassies to proceed with the Washington's policy to control and contain groups like Al Qaeda.

The solution shared by authors like Knapp (n.d.), Oh (2012) and Asseburg and Wimmen (2012) would be for NATO to embrace its role in democracy building and peacekeeping. Their suggestion is to install peacekeeping units on Syria, creating safe zones in the north, east and south of Syria. In this way, it would be possible to build stability in the Syrian border with Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey and to protect the refugees. A second step would be to create demilitarized zones between Free Syrian Army and the Syrian government security forces between Aleppo and Damascus. Many are the cases of success of such kind of operations: Suez in 1956, Cyprus in 1964 and Lebanon in 2009 (Knapp, n.d.).

The decision taken in NATO Council, in July 2015, seems to go in accordance with this ideology. In late August 2015, Turkey had already begun training a police force to be deployed to a buffer zone in Syrian territory, in order to keep Islamic State fighters away from the border. Ankara has called for volunteers to join the Turkmen fighters that have enrolled the United States-led Train and Equip program with the purpose of building a police force to patrol the buffer zone. However, Turkey is being accused of using the buffer zone as an excuse to fight against the Kurdish militias with the aspiration of creating a Kurdish majority area in Syria (Bulos and Loveluck, 2015). In fact, after the bomb attack that victimized 32 people, in Suruç, in last July, the Turkish government considered the Islamic State a top threat to national security, alongside the PKK, considering both terrorists. In this way, the dismissal of President Assad has been put in second plan (BBC, 2015; Euronews, 2015). As stated by Ahmet Mahli, Head of the Gaziantep branch of the Syrian Turkmen Nationalist movement to the Telegraph,

“The main aim of this buffer zone is to go against the project of Syrian Kurdistan”.  
The Telegraph, on 25 August 2015

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, NATO has not yet intervened directly in the Syrian conflict. However, recent developments have led to murmur among the international media, about a possible change of the transatlantic position. On 13 November 2015, a series of coordinated terrorists' attacks occurred in Paris, including mass shootings, suicide bombings and hostage-taking. Around 130 people were killed and many others were severely wounded. The Islamic State soon assumed the responsibility for the attacks.



France has not yet invoke any NATO's summit, but the gravity of the attacks legitimize Paris to invoke the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, as stated by former head of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who stressed the resemblances of this situation with the terrorist attacks in 2001, in United States.

“Formally, I do believe that the attacks on Paris qualify for an invocation of Article 5. It was an attack on an ally and we know who the attacker is. This is very similar to the situation after 9/11. At the time there was even more doubt about who the attacker was. Nevertheless NATO decided unanimously to invoke Article 5. I have no doubt that the basis is there if France requests it. The formal conditions are there.”

Newsweek, on 17 November 2015

In spite of resembling the 9/11 attacks, Rasmussen does not consider France will request the Article 5. Nonetheless, others personalities have a different vision. It is the case of Omar Lamrani, a military analyst for Stratfor, a global intelligence company, who believes the frequent use of the word “war” by the French President François Hollande, when referring to the Islamic State may be an indicative that France may call for NATO.

“After 9/11 there is a precedent for this. [But] it is not clear if France will do that yet as the French are still discussing among themselves how to respond.”

Newsweek, on 17 November 2015

In the same way, Admiral James Stavridis, former NATO-allied supreme commander, also emphasizing the similarities of Paris attacks with 9/11, argues that NATO may respond in four or five ways:

“It would start with an enhanced level of intelligence-sharing and special operations from NATO nations going in and supporting the current campaign. Secondly NATO, would take over the bombing campaign. This would bring many more assets – aircraft ordinance, the airborne early warning aircraft – into the fight. Thirdly, I think NATO should take on the training mission, both for the Kurds in the north and the Iraqi security forces in the south. [T]his way the United States doesn't have to pull the entire load. We need the alliance to step up and be there with us. And by the way, this ought to be not just NATO. There are many Arab states – and indeed Russia at least has articulated a desire to conduct operations as part of this – so I see this as NATO as the core of, effectively, a global response against the Islamic State.”

The Atlantic, on 15 November 2015

Simultaneously, United Nations have approved a resolution allowing the countries to take “all necessary measures” in the fight against the Islamic State, gathering the consensus of the 193 member states. The resolution presented by France, though, does not give a legal basis for a military action, nor invokes Chapter VII of the Chart authorizing the use of force (Morais,



2015). However, Paris and Moscow have already claimed that a military action is justifiable, due to right of countries to self-defence (BBC, 2015).

Though maintaining a non-offensive position so far, the evolution of the Syrian conflict, from a civil war inspired by democratic values to a proxy war, now also involving Europe, a NATO intervention seems to be closer than has ever been.

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Ferreira, R. M., 2015. NATO's Security Policy: The case of Syria. *Cultural Relations Quarterly Review*, Vol. 2. Issue 4. (Autumn 2015) pp.1–16.

For more information concerning the article and citation please contact us via email at [institute@culturalrelations.org](mailto:institute@culturalrelations.org)

## *Security policy in Turkey and the migration problem in Europe*

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**Abstract:** In this document I attempt to look into the security policy in Turkey and how migration is impacting Turkey and Europe as well. Cultivating international relationships is essential these days that is why I find it useful to get acquainted with the cultures of distant countries. Presently, Turkey has a difficult political situation. The security has become a key policy issue. Security policy problems are extremely timely in these days in the whole Europe. Migrants situation is a key question in the world now, and it is determines the legal, political, and military systems as well. As far as the migrant's problems are concerned, it is growing a huge factor in every people life. Migrant crisis has been triggered by the Syrian civil war which has been going on for nearly five years. The war has not only led to death of many innocent people but also caused displacement of huge number of people. More than 4 million people have been forced to flee the war torn country and have sought asylum in Turkey and recently in EU.

**Keywords:** Turkey, regionalism, migration, Kurdish question, Syria

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### **Introduction**

As part of this document I attempt to look into the security policy in Turkey and how migration is impacting Turkey and Europe as well. As part of this paper I attempt to look into the various challenges the country is facing, furthermore I will also mention about the accession possibilities to join to the EU.

The reason why I have chosen this topic is that I have been interested in the future of the European Union, the main aims of the future including the connection possibilities for Turkey. Many people do not take interest in this issue in Europe because they feel this culture is very different. However presently we need to care about this situation which may determine the future of the world.

Cultivating international relationships is essential these days – this is another reason why I find it useful to get acquainted with the cultures of distant countries. Presently, Turkey has a difficult political situation. The security has become a key policy issue.

In this September I had a great chance to travel to Istanbul and go to The Journalists and Writers Foundation and Zaman as well, and I have heard many interesting information about Turkey, and these experiences inspired me to research more about this topic. I have been to Istanbul and I could see people on the street, between many children, and to see so closely also made me decide to research more about it. First of all everybody feel sorry and empathy, but it is also important to try to look into the situation which is near to us, and examine political, economic and legal prospects.

Security policy problems are extremely timely in these days in the whole Europe. Migration situation is a key question in the world now, and it is determines the legal, political, and military systems as well. As far as the migrants' problems are concerned, it is growing a huge factor in every people life.

The most difficult part of this situation that Europe does not have any stable policy such a situation like this.

Security is of critical importance and encompasses protection of people, territorial integrity and identity of the nation which includes culture, tradition, beliefs among others. In this global world, one cannot limit to domestic security but needs to work towards safeguarding the larger community and finding solutions to various problems the world might face.

The solutions may vary from promoting development, safeguarding rights of the people, disarmament of states. Then there are traditional threats like terrorism, mass movement of people due to armed conflicts and the modern threats like cyber wars. In order to confront these issues, there is a need of greater co-operation and dialogue. Some of the issues cannot be handled by military or policies but require combination of social, economic and political policies.

Turkey blessed with its geographical location and long ties with regional nations has the capacity and even demonstrated its ability to play the role of security player in Europe, Balkans and the Middle East and beyond.

Turkey's foreign policy respects sovereignty and territorial integrity and focuses on developing relationships and resolving conflicts through peaceful means. Some of the examples of Turkish contribution to regional peace can be looked back in time when Turkey helped initiate the establishment of the Balkan Entente of 1934 with Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia, as well as the Sadabad Pact of 1937 with Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. (Turkey's Perspectives, n.d.)

With membership of UN, NATO and EU institutions, country continues to work in developing relations and co-operations. It is also a negotiating country with EU for full membership.

Turkey is facing critical challenges at the moment be it internal or external. The challenges vary from conflicts with Kurds, Syrian civil war in its neighbourhood, migrant crisis, strained relations with neighbours like Armenia among others.

### **Turkey and the EU**

Presently, Turkey has a strong military system. It could be a great advantage for the European Union if they were allowed to join.

Turkey is a founding member of the United Nations (1945) (UN.org, n.d.), a member of NATO (1952), the Council of Europe (1949), the OECD (1960) and the OSCE (1973) and was an associate member of the Western European Union (1992).

On 31 July 1959, Turkey made its first application to join the newly-established organisation. The Ankara Agreement signed on 12 September 1963 started relation between Turkey and the EU. The aim of the Ankara Agreement, (Turkey-EU Relations, n.d.) as stated in Article 2, was to promote the continuous and balanced strengthening of trade and economic relations between the parties. After that with the Customs Union decision, Turkey-EU relations entered a totally new dimension as it was one of the most important steps for Turkey's EU integration objective.

Having completed the Customs Union, membership became one of the priority issues about Turkey. In 1989 the European Union refused the full membership objective, partly because Turkey had trouble fulfilling the Copenhagen political criteria. (Archick and Morelli, 2014)

The Helsinki European Council Summit held on 10-11 December 1999 was a breakthrough in Turkey-EU relations, because the EU already accepted Turkey as an official candidate of the European Union on equal terms to the others.

Unfortunately the EU highlighted many contra reasons of the connection, like human rights problems, immigration problems and also the Kurdish problem in Turkey.

This paper has attempted to provide an outline of the state of Turkey's EU accession process. The negotiations between Turkey and the EU have slowed down recently and this current impasse has both the EU and Turkey to blame.

Turkey's geographical position and historical connections to the Balkans, the Black Sea, Russia, Central Asia and also the army of Turkey is a great possibility for the EU and should be taken advantage of. (Akbar, 2012)

The dispute over human rights is not a new one. Turkey has been monitored under the lens due to its historical past and recent crackdown on opposition parties, press and the judicial system. EU has locked the concerned chapters which form critical part of the 35 chapters which a country must fulfil for the membership. Although there are issues in the process, we must look at the bigger picture, the economic future for EU and Turkey and the other alternatives.

Turkey has now various options. It is already involved in other gas pipeline projects i.e. Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP). And with the Russian pipeline, Turkey has opportunity to be key player in the energy sector. (Natural Gas Europe, 2014)

At the same time, this raises an important question: would be independent give Turkey more economic control and growth potential? Or should Turkey consider joining hands with the Eurasian Economic Union?

As the EU's parliament dominance over its member countries policy making increases, Turkey might want to wait and see how the EU member states behave. Greece is teetering on the edge of financial crisis, while British current Prime Minister David Cameron has pledged



in his election campaign that if re-elected, the UK would hold a referendum over the EU membership. These are concerning issues for Turkey's bid.

But at the same time Turkey can gain from the membership as EU is Turkey's number one import and export partner. Turkey's businessmen would get an opportunity to expand in the various member states and Turkey's prominent logistics sector could reach greater heights.

Despite the various potential economic gains, Turkey is a tricky country to combine with. Turkey's enormous size and the population base compared to other European countries would give Turkey good number of seats in the European Parliament and this could easily dent the influence of other nations in making laws or policies. Turkey is a growing economy but at the same time it has a lot of inequality. EU policies are focused on free movement of people. The weaker communities migrating to other western nations could be detrimental to other nations' interests. It could also revitalise the demands by various nations for a need of country-wise migration policy, thereby compromising the free movement principle.

EU mentions many problems in connection with the accession of Turkey, first of all the human rights are routinely abused. Dozens of journalists languish in jail. Amnesty International's annual report is filled with accounts of torture, free speech violations, and denial of minority rights, unfair trials, and failure to protect women. Europe would import the intractable Kurdish issue.

### **Turkey at present**

Turkey presently is facing tough economic situation with slowing economy, rising inflation, (Kayaoglu, 2015) decline in exports and customer confidence, plummeting currency and increase in violence. (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015) The economy is facing pressure from both internal and external factors. The factors vary from Syrian war and refugees' crisis to Chinese economic slowdown and devaluation of its currency Yuan to country's own political uncertainty, which was triggered due to the collapse of two-year long truce with the Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK this July. (Peker, 2015)

The end of truce has led to increase in internal tensions with attacks in few Turkish cities. Tourism has taken a toll and tourists from Britain and Russia have declined by nearly 30%. (Turan, n.d.)



Turkey's currency lira continues to decline and record new lows against the US dollar. In one year, the currency had declined from nearly 0.4400 US dollar per lira to 0.33 US dollar per lira. (Lira to Dollars Today, n.d.) Decline in currency can boost exports of some countries but with war in Syria, exports have declined instead. There was loss of exports worth \$6b billion between 2011 and 2014.

Before the election in Turkey, the Zaman newspaper made an interview with Soli Özel, one of the prestigious Turkish scholars about Turkey's policies both domestic and foreign and the role country is playing in its zone of interest and influence.

He talks about the current political situation and appreciates AKP's efforts in integrating the peripheral actors into the system but at the same time stresses that more needs to be done i.e. the concerns of the modern population (38 to 40 % of the population) need to be met and not simply ignored.

He raises concerns that people need to speak up and use any opportunity which comes to them. Not being able to express properly could take them to crisis. Among other concerns, Özel mentioned about the government crackdown on legal social protests. He acknowledges that AKP party did move from collective leadership to a personal one and had the political actors stuck to their role in facilitating rule of law, functioning of democracy instead of using government positions to grab more power the situation could be different.

In addition to political situation, he discusses the vision and policies of the AKP party. The party claims its ideology to establish order more in lines with Islamic principles but at the same time has not made efforts to resolve the issues of corruption. Population has not accepted the governance or its policies but simply learned to live with them.

In addition to the domestic policies, Özel looks into the foreign policies of the AKP and mentions that zone of interests should not have turned into zones of influence. He shares examples where AKP talks about Ottoman westernisation as mistake and wishes for resurgence of the Islamic civilisation while missing that the views are not in sync with the one held by Arabs. (Today's Zaman, 2015)

## Syrian civil war

We all can see how relevant nowadays if we keep a close watch on the events in Syria. These events exhibit many problems in connection with the fulfilment of human rights.

Syria's history has been often called unique and it has something to do with its location. Since its establishment, Syria always had a mediator role between East and West. In order to make it possible for us to investigate properly the problems in connection with the human rights in Syria, we need to advert briefly to the Islamic law, as the faith in the Islamic law is very important in connection with how Syria conceives of human rights.

The aim of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is to create universal rules for the nations of the world. This is a huge challenge due to the multifariousness of the world.

In the debates they often query the universality of these laws, stating that these are only the products of the western culture, so – they say – it is not adaptable all over the world. (Hassan, n.d.)

Nowadays people around the world follow with attention the events in Syria, the relevancy of the subject is unquestionable. Syria is in a social and economic crisis and these problems turned into internationally significant. In the last two and half years one and half million house has been ruined whole or in part due to the bombardment and the state of war.

On 26 February 2012, Syria put a new draft constitution made by an ad hoc committee to referendum. The amendment of the constitution was one of the main demands of the opposition in the time of the uprising, but since then the extortion of the leave of the president al-Assad became the goal of the opposition. (Constitution, 2012)

According to the statement of the President of Syria, Bashar al-Assad the new constitution opens ways to a multi-party system. The most obvious change happened in the eighth article of constitution. The old version stated that the leader of the state and the society is the governing Ba'ath Party, but the new version states there is a plurality system.

In connection with Syria, it is important to mention the international organisations of the Arab world, of which Syria is a member. After the independence, there were attempts to build external relationships with allied Arab states namely Egypt and Libya. However, these trials have been ephemeral. One of the most important organisations is the Arab league, which was created for an international Arab organisation partly for political purposes but also to reach

other important objectives such as cooperation, promoting education, protecting human rights and managing international conflicts in the Arab world.

When economic relations are intensified, maintaining and building political relations as well as adjusting legal systems become increasingly important.

Though, Turkey and the US are in sync that Syria's Bashar al-Assad must go however, they differ to great extent in their vision of the future head of state. While, US look forward to a secular liberal democracy, Turkey prefers Muslim fundamentalist opposition to gain control. (Almond, 2015)

The two nations, members of the NATO have been taking conflicting stands in their role to resolve Syrian crisis. While US have sought help of Syria's Kurds in fight against the Islamic State of Iraq, Turkey is not happy with the Kurdish presence in the region and has made attempts to restrict their territorial expansion.

Recently Russian jets involved in bombing Syrian targets had violated Turkey's airspace. Turkey and its NATO allies are concerned about the violations stemming from the Russian air and cruise missiles and NATO has assured Turkey that it is ready to send troops to the country as a deterrent and to deal with any possible escalation. (Emmott, 2015)

As a response to the tensions, NATO has increased its capacity and preparedness to deploy forces in the Turkey. Though, NATO maintains that its focus is to prevent any escalation of the Syrian conflict and instead plans to work with Russia to identify a political solution for Syrian crisis.

The key players in Syria must realise that the peace process would be beneficial to all and must work towards that instead of focusing on the vested interests. A military solution is not possible and would lead to chaos with Turkey being the worst affected. The process must be carried out peacefully preserving the Syrian state, carrying out political reforms and free elections.

### **Migrant crisis**

In the end of October in the European Parliament was holding an interview in Brussels. Marietje Schaake, a Dutch Liberal MEP; a member of the International Trade Committee, and

a substitute member on the Human Rights Committee; Zafer Sirakaya, the chairman of the AK Party in Brussels; that is the governing party of Turkish President Erdogan, and Nikola Dimitrov, Hague Institute for Global Justice, which promotes conflict resolution, and good governance. (EuroNews, 2015) They were talking about the Syrian war and the migrants problems. According to Nikola Dimitrov, “Turkey should this most bloody and deadly attack in Turkish history to build national unity and also to restore the justice system, because as one deputy (MP) of the opposition party, of the Republican People’s Party, said, there are more political party members in jail than ISIL members.” Zafer Sirakaya said that “Well we will continue our work on this issue and I think that the long term policy should be about the refugee crisis too. We should intensify our work in Turkey in order to give better shelter to refugees, both in Europe and in Turkey as well.”

Migrant crisis has been triggered by the Syrian civil war which has been going on for nearly five years. The war has not only led to death of many innocent people but also caused displacement of huge number of people. More than 4 million people have been forced to flee the war torn country and have sought asylum in Turkey and recently in EU.

Though Turkey has welcomed more refugees than any other country i.e. 2 million compared to roughly half a million who are seeking asylum in EU’s 28 states, the country is feeling the strain. Country has spent nearly \$4- \$6 billion to provide one of the best facilities to refugees. The refugees’ population in its border towns with Syria is overwhelming where refugees exceed the local population.

Despite the humanitarian outlook, the same borders have offered a gateway for ISIS attacks inside Turkey. In July, Islamic State carried out suicide bombing in the Turkish town of Suruc killing more than 30 people. The Islamic State is again being considered responsible for the recent bombings in Ankara where 97 people were killed and 246 others were injured. (Calamur, 2015)

In response, the country was forced to join US campaign against ISIS in Syria. Turkey also opened its base to US planes and drones to facilitate the campaign.

Recently Turkey president Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed anger at the west for improper handling of the global terrorism. He accused the nations to be materialistic and creating crisis for personal gains. He cited the war in Iraq and Libya and raised that west control 80% of the Iraq’s oil wells. In addition, he argued that Security Council requires expansion with

representation to the regional players. He condemned nations of supporting one terrorist organisation against fight against the others. This is considered to be directed towards US who are supporting Kurds in fight against ISIS. Kurds are recognised as terrorist by Turkey. (Martel, 2015)

As the ongoing migrant crisis deepens in Europe and more and more migrants rush to EU for asylum, EU desperately needs all the help it can get from Turkey to stem the flow of refugees. For this, recently Angela Merkel visited the country and offered aid package but was hesitant to offer the much sought timeline for accession to the EU. (Almond, 2015)

### **The Kurdish issue**

EU highlighted many contra reasons of the connection, like human rights problems, immigration problems and also the Kurdish problem in Turkey. Kurds are a sizeable minority in the region including Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria and have often protested against the governments seeking for greater rights or even independence. Turkey's conflict with Kurds dates back to the creation of Republic of Turkey itself in 1923. As part of this, anyone who was not recognised as minority was expected to become part of the Turkish identity. However, Kurds had their own unique identity and their integration not in the society resulted in suppression of Kurdish culture and traditions. The resulting insurgency led to loss of 30,000 lives. (Bildt, 2015)

Despite the painful past, president Erdogan recognised the importance of resolution of Kurdish issue and initiated peace process with PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) in 2013. The process was also boosted by the country's ambition to be part of EU.

However, the ongoing Syrian civil war and the rise of Islamic state have escalated tensions and suspicions between the two groups. Kurds believe that the government is supporting jihadists of the Islamic state of Iraq in fight against the PKK's Syrian Kurdish organisation. The same has been echoed by various experts for example by Kerem Oktem, a professor at the Centre for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz in Austria.

Earlier in July, a suicide attack in Suruc, a Kurdish dominated town killed 32 people. The attack was apparently ordered by the IS and focused towards the gathering of left wing activists.

The attack gave rise to violence and feeling of revenge. And PKK rebels avenged the Suruc attack by killing two Turkish policemen. Government response to this led to arrests of more than 1300 suspected supporters of PKK and IS and its aircrafts attacking the groups in Iraq and Syria respectively. Turkey also granted US the use of Incirlik base thereby speeding up attacks on the IS targets.

PKK is divided between its rebel group and their leader Abdullah Ocalan. Ocalan for long has been considered a hope for peaceful resolution between the two sides but the continuous involvement of PKK rebel group in violence and murder of police and soldiers like the one in Sirnak has been detrimental to the process. (Dombey, 2014)

Also PKK's Syrian sister organisation YPG approach towards the Assad's regime which is deeply opposed by the Turkey's government is considered as a conspiracy. YPG has made territorial gains in northern Syria and Turkey plans to restrict them. If the IS can be attacked and moved out of the region with opposition groups supported by Turkey and US occupying the region, would help facilitate a control on YPG.

Turkey must realise that if the issues with Kurds are not resolved, the country may enter into sectarian chaos like the Syrian conflict. The country would not be in position to secure its borders and would in-fact face grave threats from the likes of ISIS. While at the same time Kurds in Iraq and Syria have made strides in fight against the ISIS like in Kobani but still the PKK is regarded as a terrorist organisation.

Efforts must be made to resolve the conflict which would involve engaging not only PKK leader Ocalan but the PKK's rebel group in the peace process. Concrete actions must be made supporting Kurdish language and education. Both the parties must reach a compromise i.e. a Turkey where both Turks and Kurds can live together with mutual trust and respect and get access to full rights and free fair participation in the political system. As a response to this, PKK must give up arms and violence.

To facilitate this, Erdogan should drop the restrictions on the share of national votes required for party to enter parliament thereby giving Kurdish representation an opportunity to be part of the political system. While PKK and the Kurdish community must give up arms and be open to idea of integration with the Turks. This may require conditional amnesty to PKK. (Pope, 2014)

## Turkey's role in global security

Turkey's contributions as global security player are not new. Way back in 1923–1929, Turkey promoted co-operation and worked towards regional security with Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia which later led to establishment of the Balkan Entente of 1934 and with Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan to facilitate the Sadabad Pact of 1937.

Post Second World War, Turkey chose to side with the Western bloc which later led to Turkey joining NATO. Turkey over a period of time has not only contributed in protection of block from outside threats like from Soviet Union but has also acted as a mediator between the western and eastern blocs.

Turkey continued to take initiatives in maintaining regional security and its efforts helped in reaching Baghdad Pact in 1954 with Britain, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan.

Even in Syrian crisis both NATO and Turkey are playing critical role and trying to resolve the issue. Turkey has granted US access to its base to carry out air strikes against ISIS in Syria.

In recent years, Turkey's importance as security player has been well recognised and is now treated as a crucial ally in resolving various conflicts. Earlier this year, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop recognised Turkey's contributions in Afghanistan and importance of Turkey's current role in conflicts with Islamic state of Iraq, al-Sham (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria. Using newly created MIKTA's platform, the minister highlighted that countries like Turkey have the potential to collaborate with other regional powers and raise concerns shared by wider community in the global platforms. Australia and Turkey together, plan to ensure that global powers respond to global threats like terrorism in a decisive manner. And see UN Security Council's recognition of the geopolitical realities and inclusion of the regional powers for Asia, Africa and Latin America in the council as a way to achieve the desired goal. (Unal, 2015)

Turkey is engaging with Gulf nations to increase co-operation. This co-operation has extended to security matters. Example: Qatar and Turkey entered Military co-operation agreement in March 2015. As part of the agreement, the nations would not only share intelligence with each other but it also opens door for military co-operation and deployment of forces in each other's territory.

The agreement carries advantages for both the nations. Qatar is concerned by growing Iranian and Chinese influence in the Middle East apart from the improving US-Iran relations. Country also lacks military power and seeks collaboration with other players like Turkey in order to strengthen its defence capacity. This would also help Qatar reduce its dependency on US and help build stronger ties with NATO through Turkey. While Turkey, gets a greater say in the Gulf. It would not only provide Turkey access to lucrative market but also strengthen its role as a global security player. Turkey sees this as a move to counter Iranian influence in the region. As part of the engagement, Turkey has already dispatched a task force which involves naval force and combat engineers. (Gurcan, 2015)

### **Recent elections in Turkey**

The recent elections are expected to play a significant role in not only resolving regional crisis like war in Syria, migrant crisis but for Turkey's future itself. The elections have given AKP party the much desired majority. The government recently joined US campaign against IS in Syria and another campaign against PKK. United States is using the bases in Turkey to strike Islamic State in Syria while EU is trying to work with Turkey to resolve the migrant crisis.

In recent months, the country's law and order has deteriorated and tensions got escalated last month when terrorist attacks targeted pro-Kurdish rally killing nearly 130 people. There have been raids against the media hostile to the government and journalists have been jailed limiting the freedom of press. While the country has been experiencing violence, the economy has deteriorated and the currency has plummeted more than 25 percent. (Zalan, 2015) Growth is expected to be around 3 per cent this year.

Turkey economy has slowed down and both the domestic and foreign policies are threatening the economy further. Because of the migrant crisis, many tourist places, coastal places are crowded with refugees and the tourists are shying away from the places. Tourism has also been impacted by violence and recent bombings.

Exports like that of oil are impacted because of the crisis in Syria and Iraq while Russia is blocking transit trade due the conflicting positions over the Syrian crisis.

The government should use the parliamentary majority to carry out critical reforms not only to promote growth but to limit violence and work towards peace process with the Kurds. With



migrant crisis taking toll on EU, the tables have turned giving Turkey an upper-hand. Erdogan can make use of the opportunity to secure for his people visa free travel to the Schengen zone, more funds for rehabilitating the refugees and speeding up the EU membership process. Turkey must realise the importance of the crisis and work with EU and other global powers to identify a permanent solution.

At the same time critics fear that, single party rule would be make it difficult for other political players to keep a check on AKP party's authoritarian ambitions. They also fear the restrictions on freedom of speech and judiciary (Tattersall and Coskun, 2015) following the crackdown on media in recent months.

Critics are also concerned about the government response to Kurdish issue. Recently, Kurds have gained ground in the south eastern part of the country and their expansion is being seen as a concern. With increasing violence, the government plans to bring back stability and peace and crush any Kurdish resistance. Though the approach of government may bring more violence in short term. (Almond, 2015)

## **Conclusion**

Turkey has potential and continues to show its influence in the regional conflicts. Its role as security player is well known. But the country faces challenges itself both at domestic and global front. Country must take peaceful means to resolve the issues varying form Kurdish issue, Syrian war and build relationships with its neighbours like Armenia and Cyprus for greater peace and stability in the region.

Unless the country takes these issues on priority, it may end up experiencing more violence and a sectarian war within its own boundary. It is important that the country follows a secular and liberal approach and promote freedom of media. In connection with the media freedom problems in Turkey, need to mention about the so called Hizmet Movement as well.

Gülen movement is named after Fethullah Gülen, the Turkish scholar, whose teachings has and continues to influence many. His teachings focus on working towards culture and religious tolerance, liberal democracy, education among others. And asks people not to mix religion with politics and be involved in tasks of social welfare instead of satisfying

materialistic desires. This approach is seen as a way to glorify god. He has also tried to clarify the meaning of jihad terming it as a moral and spiritual struggle.

Gülen also appreciates the value of free civil society which is not controlled by the state and suggests development of private institutions, schools as a way to achieve it. The movement continues to make contributions to society, educational institutions and charity organisations in Turkey and abroad.

Turkey offers a link between EU and the east. Also, with its deep relations and influence in the Middle East, Turkey can be of great importance to the EU. Only with Turkey, EU can become a force to reckon with in the region.

Fethullah Gülen does not want Turkey just to be a member of block but a country of importance in this global world.

Turkey offers its own interpretations to religion, culture and aspects of life compared to the other Islamic nations. With common interests and values, Turkey can help in accomplishment of various goals and projects.

Turkey is growing and has lot of potential. Blessed with young and dynamic population, country can reach places. It need not settle for a particular alliance. The country is tough and despite various hardships, it has come out stronger.

The country needs to grow and undergo change along with the world. This may require a review of how the country looks at things and may need the policies to be more liberal.

Gülen believes that differences should not be obstacle to integration with EU. People can agree on a common ground. The integration would facilitate knowledge and wealth sharing and it would eventually strengthen the relationship. Gülen suggests that the people need to be patient and make efforts to determine appropriate approach.

People should continue to learn and develop skills which would make country ready for any challenges. Gülen raises that west have some good things like science and the country should learn from the same.

An EU, which includes Turkey would be more efficient in tackling global political and economic issues, ranging from the threat of terrorism to illegal immigration and drug trafficking. Turkey's accession should also enhance the EU's position in regions close to its

immediate neighbourhood. Turkey's unique geo-strategic position, plus the strength of NATO's second-largest army would greatly add to European security. Finding the "truth" in this topic is very difficult and may not be possible at all.

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Prieger, A., 2015. Security policy in Turkey and the migration problem in Europe. *Cultural Relations Quarterly Review*, Vol. 2. Issue 4. (Autumn 2015) pp.17–34.

For more information concerning the article and citation please contact us via email at [institute@culturalrelations.org](mailto:institute@culturalrelations.org).

## *Is there relation between Turkey and ISIS?*

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Since sustained opposition to the regime of Bashar al-Assad first took root in Syria four years ago, Turkey has been heavily involved in Syrian affairs. More recently, as the Syrian conflict has spread across borders, it has also taken an interest in Iraq. In both cases, the AKP government has pursued a sectarian policy of backing Sunni groups while seeking to counter the Alawite Assad regime in Syria as well as the Shi'a-dominated Maliki government in Iraq. This policy has aligned the Turkish government with the interests of a wide range of extremist Islamist groups that have metastasised within the security vacuum of conflict-ridden Syrian. Far from an uncomfortable or incidental association, evidence from the past several years suggests that Turkey has, actively in some cases and tacitly in others, supported a variety of jihadi forces in Syria. (Bipartisan Policy, 2015, p.11) Before Arab spring, the AKP government carried out a zero problem policy with neighbouring countries. Initially it was quite successful policy besides that policy was supported by the EU countries and the US. Owing to pursuing that non aggressive policy, Turkey promoted very good relations with Syria and Iraq. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has brought into direct connection with Syria for the first time in its history.

As it is widely known, the protests and demands of secularism by people in Tunisia ignited the Arab spring. Tunisia is the birthplace of the Arab Spring. For Tunisians, the goals of the Arab Spring were primarily freedom and economic prosperity. Even though they are disillusioned by the current political leaders and believe that the difference between the rich

and poor expanded since the overthrow of the authoritarian ruler, Zein al-Abedin Ben Ali, in early 2011, Tunisians consider themselves to be more empowered and freer than they were before the revolution. They support secular politics, and less than 20% favour an Islamic government. For them, secular parties have grown a bit more popular, while the appeal of religious-oriented parties, including an-Nahda, has waned considerably. However, political parties in general are the least trustworthy and the military the most trustworthy institutions in their perspective. For Tunisians, security is the principal concern, economic backwardness the most important cause of decadence, development of science and technology the key to economic prosperity, and excelling in science and technology their primary obligation. While a majority support the freedom of expression, this freedom is tolerable for only one-third of the respondents if it is used to criticise their religion. They also overwhelmingly concur regarding the significance of tourism for their national economy. (Moaddel, 2013, p.2)

At the beginning of the Arab spring, Turkey was being cited as an example by some political authorities for Arab governments. Does the Arab Spring have a Turkish model? Countries in the Middle East are looking to Turkey whose conservative social and cultural outlook, but liberal political and economic program, stand out as a model of Islamic liberalism. For the US Army, this presents a long-term opportunity. Turkish security forces, trained by the US Army, have begun to train other armies (such as Syria and Jordan in the Middle East and many in Central Asia and Eastern Europe). Thus US lessons on civil-military relations or the laws of war will, in turn, be taught to these countries. Given its current popularity, America could use Turkish help as it maps out the future of the Arab Spring. (Kaya, 2012, p.26)

Contrary to what is believed, Turkey have not been good an example for those countries because the AKP government implemented totally different foreign policy. A zero problem policy with neighbouring countries was abandoned by the AKP government. Probably the Gezi Park events had influence that the AKP government changed its foreign policy. The impact of the Gezi Park protests on Turkish foreign policy will likely become a hot topic in near future for the main reason that the way how the entire process has evolved will affect Turkey's image abroad. This essay will simply discuss how the Gezi Park protests, particularly the way the AKP government has responded to the protesters, will impact Turkey's soft power abroad. (Oğuzlu, 2013, p.11)

For most of its history Turkey has had a poor relationship with its southern neighbour. After independence Turkey showed little interest in the states carved out of the Ottoman Empire's



Arab provinces, propelled by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's desire to face westwards and a lingering sense of betrayal directed towards the Arabs for having sided with Britain in the First World War. Syria was particularly problematic. Turkey and Syria were on opposite sides in the Cold War, with Ankara a founding member of NATO and Damascus becoming the USSR's closest regional ally. Bashar al-Assad's father and predecessor, Hafez al-Assad, promoted a centralised socialist economy. This meant trade relations between the two countries got nowhere – unlike Turkey's growing ties with Iraq and Iran during the 1980s. Instead, Hafez al-Assad continued to clash with Turkey: championing Syrian claims to the Turkish province of Hatay, demanding a greater share of water from the Euphrates River, which runs from Turkey into Syria, and giving military support to the Turkish-Kurdish separatist group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The end of the Cold War and a military alliance with Israel in 1996 enabled Ankara to take a much more confrontational stance in the 1990s, culminating in the 1998 threat to invade if Syria did not hand over PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, whom it was sheltering. Yet when Hafez al-Assad swiftly relented to defuse the crisis, the Adana Accords signed soon afterwards opened the door to a decade of Turkish Syrian cooperation. (Phillips, 2012, p.3)

For almost a month, Turkey has been witnessing serious challenges to its social and political stability, with protestors defying the authority of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Sparked by a harsh response to a quiet environmental demonstration over Taksim's Gezi Park, the protests caught the world by surprise, as did the government's reaction to them. The defiant attitude of Erdoğan, along with the heavy-handed approach of the police, cast a dark shadow over Turkey's ruling elites and attracted criticism from the international community, including the EU. (Paul and Seyrek, 2013, p.1)

During a time of Gezi Park events, the AKP government felt abandoned and betrayed by its European allies and US. The AKP government placed mostly importance to foreign policy with Syria that is why it always maintained intimate relations with Al-Assad regime. When Gaddafi regime was toppled in a short span of time, the AKP government changed its foreign policy completely. Turkey expected that Al-Assad regime would have been toppled by protesters at short notice. In other words, AKP government hoped that Western countries and the US would have supported opponents in Syria. But Turkey did not take accounts of Assad's military and intelligence power. Beside that Al-Assad has very powerful two political allies, their interests correspond with Al-Assad regime. Majority of Turkish Population is



Sunni-Islam. On the other hand majority of Syrian population is Sunni-Islam as well. AKP government attempted to use Sunni Islam against Al-Assad regime, because Al-Assad family is Shiite. The Assad regime receives significant support from Shia forces in the region, eager to preserve the “crescent” of Shia-led states that stretches from Iran, through Iraq, to Syria. Tehran has long maintained close economic and security ties with the Alawi regime in Damascus. Now, in order to keep its ally in power and preserve its own influence, Iran has redoubled its support by sending more money and arms, providing military advisors and even deploying Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) commanders and soldiers to support the regime. Hezbollah’s close ties with Assad and the IRGC have led it to intervene as well, sending fighters from Lebanon to reinforce the Syrian government. Iraq’s Shia-led government deeply worries about the possible effects of a rebel victory in Syria on its own Sunni population, and thus allows Iranian planes with arms supplies bound for Syria to use its airspace. (Abramowitz and Edelman, 2013, p.12)

The AKP government suddenly started implementing leadership policy. Especially Erdogan was trying to gather under a single roof only Sunni Muslims by exemplifying Secularism. While in Cairo, Erdoğan gave an interview on Egyptian television in which he doled out advice on what he considered the lessons to be learned from his own country. His message to the Egyptian people: “do not fear secularism, because it does not mean being an enemy of religion.” (Halperin, n.d., p.9) Erdogan paid many official visits to Arab countries. He mentioned the Arab leaders and Arabic people always about secularism in every country. Middle Eastern countries were influenced by Turkish secularism for a while. When the Gezi demonstrations were suppressed heavily by Government, Turkey has lost its popularity in front of Middle Eastern countries. The AKP government declared Al-Assad as a dictator beside that gave the opponents financial and military support in Syria. Despite all supports, Opponents could not succeed to overthrow Al-Assad regime because it was more powerful the estimated for Turkish Government. The AKP government could not find political support from western countries and US. It tried to create new and much more powerful alternative military forces against the Al-Assad regime in Syria.

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Sarikaya, A., 2015. Is there relation between turkey and ISIS? *Cultural Relations Quarterly Review*, Vol. 2. Issue 4. (Autumn 2015) pp.35–39.

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