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## Turkey and NATO

**Abstract:** This article takes stock of Turkey's contributions to and benefits from the NATO in the context of an evolving strategic context and an adapting alliance. Turkey joined NATO in 1952 in the face of the then Soviet threats. As a strategically important Southern Flank nation it relieved the military pressure on Western Europe by tying down many Soviet divisions in the South and also by constituting a formidable barrier for the Soviets and the Warsaw Pact for their aspirations to have direct access to the Middle East. The dual-track approach of dialogue and deterrence/defence pursued in the years of detente of 1960s and 1970s suited Turkey, whose dialogue and economic cooperation with the Soviets and Warsaw Pact states increased. Events related to Cyprus and in particular President Johnson's letter of 1964 implying that NATO would be unwilling to defend Turkey in case of a Soviet intervention resulting from Cyprus crisis, had a profound impact on Turkey's strategic approach and pushed Turkey to re-evaluate its overall foreign relations and diversify its external ties by opening up to the Third World. The end of the Cold War was brought about, basically, as a result of the decline of communist ideology and failure of the Soviet economy. While maintaining the priority of the collective defence function, the Alliance adapted itself to the end of the Cold War by agreeing to additional missions in its new strategy. Turkey continued to give priority to the collective defence mission and made important contributions to Alliance's new functions through a robust participation in its crisis management operations, to its partnership programs and in facing up the emerging security challenges. The crises that may affect the peace, security and stability in the North Atlantic area concern regions in Turkey's vicinity such as Ukraine or the Middle East (Arab Spring related developments). In short, Turkey continues to contribute to and benefit from the new Alliance.

**Keywords:** Turkish Foreign Policy, NATO.

### Introduction

2012 was the 60th anniversary of Turkey's joining NATO. Perhaps today, it would be a timely exercise to take stock of Turkey's contributions to and benefits from the Atlantic Alliance. This cannot be a static exercise. International strategic context and the Alliance's response to it have evolved since the Alliance's establishment. It would, therefore make sense to dwell upon Turkey's changing role within an evolving NATO from the Cold War days to the post-Cold War international environment.

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## History

When Turkey was invited to join NATO in 1952 in the face of the then Soviet threats and pressures to its territorial integrity and sovereignty, the Alliance was merely three years old. In 1949, the Alliance was created through the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty (a.k.a. the Washington Treaty) by the United States, Canada and Western European countries to guarantee that the latter would not be overrun by the Soviet tanks in the way that Eastern Europe was overrun and that they could focus on building their economies and healing their societies with the knowledge that the United States would come to their defense.

The vital role that the Alliance played for European security could not be better summarized than the words of James Goldgeier in his opinion piece published in the New York Times on the occasion of awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union in October 2012:<sup>1</sup>

In awarding this year's Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union, the Nobel committee quite rightly noted the EU's critical role in Europe's transformation 'from a Continent of war to a Continent of peace.' But as Europeans celebrate what they have accomplished since World War II, they should not forget that without the United States and NATO, they could not have been successful. By creating economic interdependence and then building deep political, cultural and societal ties, the Union enabled Western Europeans –and later Central and Eastern Europeans– to build prosperity. The horror of two world wars receded into the past. But prosperity is only possible when security is assured. And without the United States and NATO, peace would not have been possible.

This truism touches Turkey-NATO interaction in two distinct ways: 1) Turkey, though not being a member of the EU or its predecessor EEC<sup>2</sup>, has immensely benefited, as a European country, from the security guarantees provided by NATO and the United States. 2) At the same time Turkey, being a staunch ally often described as 'the anchor of the Southern Flank of the Alliance,' was also a significant contributor to overall European security and NATO strategy. By tying down many Soviet divisions in the south, the Southern Flank was effectively relieving pressure on Central Europe. Furthermore, in addition to contributing to European Security, the Southern Flank was also a barrier for Soviet access to Middle Eastern Oil. By its very existence, NATO's Southern Flank constituted a formidable barrier for the Soviets and the Warsaw Pact on their aspirations to have direct access to the Middle East and the Mediterranean sea. In short, Turkey benefited from its inclusion in NATO, and NATO has benefited from Turkey's membership.

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1 Goldgeier, James, "Don't Forget NATO", commentary in the New York Times, 16 October 2012.

2 Turkey was interested in 1950's to cooperate with the then EEC and has signed Association Agreement with the then EEC in 1963, has a Customs Union Agreement with the EU, which went became effective in December 1995, and has started accession negotiations with the EU in 2005.

## NATO's Evolution

NATO's history, in a sense, is a history of adaptation. Perhaps NATO owes the attribution of being 'the most successful Alliance in history' to its ability to adapt to the strategic circumstances. It is an interesting turn of events that major shifts in European strategic landscape have all been associated with events surrounding Berlin. If we can divide the life of the Alliance since its establishment roughly into three periods, all are ushered in, albeit symbolically, by events relevant to Berlin. It was, among other developments, the blockade of Berlin in 1948 that was instrumental in bringing about the creation of the Alliance in 1949. Then came the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Though this development represented the height of the Cold War (following the establishment of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 in response to admission of then West Germany to NATO), it also signaled the beginning of the period of detente or relaxation of tensions and the movement by the US from massive retaliation strategy to flexible response.<sup>3</sup> Again in this period, in 1966-67 France withdrew from the integrated military structure of NATO. (Also as a consequence of this French withdrawal, NATO Headquarters moved from Paris to Brussels). The 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall symbolized the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the post-Cold War era.

## Turkey and NATO in the Cold War period

Turkey enjoyed friendly relations with the Soviets in the years immediately preceding the establishment of the Republic. Turkish war of independence was supported by the new Soviet state in the aftermath of the First World War since it was perceived as a contribution to the struggle against "imperialism".<sup>4</sup> This state of cordial relations also continued during the interwar period. During and after the Second World War, Stalin put pressure on Turkey, threatening its independence and territorial integrity requesting basing rights on Turkish Straits and certain Eastern provinces of Turkey. In 1945 it renounced the Turco-Russian Treaty of Friendship and Non-aggression of 1925. It was under these circumstances that eventually in 1952, also after its contribution to the Korean War against "communist aggression", Turkey (together with Greece), was invited to join NATO at the height of the Cold War. It was a staunch Ally at a critical geostrategic location. Turkish and Greek membership would mark the first successful enlargement of NATO.

Even though the Soviets withdrew their territorial claims from Turkey in 1953 following the death of Stalin, tensions and crisis continued. This was especially true for their Middle East policies. Turkey had become the linchpin of the then 'containment' policy. Containment on the western frontier was already achieved

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3 Wilson, John. (1998) "Chapter XII: Flexible Response". Retrieved from <http://www.history.army.mil/books/Lineage/M-F/chapter12.htm>.

4 Shamsutdinov, A. M., A. Şemsutdinov, and A. Hasanoğlu. *Kurtuluş Savaşı Yıllarında Türkiye-Sovyetler Birliği İlişkileri*. Cumhuriyet, 2000.

through the creation of NATO. In the Middle East, containment was initially achieved through the Baghdad Pact in 1955. Soviets had perceived this as being squarely counter to all their strategic interests in the region. After the overthrow of the Hashemite royalty in Baghdad in 1958, Iraq withdrew from the Baghdad Pact. It was substituted by CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) which included also Iran and Pakistan, further antagonizing the Soviets. CENTO survived until the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979.<sup>5</sup> Turkey was member of both NATO and CENTO, linking one to the other.

During this Cold War period, even though Turkey was a flank country, more often than not, it was involved in major security related developments. For example in 1959 Jupiter missile systems were deployed in Turkey, provoking Soviet reaction.<sup>6</sup> The downing of a US U-2 spy plane in May 1960 led to accusations by the Soviets that Turkey allowed the use of its territory for aggressive actions. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 resulted, among other things, in the removal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey.

## Years of Détente

During the years of detente, Turkey's security policy continued to be pursued within NATO framework and in harmony with the NATO's "dual-track" approach of dialogue and deterrence/defense as elaborated in the Harmel Report.<sup>7</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s Turkey's political dialogue and economic cooperation with the Soviets and Warsaw Pact states increased.

Events related to Cyprus had a profound impact on Turkey's strategic approach. In particular President Johnson's letter of 1964 implying that NATO would be unwilling to defend Turkey in the case of a Soviet intervention resulting from the Cyprus crisis disappointed Turkey.<sup>8</sup> Turkey re-evaluated its overall foreign relations and diversified its external ties by further opening up to the Islamic countries and the Third World.

Economic relations with the Soviets advanced to include major industrial projects such as refineries, steel mills as well as energy trade. Yet, some problems lingered on, such as the communist ideology broadcasts to Turkey from then East Berlin which was considered as subversive by Turkey, or some spying incidents.

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5 Dimitrakis, P. (2009). British Diplomacy and the Decline of CENTO. *Comparative Strategy*, 28 (4), pp. 317-331.

6 Kamel, Ayhan. (n.d.) "İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın Bitiminden Günümüze Kadar Türk-Rus İlişkileri". Retrieved from [http://www.dispolitika.org.tr/dosyalar/akamel\\_p.htm](http://www.dispolitika.org.tr/dosyalar/akamel_p.htm).

7 *Report on the Future Tasks of the Alliance: Harmel Report*. Brussels: NATO Information Service, 1968. Print.

8 Bölükbaşı, Süha. "The Johnson Letter Revisited", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 29.3 (1993): 505. Academic Search Complete Web.

## Post-Cold War Period

NATO adopted itself to the end of the Cold War, initially through the adoption of its “New Strategic Concept” in 1991. (There are varying views on the causes of the end of the Cold War, but a most prevalent one is summarized by Joseph Nye as “the decline of communist ideology and the failure of the Soviet economy.”<sup>9</sup> It should also be added that Ronald Reagan’s steadfast policies in confronting the Soviets and Gorbachev’s attempts for reform through “*Perestroika*” and “*Glasnost*” were also instrumental, but most argue that even in the absence of these latter factors, the Soviet ideology and economy would have continued to decline.) Furthermore on this occasion, for the first time NATO’s Strategic Concept was published as a public document. This transformation was continued in the next iterations of the strategy in 1999 and then in 2010 in the Lisbon Summit. The main shift was the acknowledgement that NATO did not consider any country as its adversary, extended the hand of friendship to its former adversaries and the risks and threats that the Alliance faced were multi-faceted and multi-directional. (This also implied that the Alliance capabilities, as well as its command and force structures had to be more mobile, flexible and deployable). In particular the “newer” strategy that was agreed at the Lisbon Summit of 2010 stipulated three core missions for the Atlantic Alliance: 1) The enduring mission that always constituted the cornerstone of NATO: Collective defense and Article 5 commitments, 2) The promotion of security through crisis management operations basically reflecting the Alliance’s readiness to extend peace through strategic projection of security (such as its operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, off the shore of Horn of Africa and in Libya), and 3) Cooperative approach to security meaning that NATO does not aspire to become a global cop, performing every security function but intends to cooperate with partners in the face of converging global priorities and security crises, in short deepening and widening its engagement with partners, as well as arms control. The new strategy also emphasizes that NATO will deter and defend against emerging security challenges such as the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, terrorism, instability or conflict beyond NATO’s borders, cyber attacks and the disruption of the flow of energy supplies – where and when they threaten the security of individual Allies or the Alliance as a whole.

With respect to the *first task*, collective defense, the Strategic Concept of the Alliance reiterates the Allies’ commitment to ensuring that NATO can deter and defend against any threat to Allied populations and territories and has the “capabilities” to do so. Actually, as far as collective defense was concerned, NATO’s motto has always been “deterrence and defense”. Deterrence comes before defense, because if deterrence is successful, you don’t have to defend, ie. you don’t have to fight. And the concept of deterrence has two main components: a) having the

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9 “Who Caused the End of the Cold War?”, Joseph Nye, The Huffington Post, 18.3.2010.



capabilities to do the job, and b) displaying the intention or the political will to use those capabilities (e.g. through exercises or public statements) so that deterrence is credible. This also means, in the broadest term, maintaining an appropriate mix of conventional, nuclear and missile defense forces. Collective defense will continue to require effective military forces that are deployable across Alliance territory and beyond.

In that context, despite the end of the Cold War, Turkey continued to attach importance to NATO's Article 5 -collective defense- commitments. In this Turkey is not alone: for quite a number of Allies, particularly newer members of NATO, Article 5 continues to be extremely important and as stated above, its validity has strongly been re-confirmed in the new Strategic Concept.

As far as the collective defense related missions are concerned, Turkey has participated in the Alliance's air policing over the Baltic States. This has been an important instance of Alliance solidarity, and by taking part in it with its interceptors, Turkey has demonstrated its preparedness to contribute to the defense of its Allies while also relying on them to contribute to Turkey's security. And indeed Allied solidarity with Turkey was demonstrated in connection with the crisis in Syria. All NATO countries condemned the downing of a Turkish reconnaissance plane in 2012 as well as the mortar shelling of Turkish town on the border with Syria. Most importantly, subsequent to those incidents, the Alliance took a decision to call for deployment of air defense Patriot missiles to Turkey to deter any possible missile attack from Syria and to contribute to the de-escalation of the crisis. Three Allies (US, Germany and Netherlands) took the decision to deploy Patriot missiles to Turkey, as an act of solidarity, and in January 2015, Spanish Patriots replaced the ones from the Netherlands. Perhaps it is important to note that Article 4 of the Washington Treaty has been invoked three times in the Alliance's history, and only by Turkey. (First time in 2003 during the second Iraq war, second and third times in 2012 in connection with Syria's downing of an unarmed F-4 reconnaissance fighter and mortar being fired to a town on the border.)

NATO continues to be important for Turkey for other reasons as well. The Alliance provides a transatlantic forum in which Turkey can find the opportunity to defend its security interest and shape international security together with its North American and European Allies. NATO also provides a unique integrated military structure at the disposal of the Allies.

Turning to the *second task*, the fact that the Allies undertook to promote security through a spectrum of crisis management activities, missions or operations is a recognition that the Alliance's security depends on events beyond its borders, and that crises and conflicts, failed states, and extremism elsewhere can pose a direct threat to Allies' safety. The operations that NATO has undertaken or currently undertakes with the aim of contributing to peace, security and stability, without exception concern regions in Turkey's vicinity and with which Turkey has strong links. Turkey provides significant support to all NATO-led operations and missions.

Turkey's contributions to NATO operations were estimated to amount to more than 3000 troops. The bulk of these troops are deployed as part of ISAF. That mission was completed at the end of 2014, Turkey is contributing to the follow-on mission of training, advising and assisting (Resolute Support Mission). Turkey also led two PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) in the Wardak and Jowzjan provinces of Afghanistan, and as part of the Transition Plan, all PRTs have been handed over to the Afghan government. (This has also supported NATO's comprehensive approach to crises encompassing not only military but also developmental and reconstruction dimensions). Hikmet Çetin, a former Speaker of Parliament and Foreign Minister of Turkey, served as NATO's first Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2006. The "Ankara process" that brings together the Presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan under the auspices of the Turkish President, is recognized as an important contribution to building peaceful relations between the two countries. Turkey also contributed to Operation Unified Protector in Libya in 2011. It has been among steady contributors to Operation Active Endeavour -a maritime, anti-terrorism operation in the Mediterranean- in terms of assets and personnel. It should also not be forgotten that, immediately after the end of the Cold War, when a main challenge for the Alliance was to go "out of area or out of business", Turkey was among the key countries advocating for NATO involvement in the Balkan crises (in early 1990s it was Bosnia) with a view to reducing its destabilizing effect on overall European security. While outside NATO's own responsibilities, Turkey also contributes to a number of UN and EU-led operations, including both military and police missions.

NATO's *third task*, i.e. cooperative security, involves advancing partnerships. Actually partnerships are not by any means a new feature of the way NATO conducts its business. However, the new strategy adopted in Lisbon foresees enhanced and deeper engagement with the wider world with old and new partners. There is a clear recognition in NATO's Strategic Concept that NATO's relations with other nations and international organizations within an expanded network of partnerships is essential for Euro-Atlantic and wider international security and stability. NATO has a variety of partnership frameworks: Russia, Ukraine and Georgia having their distinct fora; PFP (Partnership for Peace, for former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact and Eastern/Southeastern European countries); Mediterranean Dialogue for Middle East and North Africa countries; ICI (Istanbul Cooperation Initiative) for most Gulf states; Operational Partners such as Afghanistan and Iraq; and finally Partners Across the Globe such as Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia. Since dealing with global security concerns such as terrorism, proliferation, cyber attacks and energy security require cooperative responses, NATO, through its partnership policies, among other things, aims at developing with the desiring partners, a capability of working together. In particular, the Smart Defense and Connected Forces Initiatives launched at NATO's Chicago Summit of May 2012 (and which is explained below) require robust partner involvement.

NATO's growing partnerships are also of interest to Turkey. Turkey has established cooperative relations with countries in its region over the past decades. It

has also led multilateral cooperative regional efforts such as the establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation framework. These bilateral and multilateral relations overlap, to a great degree, with the wide network of partnerships that NATO has built, and can be seen as mutually reinforcing. An example of Turkey's role with respect to NATO's partnership is a Turkish initiative that resulted in the creation of the "Multinational Peace Force South-East Europe", and the subsequent deployment of the South East European Brigade (SEEBRIG) as part of the NATO-led force in Afghanistan in the first half of 2006.

Turkey also acts as a mentor to NATO's partners, particularly those in the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia, by helping them to make use of the political dialogue and practical defense cooperation programs that the Alliance has on offer. Among other initiatives, Turkey runs a Partnership for Peace Training Center as well as a Center of Excellence on Defense Against Terrorism in Ankara, which are open to partners.

The 2010 Lisbon Summit decisions and April 2011 Berlin Foreign Ministers conclusions on NATO's partnerships indeed were quite forward leaning.<sup>10</sup> These decisions, however, could not be fully developed and implemented because of Turkey's cooling relations with Israel, a Mediterranean Dialogue partner, due to the Mavi Marmara incident.<sup>11</sup> For the same reason, partnership aspects of NATO's Chicago Summit's decisions, in particular on Smart Defense and Connected Forces Initiative, also were slow in being developed. Earlier signs of improvement in mending the relations between the two countries (during President Obama's visit to Israel)<sup>12</sup> have once again struck an all time low following the November 2014 incidents at the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Had relations started to mend, the expectation was to positively influence also the implementation of NATO's partnership policies, recognizing that other divergences also may exist between many allies on some other aspects of partnerships.

Turkey has also been an avid supporter of NATO's open door policy. According to Turkey, the accession of new members has helped create a continuous space of democracy and security in Europe, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. It also brought new Allies in Turkey's immediate neighborhood and thereby helped to consolidate its security. NATO's enlargement may well continue in the future, not least including further invitations to states in the Balkans.

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10 Moore, Rebecca R. "Lisbon and the Evolution of NATO's New Partnership Policy", *Perceptions* (2012): 55. Retrieved from [http://sam.gov.tr/tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/perceptions\\_Spring\\_2012.pdf#page=59](http://sam.gov.tr/tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/perceptions_Spring_2012.pdf#page=59).

11 Özalp, Güven. (2012). "Türkiye'den İsrail'e NATO Vetosu". *Milliyet Newspaper*. Retrieved from <http://dunya.milliyet.com.tr/turkiye-den-israil-e-nato-vetosu/dunya/dunyadetay/23.04.2012/1531613/default.htm>.

12 Landler, Jodi Rudoren. "At YadVashem in Israel, Obama Urges Action Against Racism", *The New York Times*. Web. 25 Mar. 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/23/world/middleeast/president-obama-israel.html?pagewanted=all>.



Turkey also expresses active interest in supporting an Alliance role in the face of *emerging security challenges*, such as terrorism, energy security, maritime security, cyber security, climate change and proliferation.<sup>13</sup> For example, regarding energy security, Turkey plays an important role as an energy corridor for Europe and can help diversify energy supply routes into the territory of several Allies. As far as ballistic missile proliferation is concerned, Turkey's decision to host a radar constitutes an important element of NATO's missile defense capability (which has been agreed at the Lisbon Summit as a mission for the Alliance) which will significantly contribute to NATO's capability to provide protection to Alliance territory, populations and forces against the growing threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

## Current NATO Issues

A most acute development that affects the way NATO performs its tasks is the current **economic crisis**. The effects of the economic crisis on the Allies' government budgets and therefore on their defense spending have been severe. This has resulted in the cancellation or delays of major equipment projects, reductions in training, and cuts in personnel. Ongoing operations are also draining funds away from modernization and transformation budgets. At the same time, the defense spending gap between the United States and the European Allies has continued to increase although defense spending in the US is also set to decline, in particular as a result of the sequestration. The Libya operation had shown that European Allies could take the lead, but it depended on essential support provided by the United States. Many in the Alliance argue that if the Allies, in Europe in particular, do not act to counter this imbalance, NATO's pre-eminent role as a provider of security and performing its tasks could be jeopardized.<sup>14</sup> In 2011, then US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates also emphasized this point in his valedictory speech.<sup>15</sup> NATO Summit of September 2014 in Wales has, on paper, forged an agreement among Allies, "to reverse the trend of declining defence budget"<sup>16</sup>.

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13 Gönül, Vecdi. "Turkey-NATO Relations and NATO's Strategic Concept", *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 9.1 (2010): 15-21. Turkish Policy Quarterly. Web. <http://www.turkishpolicy.com/images/stories/2010-01-tpq/15-21.pdf>.

14 NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *NATO after ISAF – Staying Successful Together*, p. 2, Feb. 2013. Web. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions\\_94321.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_94321.htm).

15 Paris, Thom Shanker And Steven Erlanger; Thom Shanker Reported From Brussels, And Steven Erlanger From Paris. Stephen Castle Contributed Reporting From Brussels, Elisabeth Bumiller From Washington, And Romain Parlier From. "Blunt U.S. Warning Reveals Deep Strains in NATO", *The New York Times*. 11 June 2011. Web <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/11/world/europe/11nato.html?pagewanted=all>.

16 September 2014 NATO Summit Declaration, paragraph 14.

As a result, NATO has been developing a more focused, cooperative approach to the development of military capabilities. This seems to be based on the belief that the challenges facing the international system -both security and economic- require concerted and deliberate action. They argue that security risks do not simply or conveniently disappear due to a financial crisis. Nations must continue to guarantee the security of their citizens, even in times of austerity.<sup>17</sup>

NATO's approach to this has been *Smart Defense*. According to the Alliance, Smart Defense means prioritizing, specializing and adopting more multinational approaches to provide capabilities needed to perform its tasks. They will need to focus on spending their defense budgets more wisely and to make more efficient use of their resources. Smart Defense should bring greater efficiency by delivering many capabilities more cost-effectively through cooperation. Turkey has indicated a strong interest in the Smart Defense initiative and is participating in quite a number of projects either as lead nation or participating nation.<sup>18</sup>

*Connected Forces Initiative* (CFI) is another aspect of Chicago Summit's Defense Package (Chicago Defense Package) for making the Alliance's forces and capabilities suitable for the tasks of future through *NATO Forces 2020*.<sup>19</sup> The operational tempo of the Alliance forces, which is considered to be quite high due to the operation of ISAF in Afghanistan, is expected to be significantly reduced after the end of 2014 when the mission of these forces are expected to change from combat to train, assist and advise.<sup>20</sup> This would, in turn, lead to a reduction of activities that could improve the Allied nations' (and partners' too) forces' ability to work together and enhance interoperability. Therefore, the CFI aims at making up for this shortcoming through an increased focus on exercises (especially those involving NATO Response Forces – NRF, not least because it would also allow US forces' rotational participation and presence in Europe), training, education and use of technology. Turkey, like all other Allies supports this initiative as the Alliance moves from operational engagement to operational readiness.

An important issue for the Alliance is managing its *relations with the European Union*. This is relevant for most aspects of NATO's work ranging from partnership to comprehensive approach to crisis management as well as capability development. 22 NATO countries are also members of the European Union. It, therefore,

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17 NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *NATO after ISAF – Staying Successful Together*, p., 2 Feb. 2013. Web. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions\\_94321.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_94321.htm).

18 NATO Review interview with Turkish Minister of Defense İsmet Yılmaz, published on June 6, 2012.

19 NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *Summit Declaration on Defense Capabilities: Toward NATO Forces 2020*. N.p., 20 May 2012. Web. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_87594.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87594.htm?mode=pressrelease).

20 NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *ISAF Defense Ministers Prepare for Transition Milestone*. p., 22 Feb. 2013. Web. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_98737.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_98737.htm).

makes sense for the two organizations to cooperate in areas of common interest to them. After all, they have one set of forces and for that matter, one set of budgets. But because of the Cyprus issue and its membership in the EU, there are institutional difficulties in fully developing these relations. Turkey, while recognizing the importance of this indispensable partnership between the two institutions, insists that it should be conducted on the basis of the existing agreed framework. At the 'political level' it seems that the only long-term solution would come from reaching an understanding on the Cyprus issue. At the 'operational level', it seems that coordination and cooperation between NATO and the EU in theaters where they are involved together (such as Afghanistan, Kosova, counter-piracy off the coast of Somalia) *modus operandis* are working at a satisfactory level. In the area of 'capability development' it is important to avoid duplication and provide complementarity and coherence between the efforts of the two organizations, especially at a time when both have launched similar initiatives in this area (NATO's Smart Defense and EU's Pooling and Sharing). A NATO-EU Capability Group already exists to deal with these aspects.<sup>21</sup>

As had been mentioned earlier, NATO started to transform its forces and structures in accordance with the requirements of the new strategic environment which called for more mobility, flexibility and deployability. NATO's command structure, which constitutes a unique feature of NATO and the backbone of its integrated military structure, was recently reformed with these considerations in mind. Indeed the *Command Structure Reform*, agreed by NATO Defense Ministers in June 2011, reduced the number of NATO's major Headquarters from 11 to 7.<sup>22</sup> This reform seems to have confirmed İzmir as an important location among NATO's military headquarters. In a way, with the new Land Component Command in İzmir, the Alliance keeps a major NATO flag on Turkish territory in a domain for which Turkey has a traditional affinity, expertise and potential.

NATO's strategic *partnership with Russia* has a key importance in its partnership policies and structures. NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was established at the NATO-Russia Summit in Rome on 28 May 2002 by the Declaration on "NATO-Russia Relations: a New Quality". Despite the tensions of the Cold War period, in the post-Cold War era, Turco-Russian relations and friendship developed at a rapid pace. For example, today Russia is Turkey's number 2 trading partner. Thus, Turkey supports engagement with Russia policy of the Alliance enthusiastically.<sup>23</sup>

Despite this positive trend, first the crisis with Georgia in 2008 was treated as a strategic challenge by NATO countries. NATO-Russia relations, which were

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21 NATO EU Strategic Partnership, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49217.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49217.htm), updated 29 Oct. 2012.

22 *BBC News Europe*, Viewpoint: How to make Nato leaner, meaner and cheaper By Edgar Buckley Former Assistant Secretary-General of NATO, 22 Nov. 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11812560>.

23 "Turkey's Relations with NATO", <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/nato.en.mfa>.

increasingly tense after the 2008 crisis in Georgia. Just as there was a move towards “reset” in particular in US-Russian relations, the crisis in Ukraine came about. The NATO, in its Declaration of Wales Summit of September 2014 “condemned in the strongest terms Russia’s escalating and illegal military intervention in Ukraine and demanded that Russia stop and withdraw its forces from inside Ukraine and along the Ukrainian border”. It stated that “this violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity was a serious breach of international law and a major challenge to Euro-Atlantic security. For more than two decades, NATO had strived to build a partnership with Russia, including through the mechanism of the NATO-Russia Council”. Nevertheless, it went on saying that they “continue to believe that a partnership between NATO and Russia based on respect for international law would be of strategic value” and they “continued to aspire to a cooperative, constructive relationship with Russia”, “As a result, NATO’s decision to suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia remains in place. Political channels of communication, however, remain open”. On the operational side, the Alliance approved the NATO Readiness Action Plan, “in order to ensure that the Alliance was ready to respond swiftly and firmly to the new security challenges.” The Crisis in Ukraine and Crimea in 2014 brought the NATO-Russia relations at their lowest since the end of the Cold War. The NATO Secretary General, in his keynote speech at the opening of Munich Security Conference on 6 February 2015 said the efforts by Chancellor Merkel and President Hollande to find a peaceful solution to the Ukraine crisis are ‘important and urgent’. He said there was no contradiction between defence and dialogue. “A strong NATO is essential if we are to engage Russia with confidence. A constructive NATO-Russia relationship would benefit the Euro-Atlantic community and the entire international order, but international rules must be respected – not rewritten and certainly not violated.”

NATO also seems to be watching closely the evolution of the *Arab Spring*. With its insights; geographical, historic and cultural affinity with the region and its growing influence Turkey can make an important contribution to strengthening NATO’s relations with the region. NATO’s ambition for the region, for the time being, seems to be to consider how to contribute in the security field to the transition efforts of its partners in areas in which it has expertise, such as defense transformation, modernization and capacity development; civil-military relations; and security sector reform.<sup>24</sup> Yet, as the crisis in Syria and as a result of that in Iraq has transformed into a serious security threat by the radical elements, the Alliance again, in its Wales Summit Declaration of September 2014 has also focused on this issue by stating that they are deeply concerned by the growing instability and mounting transnational and multi-dimensional threats across the Middle East and North Africa region; that they will continue to closely monitor the situation

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24 *International Herald Tribune* Op-ed contributor: Anders Fogh Rasmussen, “NATO and the Arab Spring”, May 31, 2011.



and explore options for possible NATO assistance to bilateral and international efforts to promote stability and contribute to the response to the growing crisis in, and threats from, the Middle East region. They've stressed that the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (also sometimes called the self proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) poses a grave threat to the Iraqi people, to the Syrian people, to the wider region, and to our nations, and if the security of any Ally was threatened, they will not hesitate to take all necessary steps to ensure their collective defense.

The economic crisis referred to above and the burden sharing issue that it has further exposed is closely linked to the importance of maintaining the *Transatlantic Relations*. Turkey has always been considered a staunch ally, both during the Cold War and in the Post-Cold War period.<sup>25</sup> During the Cold War period, this was more due to its exposed geostrategic position as a flank country. In the post Cold War era, it seems to be due to the fact that most developments receiving the Alliance's and US's strategic attention are taking place in the vicinity of Turkey and therefore adding more strategic convergence, vision and focus to their interest. The so-called US pivoting to the Middle East and Asia-Pacific region has not weakened, but on the contrary reinforced this convergence (Actually, US has also declared that its commitment to security of Europe continues, that it sees Europe as a security provider and not as a security consumer.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, whatever US engage in Asia-Pacific region's security is also to the benefit of Europe). Needless to say transatlantic relations are not merely confined to the security domain. Transatlantic trade talks are important item on the agenda between the EU and the US. Whether defense trade issue will come within the scope of these broader trade talks and the extent of synchronization with NATO remains to be seen. Obviously Turkey would have a keen interest in these developments. Turkey is particularly concerned to be left out of any Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) as it is not a member of the EU, and its Customs Union with the EU may not automatically apply to 3rd party countries. On a separate note on security issue, as far as burden sharing issue is concerned qualitative aspects of contribution to Allied security would be as important as the quantifiable indicators such as defense spending as percentage of GDP, major defense investments as percentage of Defense Budget, deployability and sustainability of forces. Qualitative aspects of burden sharing also include soft power that Allies provide. Turkey, as mentioned above, with its geographic, historic, cultural and economic links with the areas of strategic interest for Alliance stands out as such a source of soft power.

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25 "Turkey and the West," By Bruce R. Kuniholm, **Foreign Affairs**, published by the Council on Foreign Relations, Spring 1991.

26 "THE TRANSATLANTIC LINK: AN ESSENTIAL PART OF EUROPE'S GLOBAL STRATEGY", By Erik Brattberg. Published 12 March 2013. The Swedish Institute for International Affairs.

This has been manifest for example with Turkish role in NATO's involvement in Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup>

In conclusion, the words of NATO's former Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, in a speech delivered in Ankara in February 2012, succinctly summarizes the main tenets of Turkey's involvement within NATO; "Turkey has been a vital member of NATO for 60 years. Many things have changed in that time. But our commitment to each other has not. Turkey plays an important role in our operations and we are particularly grateful for your steadfast commitment to our ISAF operation. Turkey has an important voice in our decisions. And Turkey has a vital part to play in shaping our partnerships. Together, we are the most successful military Alliance in the world. So, Turkey has done very much for NATO. It has shown its commitment to security, stability and solidarity time and again. But NATO has done a lot and does a lot for Turkey. First, Article 5 of NATO's founding treaty is still the world's most powerful insurance policy. So, the security each Ally gets out is about more than just the security you contribute. NATO remains the only structured forum that brings together North America and Europe. It is a dynamic and unique forum for Allied consultations on both the political and the military dimensions of security. All decisions are taken by consensus. So Turkey's voice matters... For sixty years Turkey has been a part of the transatlantic family. Turkey gains what all the family members gain – not just the promotion of our interests, but also the protection of our values".

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