



# Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations

**Jim Zanotti**

Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs

January 17, 2012

**Congressional Research Service**

7-5700

[www.crs.gov](http://www.crs.gov)

R41368

**CRS Report for Congress**

*Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress*

## Summary

Congress has an active role to play in shaping and overseeing U.S. relations with Turkey, and several Turkish domestic and foreign policy issues have significant relevance for U.S. interests. This report provides background information on Turkey and discusses possible policy options for Members of Congress and the Obama Administration. U.S. relations with Turkey—a longtime North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally—have evolved over time as global challenges to U.S. interests have changed. Turkey’s economic dynamism and geopolitical importance—it straddles Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia and now has the world’s 16<sup>th</sup>-largest economy—have increased its influence regionally and globally. Although Turkey still depends on the United States and other NATO allies for political and strategic support, growing economic diversification and military self-reliance allows Turkey to exercise greater leverage with the West. These trends have helped fuel continuing Turkish political transformation led in the past decade by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has Islamist roots. Future domestic political developments may determine how Turkey reconciles respect for democratic views that favor Turkish nationalism and traditional Sunni Muslim values with protection of individual freedoms, minority rights, rule of law, and the principle of secular governance. Debate on issues such as the status of Turkey’s ethnic Kurdish population, the civil-military balance, the role of religion in public life, and heightened concern over press freedom could coalesce in 2012 around a proposal for a new constitution.

Congressional interest in Turkey is high with respect to the following issues:

- Addressing ongoing change in the Middle East by coordinating policies and using Turkey’s regional example to influence political outcomes in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere; counter Iranian influence; and preserve stability;
- The decline in Israel-Turkey relations and how that might affect U.S.-Turkey defense cooperation, including arms sales to counter the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization; and
- A potential congressional resolution or presidential statement on the possible genocide of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire (Turkey’s predecessor state) during World War I.

Many U.S. policymakers also are interested in the rights of minority Christian communities within Turkey; the currently stalemated prospects of Turkish accession to the European Union (EU); promoting increased trade with Turkey; and Turkey’s role in the Cyprus dispute, especially given tensions in late 2011 over offshore gas drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean. Congress annually appropriates less than \$10 million in military and security assistance for Turkey. The EU currently provides over \$1 billion to Turkey annually in pre-accession financial and technical assistance.

In 2011, U.S.-Turkey cooperation on issues affecting the Middle East became closer, partly because Turkey agreed to host a U.S. radar as part of a NATO missile defense system. Nevertheless, developments during the Obama Administration—including Erdogan’s downgrading of relations with Israel—have led to questions about the extent to which U.S. and Turkish strategic priorities and values converge on both a short- and long-term basis. Issues on which congressional action could affect future cooperation one way or another include the possible sale of drone aircraft to Turkey to counter the PKK and a potential Armenian genocide resolution.

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction and Issues for Congress.....                | 1  |
| Background and Domestic Political Issues.....            | 6  |
| Historical Overview.....                                 | 6  |
| Changes to the Kemalist Order.....                       | 6  |
| In the Past Decade.....                                  | 6  |
| In Historical and Societal Context.....                  | 7  |
| Fethullah Gulen Movement.....                            | 8  |
| Economy and Trade.....                                   | 9  |
| Major Minority Groups.....                               | 10 |
| Kurds.....   | 10 |
| Alevis.....  | 11 |
| A New Constitution?.....                                 | 12 |
| Minority Religious Rights.....                           | 13 |
| Foreign Policy on Matters of U.S. Interest.....          | 14 |
| The “Turkish Model” and Regional Stance.....             | 14 |
| Israel.....  | 16 |
| Syria.....   | 18 |
| Iran and NATO Missile Defense.....                       | 20 |
| Iraq and the PKK.....                                    | 21 |
| Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean.....                | 22 |
| Armenia.....   | 23 |
| Afghanistan.....   | 23 |
| Regional Energy Issues.....                              | 24 |
| Turkey as a Transit Corridor and Potential Source.....   | 24 |
| Nuclear Energy.....                                      | 25 |
| Turkey and the European Union.....                       | 26 |
| Other International Relationships.....                   | 27 |
| U.S.-Turkey Relations.....                               | 28 |
| Overview.....  | 28 |
| Bilateral and NATO Defense Cooperation.....              | 30 |
| Possible U.S. Policy Options.....                        | 32 |
| Influencing Regional Change and Promoting Stability..... | 32 |
| Arms Sales and Military/Security Assistance.....         | 33 |
| Possible Armenian Genocide.....                          | 34 |
| Bilateral Trade Promotion.....                           | 35 |
| Conclusion.....  | 36 |

## Figures

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Figure 1. Turkey and Its Neighbors.....  | 5  |
| Figure 2. Major Pipelines Traversing Turkey and Possible Nuclear Power Plants.....   | 25 |
| Figure 3. Map of U.S. and NATO Military Presence and Transport Routes in Turkey..... | 31 |

## Tables

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table 1. Turkey in Brief.....                     | 3  |
| Table 2. Parties in Turkey’s Parliament .....     | 12 |
| Table 3. PKK Designations by U.S. Government..... | 21 |
| Table 4. U.S. Foreign Assistance to Turkey.....   | 31 |
| Table 5. U.S. Merchandise Trade with Turkey ..... | 35 |

## Appendixes

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Appendix A. Profiles of Key Figures in Turkey .....   | 38 |
| Appendix B. List of Selected Turkish-Related Organizations in the United States.....                | 41 |
| Appendix C. Congressional Committee Reports of Armenian Genocide-Related Proposed Resolutions ..... | 42 |

## Contacts

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Author Contact Information..... | 42 |
| Acknowledgments .....           | 42 |

## Introduction and Issues for Congress

Turkey has been an important ally for the United States since the Cold War era. As global challenges to U.S. interests have changed over time, U.S. relations with Turkey have evolved. During that time, Turkey has experienced fundamental internal change—particularly the economic empowerment of a middle class from its Anatolian heartland that emphasizes traditional Sunni Muslim values. This change has helped fuel continuing political transformation led in the past decade by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President Abdullah Gul, and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (all of whom are profiled in **Appendix A**) from the Islamic-leaning Justice and Development Party (known by its Turkish acronym, AKP, or *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi*). For decades, the Turkish republic relied upon its military, judiciary, and other bastions of its “secular elite” to protect it from political and ideological extremes—sacrificing at least some of its democratic vitality in the process. Through a series of elections, popular referenda, court decisions and other political developments within the existing constitutional order, Turkey has changed into a more civilian-led system that increasingly reflects the new middle class’s dedication to market economics and conservative values.

Turkey’s internal transformation has at least partly driven increased engagement and influence within its own region and the Muslim world, where its leaders have aspired to a foreign policy of “zero problems.” At the same time, its leaders have tried to maintain Turkey’s traditional alliances and economic partnerships with Western nations in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), routinely asserting that Turkey’s location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and its increasing soft power provides it and its allies with “strategic depth.” Thus, the geopolitical importance of Turkey for the United States in a post-September 11, 2011, world is now intertwined with its importance as a regional partner and symbol—politically, culturally, economically, and religiously.

Congressional interest in Turkey is high with respect to the following issues and questions:

- *Addressing Regional Change in the Greater Middle East:* Will Turkey’s policies and actions be reconcilable with U.S. interests in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Afghanistan with regard to political and financial support for populations, opposition movements, and transitional governments; existing and potential future sanctions against autocratic regimes; internationally mandated humanitarian and/or military action that includes or may include the use of Turkish bases or territory; and limiting Iranian influence?
- *Israel and U.S.-Turkey Defense Cooperation:* Will increasing tensions in Turkey-Israel relations hamper U.S. efforts at regional security coordination? Should these tensions affect congressional views generally on Turkey’s status as a U.S. ally and/or specifically on sales of weapons—particularly those such as drone aircraft that involve highly sensitive technology—that Turkey seeks to combat the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK, or *Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan*), a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization?
- *Armenian Genocide Resolution:* What are the arguments for and against a potential U.S. congressional resolution or presidential statement characterizing World War I-era deaths of hundreds of thousands of Armenians through actions of Ottoman Empire (Turkey’s predecessor state) authorities as genocide,

including considerations of how such a resolution would affect U.S.-Turkey relations and defense cooperation?

- *Rights of Non-Muslim Minority Religions*: What is Congress's proper role in promoting the rights of established Christian and Jewish communities and religious leaderships and their associated foundations within Turkey to choose leaders, train clergy, own property, and otherwise function independent of the Turkish government?

As of January 2012, there are 131 Members of Congress in the Congressional Caucus on Turkey and Turkish Americans.<sup>1</sup> Congress appropriates relatively small amounts of military and security assistance for Turkey compared with past sums—approximately \$8 million in FY2011, with less than \$6 million requested by the Obama Administration for FY2012. The Administration does not currently request, nor does Congress appropriate, Economic Support Fund assistance for Turkey—perhaps partly owing to the over \$1 billion in pre-accession financial and technical assistance Turkey receives from the European Union (EU).

Many U.S. policymakers also are interested in the currently stalemated prospects of Turkish accession to the EU; promoting increased trade with Turkey; and Turkey's role in the Cyprus dispute, especially given tensions in late 2011 over offshore gas drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean. Domestic Turkish political developments, possibly including a new constitution in 2012, seem likely to affect the country's civil-military balance, its debate on religion in public life, the status of its Kurdish and other minorities, and heightened concerns about press and civil society freedoms, which are in turn likely to determine who shapes Turkey's foreign policy and how they conduct it. Turkey's continued regional influence could depend on its maintaining the robust economic growth from its past decade that has led to its having the world's 16<sup>th</sup>-largest economy.

---

<sup>1</sup> Figure provided by officials of the Turkish Embassy to the United States, December 2011.

Gauging how U.S. and Turkish interests coincide has become increasingly complicated and dynamic. In 2011, U.S.-Turkish closeness on issues affecting the Middle East increased because

- Turkish leaders perceive a need for U.S. help to encourage regional democratic transition while countering actors with the potential to undermine internal Turkish and regional stability—including the Iranian and Syrian regimes and terrorists from its own ethnic Kurdish population; and
- The United States may be more dependent on its alliance with Turkey because the end of its military mission in Iraq and other possible future reductions in its Middle East footprint probably give Turkey greater influence over developments in Iraq and other parts of the region whose stability is of critical U.S. interest.

These factors have led to frequent high-level U.S.-Turkey consultation on developments in Syria, Libya, and the broader region. In addition, U.S. officials reportedly interpreted Turkey’s agreement in September 2011 to host a U.S. early warning radar as part of a NATO missile defense system for Europe as a critical sign of Turkey’s interest in continued strategic cooperation with Washington.<sup>4</sup> During the previous year, some U.S. and European policymakers and analysts had voiced concern about Turkey’s reliability as a bilateral and NATO ally owing to its active opposition to United Nations sanctions against Iran

**Table I. Turkey in Brief**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Population:</b>                                  | 78,785,548 (July 2011 est.)   |
| <b>Area:</b>  | 783,562 sq km (302,535 sq. mi., slightly larger than Texas)                                     |
| <b>Most Populous Cities:</b>                        | Istanbul 11.2 mil., Ankara 4.1 mil., Izmir 3.2 mil., Bursa 2.0 mil., Adana 1.6 mil. (2007 est.) |
| <b>Ethnic Groups:</b>                               | Turks 70%-75%; Kurds 18%; Other minorities 7%-12% (2008 est.)                                   |
| <b>Religion:</b>                                    | Muslim 99.8% (Sunni 75%-88%, Alevi 12%-25%), Others (mainly Christian and Jewish) 0.2%          |
| <b>Literacy:</b>                                    | 87% (male 95%, female 80%) (2004 est.) <sup>2</sup>   |
| <b>% of Population 14 or Younger:</b>               | 26.6% (2011 est.) <sup>3</sup>  |
| <b>GDP Per Capita:</b>                              | \$10,624 (2011 est.)  |
| <b>Real GDP Growth:</b>                             | 7.5% (2011 est.)  |
| <b>Inflation:</b>                                   | 6.2% (2011 est.)  |
| <b>Unemployment:</b>                                | 8.8% (2011 est.)  |
| <b>External Debt as % of GDP:</b>                   | 43% (2011 est.)   |
| <b>Current Account (Trade) Deficit as % of GDP:</b> | 9.8% (2011 est.)  |

**Sources:** Turkish Ministry of Economy, OECD Economic Outlook, Economist Intelligence Unit, Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook, Turkish Statistics Institute

<sup>2</sup> Literacy rates in Turkey are higher than those of other large Muslim-majority countries. For example, the Central Intelligence Agency’s World Factbook says that Egypt has a 71.4% total literacy rate, with only 59.4% of its women able to read and write, while Iran has a literacy rate of 77%, with 70.4% of women able to read and write.

<sup>3</sup> The youth population is considerably higher in Turkey than in countries in the EU, which Turkey aspires to join.

<sup>4</sup> The probability that information collected from the radar would be coordinated as necessary with another U.S. missile defense radar deployed in Israel has led to public statements of concern from Turkish officials and media, while some Members of Congress have insisted that sharing information for Israel’s potential defense should be a condition of the radar’s placement in Turkey. The text of a September 19, 2011, letter to President Barack Obama from six Senators on this subject is available at [http://kirk.senate.gov/?p=press\\_release&id=299](http://kirk.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=299).

for its nuclear program and its deteriorating relationship with and criticism of Israel—particularly in the wake of the May 2010 Gaza flotilla incident that resulted in the death of eight Turks and an American of Turkish origin.

Short-term fluctuations in the U.S.-Turkey relationship could become the norm as greater fluidity in domestic, regional, and global developments leads both actors to more frequently reassess their circumstances and positions vis-à-vis each other and significant third party actors. The two countries' acceptance of this situation might lead to shared longer-term views regarding mutual interests that facilitate broad strategic cooperation, or to more limited expectations regarding the conditions and timing under which they might make common cause.



Figure I. Turkey and Its Neighbors



Source: CRS Graphics.

## Background and Domestic Political Issues

Since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, a number of developments have transformed Turkey and its relationship with the United States. Per capita income has more than tripled (from approximately \$3,000 to over \$10,000) in the past decade. Economic dynamism and Turkey's geopolitical importance—straddling Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia—have increased its influence regionally and globally. Although Turkey still depends on the United States and other NATO allies for political and strategic support, growing economic diversification and military ties with non-NATO countries have contributed to greater Turkish leverage with the West. A number of internal and external developments have contributed to political changes, most notably the rise of the AKP and the dwindling capacity of the military and other bulwarks of Turkey's traditional secular elite to counter the initiatives of elected government representatives. Over the past decade, Prime Minister Erdogan has consolidated the AKP's hold on power.

### Historical Overview

Starting with the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, state officials self-consciously sought to define Turkey as a secular state patterning itself after the West politically, legally, socially, economically, and militarily. The military was the ultimate protector of a Kemalist order that included state control of religion; discontinuing the use of Arabic script in favor of the Latin alphabet; discouraging Islamic modes of dress; and actively promoting literacy, education, and employment among men and women of all classes and backgrounds.

### Changes to the Kemalist Order

#### In the Past Decade

That the old order is changing is clearly manifested by the political mandate enjoyed for the past decade by the AKP, which has Islamist roots. These changes have gained greater attention and momentum through failed attempts (or purported attempts) by elements within the military, the judiciary, the opposition Republican People's Party (known by its Turkish acronym, CHP, or *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), and others within the Turkish secular elite to thwart the AKP on key issues. Major AKP victories in the face of domestic pressure included:

- the 2007 election within parliament of the AKP's Abdullah Gul (a former prime minister and foreign minister) as Turkey's president;
- alleged unsuccessful plots to undermine or overthrow the government;
- the unsuccessful 2008 Constitutional Court case attempting to ban and dissolve the AKP; and
- the September 2010 passage of amendments to the 1982 military-backed constitution in a nationwide referendum, increasing military and judicial accountability to civilian and democratic institutions.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> "Balance of power," *Economist*, October 21, 2010.

Additionally, in July 2011, on the eve of the annual Turkish Supreme Military Council meetings to discuss promotions and retirements, the chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS), Isik Kosaner, resigned simultaneously with the generals who commanded the Turkish land, naval, and air forces. According to most reports and Kosaner's account, the resignations were connected with the generals' concern about the government's detention or passing over of several high-ranking officers. Civilian leaders opposed rewarding officers allegedly involved in plots purportedly hatched within the military in the early 2000s (called "Ergenekon" and "Sledgehammer") to overthrow or undermine the AKP government. Many analysts have portrayed Kosaner's resignation and his subsequent replacement by Necdet Ozel, previously the commander of the Turkish Gendarmerie, as an indication that domestic power has shifted decisively to civilian government leaders, who are now able to appoint more deferential and constrained military leaders.<sup>6</sup> In January 2012, Turkish authorities took the unprecedented step of arresting former TGS Chief Ilker Basbug in connection with the Ergenekon case. One Turkish analyst was quoted as saying in reaction, "The fact that prosecutors are now touching senior generals is a turning point in the democratization process of Turkey."<sup>7</sup>

## In Historical and Societal Context

The changes to the old order did not materialize suddenly with the AKP's rise to power. They reflect long-standing dynamics in Turkish politics and society that continue to evolve within Turkey's existing constitutional framework. Popular desires to allow greater public space for traditional Islamic-oriented lifestyles and societal participation manifested themselves politically as early as the 1950s during the rule of Turkey's first democratically elected leader, Adnan Menderes. Menderes was eventually overthrown by a military-led coup in 1960 (and subsequently hanged), and the military continued to discourage the overt influence of religion in politics, intervening again in 1971 and 1980 to replace governments that it deemed had lost control of the country or had steered it away from secularism or toward ideological extremes.

The military allowed Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs (later Prime Minister and President) Turgut Ozal to begin liberalizing the traditionally statist Turkish economy following its restoration of internal order in 1980. This helped set in motion a chain of events leading to the economic and political empowerment of millions of Turks hailing from traditional communities removed from Turkey's more secular urban centers. Subsequent social and political developments reflected accommodation of this rising middle class—many of whom migrated to bigger cities—and their values. For example, *imam hatip* religious schools, initially established for young males seeking clerical careers, became widely attended by youth from religiously conservative families.<sup>8</sup> In 1997, Turkey's first-ever Islamist-led coalition government was compelled to resign by the military, but junior members of the coalition-leading Refah (Welfare) Party went on to form the AKP,<sup>9</sup> which they characterize as a center-right reformist party without an Islamist agenda.

---

<sup>6</sup> Gareth Jenkins, "Ergenekon, Sledgehammer, and the Politics of Turkish Justice: Conspiracies and Coincidences," *MERIA Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2, June 2011; Soli Ozel, "Military Resignations: Crisis or New Beginning?," German Marshall Fund of the United States, August 3, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> "Former Turkish armed forces chief ordered held for trial," *Reuters*, January 6, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> According to *Reuters*, an estimated one third of the AKP's parliamentary members in 2010, including Prime Minister Erdogan, attended *imam hatip* schools. Simon Akam, "A 'model' Islamic education from Turkey?," *Reuters*, February 23, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> AKP members generally use the acronym "AK Party" or "AK," partly because the Turkish word *ak* means "clean" (continued...)

Popular discontent with coalition rule stemming from a 1999-2001 economic and financial crisis and perceptions of government corruption and ineffectiveness opened the way for the AKP to achieve single-party rule with its first election victory in 2002. Since the AKP came to power, the military has reportedly become less scrutinizing of its rising officers' religious backgrounds and views, taxes and regulations on the consumption of alcohol have increased, and the wearing of headscarves by women in universities and other public places has gained legal and social acceptance.

Domestic and international observers have raised concerns about the AKP government's respect for civil liberties.<sup>10</sup> Although infringement upon press freedom is of routine concern in Turkey, recent measures taken by authorities have been criticized inside and outside of Turkey as unusually severe and ideologically driven.<sup>11</sup> These measures include multiple arrests of journalists and multi-billion-dollar tax fraud penalties against the country's largest pro-secularist media firm (the Dogan Group).<sup>12</sup>

Concerns about press freedom exist against the backdrop of ongoing criminal investigations into the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer cases discussed above. Many in the media claim that even if some of the anti-government plots were real, authorities with pro-AKP leanings or sympathies for the Fethullah Gulen movement (discussed below) have used the allegations to silence or weaken political and ideological opponents.<sup>13</sup> Concerns about AKP overreach reflect anxieties among some Turks that, with the weakening of the military and other guardians of the Kemalist order, it is unclear to what extent effective checks and balances exist on Erdogan's charismatic and Islamic-friendly single-party rule.

## **Fethullah Gulen Movement**

The Fethullah Gulen movement (or community) became a nationwide grassroots movement in the 1980s as part of the emergence of the new conservative Turkish middle class. Its societal rise has roughly paralleled the AKP's political rise, and Gulen-inspired businesses, media enterprises, and civil society organizations now exercise considerable influence in Turkey.<sup>14</sup> The movement is comprised of adherents of Turkish imam Fethullah Gulen, who is now a permanent U.S.

---

(...continued)

and "unblemished," thus presenting an image of incorruptibility.

<sup>10</sup> For examples, see the U.S. State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2010.

<sup>11</sup> During her July 2011 visit to Turkey, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton referred to these measures by saying, "I do not think it is necessary or in Turkey's interests to be cracking down. It seems to me inconsistent with all the other advances Turkey has made." "Clinton says Turkey must address concerns on backsliding on rights," *Associated Press*, July 16, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Some of the penalties against the Dogan Group have been reversed on appeal to Turkish courts, while others remain under appeal.

<sup>13</sup> One widely discussed case involves the April 2011 arrest of Ahmet Sik and Nedem Sener, two prominent investigative journalists who were charged with involvement in the Ergenekon plots. Sik was reportedly close to finishing a book whose title translates as *The Imam's Army*. The book is reportedly about the Gulen movement's alleged infiltration of the Turkish police over the past 25 years. Several observers believe that the detentions of Sik and Sener were motivated by a desire to silence them rather than legitimate evidence of their criminal involvement. Jurgen Gottschlich, "Arrested Journalist's Book Claims Turkish Police Infiltrated by Islamic Movement," *Spiegel Online*, April 6, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Gulenists run *Zaman*, the most widely circulated newspaper in Turkey, and its English-language sister publication *Today's Zaman*.

resident,<sup>15</sup> and who insists that he is neutral as to political parties and leaders in Turkey.<sup>16</sup> Gulen preaches a distinctly Turkish brand of Islam that condemns terrorism<sup>17</sup> and can function in concert with secular democratic mechanisms and modern economic and technological modes of living. Gulenist-affiliated organizations also maintain a presence in the United States<sup>18</sup> and other regions worldwide.

The parallel rise of the AKP and the Gulen movement has unsettled many pro-secularist Turks who detect greater ideological bias within Turkish state and civil society institutions and who are concerned about the potential for imposition of Islamic norms and suppression of dissent. Other observers see the AKP's and Gulenists' emergence as an authentic and even necessary development in Turkey's democratic evolution because of their views' representativeness of large segments of the population. This, in these observers' view, provides a counterbalance to Turkish secularist ideology that in the past had been rigidly enforced and inculcated.

## Economy and Trade

The AKP's political successes have been aided considerably by robust Turkish economic growth that was set back only briefly as a result of the 2008-2009 global economic crisis. Growth rates, fueled by diversified Turkish conglomerates such as Sabanci and Koc as well as "Anatolian tigers" (small- to medium-sized, export-oriented businesses concentrated in central and southern Turkey), have been comparable in the past decade to those of China, India, and other major developing economies. According to the Turkish Ministry of Economy, Turkey's construction industry, with extensive projects domestically as well as in Russia, Central Asia, the Balkans, the Middle East, and Africa, was listed by *Engineering News Record* in 2010 as second only to China's in the number of projects undertaken worldwide.<sup>19</sup> Its dependence on foreign investment and exports could bring on future challenges from a potential economic slowdown in the European Union—Turkey's main trading partner.

---

<sup>15</sup> Gulen lives in seclusion at a retreat center with some of his adherents in Saylorsburg, PA, in the Pocono Mountains. He came to the United States in 1999 for medical treatment for a cardiovascular condition, and elected to stay after an ultimately unsuccessful case was brought against him in Turkey charging that he sought to undermine Turkey's secular government.

<sup>16</sup> Gulen asserted in August 2010 that "we are still at an equal distance from every party. We never told anybody to enroll in a specific [party], attend its rallies or act as its supporters." "Gulen Endorses Reform Package, Appealing for 'Yes' on Sept. 12," *Today's Zaman*, August 1, 2010. He has backed AKP-proposed constitutional amendments, but distinguished his support for the substance of the initiatives from support for the party or individual leaders that had proposed them. "Gulen Says His Call for Yes Vote Not Linked to Political Motives," *Today's Zaman*, August 25, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Days after the Al Qaeda terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Gulen took out advertisements in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* condemning the attacks as incompatible with the teachings of Islam.

<sup>18</sup> Gulenists are involved with Turkish and Turkish-American trade associations and foundations active in the United States—both regionally and in the Washington, DC, area. Such organizations reportedly include the Turkic American Alliance umbrella of organizations and the business confederation TUSKON. Ilhan Tanir, "The Gulen movement plays big in Washington," *Hurriyet Daily News*, May 14, 2010; Helen Rose Ebaugh, *The Gulen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam*, New York: Springer, 2010, p. 49. Gulenist organizations also have reportedly founded and operate more than 120 public charter schools in over 25 U.S. states. These schools have generated publicity both for their high academic quality and for questions and possible federal investigations regarding their hiring and business practices. Stephanie Saul, "Charter Schools Tied to Turkey Grow in Texas," *New York Times*, June 6, 2011; Martha Woodall and Claudio Gatti, "U.S. charter-school network with Turkish link draws federal attention," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 20, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Turkish Economic Ministry correspondence with CRS, December 2011.

An Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) forecast from 2009 projected that Turkey's economy would grow at the highest rate of any OECD member from 2011 to 2017, with projected average annual real GDP growth of 6.7%.<sup>20</sup> However, a potential Europe-related slowdown could slow 2012 growth to between 2-4%. Recent monetary policy decisions by Turkey's central bank to lower interest rates have limited foreign capital inflows and contributed to current consumer-spending-driven growth. They also have contributed to a depreciation in Turkey's currency (the lira) that might help Turkey with its import-export balance, but also possibly fuel inflation,<sup>21</sup> which Turkey seeks to control through relatively conservative fiscal policies and banking practices. Major Turkish exports include textiles, foodstuffs, iron and steel, and machinery; while major imports include chemicals, fuels, and semi-finished goods. Structural economic goals for Turkey include incentivizing greater research and development to encourage Turkish technological innovation and global competitiveness, harmonizing the educational system with future workforce needs, and increasing and diversifying energy supplies to meet ever-growing consumption demands.

The European Union is Turkey's main trading partner by far, while the United States is Turkey's fourth-largest trading partner (behind the EU, Russia, and China—see “Bilateral Trade Promotion” below). Though Turkish pursuit of new markets since 1991 has reduced trade with both the EU (from nearly 50% to just over 40%) and the United States (from over 9% to under 5%) as a percentage of Turkey's total trade, overall trade volume with both continues to increase. Over the same period, trade with Russia as a percentage of Turkey's total trade has more than doubled—from 5% to over 11%—largely due to energy imports. China's share of Turkish trade is also increasing, with volume reportedly rising from \$1 billion per year to \$24 billion per year in the past decade.<sup>22</sup> Iran (as discussed below) is—like Russia—a major source of Turkish energy. Turkey's importance as a regional energy transport corridor (see “Turkey as a Transit Corridor and Potential Source” below) elevates Turkey's increasing relevance for world energy markets while also providing Turkey with opportunities to satisfy its own growing domestic energy needs.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, Turkey has actively pursued economic opportunities with many Arab Middle Eastern countries in recent years through free trade and no-visa agreements. As political upheaval in the region continues, it could contribute to future challenges to Turkish economic growth and foreign investment.

## Major Minority Groups

### Kurds

Ethnic Kurds constitute 15%-20% of Turkey's population, and are concentrated in urban areas and the relatively impoverished southeastern region of the country. Kurdish reluctance to recognize Turkish state authority—a dynamic that also exists between Kurds and national governments in Iraq, Iran, and Syria—and harsh Turkish measures to quell claims of Kurdish identity have fed tensions that have periodically worsened since the foundation of the republic in

---

<sup>20</sup> OECD Economic Outlook No. 86, November 2009.

<sup>21</sup> “TEXT-Fitch revises Turkey's outlook to stable,” *Reuters*, November 23, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Gokhan Bacik, “Envisioning the Asia-Pacific Century: Turkey between the United States and China,” *On Turkey*, German Marshall Fund of the United States, December 8, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Transatlantic Academy, *Getting to Zero: Turkey, Its Neighbors, and the West*, June 2010, citing Turkish government statistics.

1923. Since 1984, the Turkish military has waged an off-and-on struggle to put down a separatist insurgency and urban terrorism campaign by the PKK (whose founder, Abdullah Ocalan, is profiled in **Appendix A**).<sup>24</sup> This struggle was most intense during the 1990s, but resumed after a lull in 2003 after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. The PKK uses safe havens in northern Iraq to coordinate and launch attacks, and according to the U.S. government partially finances its activities through criminal activities, including its operation of a Europe-wide drug trafficking network.<sup>25</sup> The initially secessionist demands of the PKK have since evolved to a less ambitious goal of greater cultural and political autonomy. The Turkish military's approach to neutralizing the PKK has been routinely criticized by Western governments and human rights organizations for being overly hard on ethnic Kurds—thousands have been imprisoned for PKK involvement or sympathies and hundreds of thousands have been displaced.

Turkey's AKP government—which has a sizeable constituency in rural Kurdish areas because of its appeal to traditional values—has acknowledged that the integration of Kurds into Turkish society will require political, cultural, and economic development approaches in addition to the more traditional security-based approach. By appealing to common Islamic identity, Erdogan and other government ministers have moved away from the state's traditional unwillingness to acknowledge the multiethnic nature of Turkey's citizenry. Thus far, however, government statements or efforts aimed at giving greater rights to Kurds and greater normalized status to Kurdish nationalist leaders and former militants have been politically undermined by upswings in PKK attacks and public manifestations of Kurdish nationalist pride. The government has adopted some measures allowing greater use of Kurdish languages in education, election campaigns, and the media. Kurdish nationalist leaders demand that any future changes to Turkey's constitution not suppress Kurdish ethnic and linguistic identity. They also seek to modify the electoral law to allow for greater Kurdish nationalist participation in Turkish politics by lowering the percentage-vote threshold (currently 10%) for political parties in parliament.<sup>26</sup>

## **Alevis**

Most Muslims in Turkey are Sunni, but 10 million to 20 million are Alevis (of whom about 20% are ethnic Kurds). The Alevi sect of Islam is an offshoot of Shiism<sup>27</sup> that contains strands from pre-Islamic Anatolian traditions. Alevism has been traditionally influenced by Sufi mysticism that emphasizes believers' individual spiritual paths, but it defies precise description owing to its lack of centralized leadership and reliance on oral traditions historically kept secret from outsiders. Alevis have long been among the strongest supporters of Turkey's secular state, which they perceive as their protector from the Sunni majority.

---

<sup>24</sup> In Footnote 2 of a September 2011 report, the International Crisis Group stated that Turkish government figures estimate that 11,700 Turks have been killed since fighting began in the early 1980s. This figure includes Turkish security personnel of various types and Turkish civilians (including Turkish Kurds who are judged not to have been PKK combatants). The same report states that Turkish estimates of PKK dead during the same time period run from 30,000 to 40,000. International Crisis Group, *Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency*, Europe Report No. 213, September 20, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Treasury Department Press Release, "Five PKK Leaders Designated Narcotics Traffickers," April 20, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> In the 2011 election, 61 members of the Kurdish nationalist Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) ran as independents for individual geographic constituencies because of a calculation that the party would not reach the 10% threshold. These independents won 36 of the constituencies and 6% of the national vote.

<sup>27</sup> For information comparing and contrasting Sunnism and Shiism, see CRS Report RS21745, *Islam: Sunnis and Shiites*, by Christopher M. Blanchard; and CRS Report WVB00001, *Sunni and Shi'a Islam: Video Brief*, by Christopher M. Blanchard.

## A New Constitution?

The AKP has proposed that a new constitution replace the one imposed by the military in 1982. Most observers expect that a new constitution would more firmly place the state's governing mechanisms—including the executive, military, judiciary, Supreme Electoral Council, Council of Higher Education, and Supreme Board of Radio and Television—under democratic civilian control. Other possible changes include greater emphasis on individual rights and greater delegation of authority to provincial and local officials. It is unclear whether furthering civilian control in an era of AKP dominance is compatible with the goal of strengthening Turkish civil liberties and decentralizing state power. Future debate over a new constitution and its implementation might include discussion of the potential merits and drawbacks of single-party rule and robust executive power. Do Turks prefer a system that is more subject to the personal direction of popular leaders, or one that might sacrifice some expediency of action in favor of greater consensus across party and ideological lines? This debate could be shaped by Turkey's economic outlook and its citizens' concerns about potential national security threats.

Although the AKP's June 2011 electoral victory provided it with a significant mandate and nearly 50% of the vote, its inability to garner a 60% supermajority in Turkey's unicameral parliament (the Turkish Grand National Assembly) has led most analysts to conclude that the AKP will need to find opposition support for its constitutional proposals. The need for consensus has dimmed the prospect that Erdogan could use the constitutional reform process to vest greater power in the presidency—an office that he may seek near the end of his current term as prime minister.

A Constitutional Reconciliation Commission including all four parties represented in parliament—the AKP, the secular-leaning CHP, the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), and the Kurdish nationalist Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)—was formed in late 2011, led by Parliamentary Speaker Cemil Cicek, who has stated his goal of having a new constitution approved by popular referendum by the end of 2012. Analysts debate whether Erdogan will seek to redefine himself as a more consensus-oriented politician in the debate over constitutional reform, or whether he will try to establish his preferences by applying greater political pressure on his opponents if significant disagreements arise.

**Table 2. Parties in Turkey's Parliament**  
(Based on national elections held in June 2011)

| Party   | June 2011 Pct Vote | Members of Parliament | General Orientation                        |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Justice and Development Party (AKP)<br>Leader: Recep Tayyip Erdogan | 49.8%              | 326                   | Economic liberalism, social conservatism   |
| Republican People's Party (CHP)<br>Leader: Kemal Kilicdaroglu       | 26.0%              | 135                   | Social democracy, pro-secular              |
| Nationalist Action Party (MHP)<br>Leader: Devlet Bahceli            | 13.0%              | 53                    | Nationalism                                |
| Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)<br>Leader: Selahattin Demirtas      | 6.6% <sup>a</sup>  | 36                    | Ethnic Kurdish interests, social democracy |

**Source:** Supreme Electoral Board of Turkey, Parties and Elections in Europe Website

- a. This is the percentage vote figure for the 61 BDP members who ran in the election as independents for individual geographic constituencies, as described in footnote 26.



BDP support for constitutional proposals that address the questions of Kurdish civil, linguistic, and cultural rights and local autonomy could become particularly important in light of increases in PKK violence and Turkish reprisals following the June election, as discussed above. The first clause of Article 3 of the 1982 constitution reads, “The Turkish state, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity. Its language is Turkish.” Because the constitution states that its first three articles are unamendable, even proposing a change could face judicial obstacles. Some observers believe that recent arrests of prominent BDP members and other Kurdish nationalist political activists, as well as a December 2011 Turkish air strike that mistakenly killed 35 civilians,<sup>28</sup> might be souring the atmosphere for constitutional compromise.

The AKP government maintains that a new constitution will advance democratization and help the country meet criteria for EU membership. In one European observer’s analysis of constitutional changes, however, “European integration and democratization [in Turkey] are increasingly hostage to the struggle for power among the elites”: the “not-so-new” AKP ruling elite and the “remnants of the so-called Kemalist establishment.”<sup>29</sup>

## **Minority Religious Rights**

While U.S. constitutional law prohibits the excessive entanglement of the government with religion, republican Turkey has maintained secularism by controlling or closely overseeing religious activities in the country—partly in order to counter the openly Islamic nature of previous centuries of Ottoman rule. Sunni Muslims, although not monolithic in their views on freedom of worship, have better recourse than other religious adherents to the democratic process for accommodation of their views because of their majority status. Minority Muslim sects (most prominently, the Alevis) and non-Muslim religions largely depend on legal appeals, political advocacy, and outside support from Western countries to protect their rights in Turkey.

U.S. and congressional concerns focus on the rights of established Christian and Jewish communities and religious leaderships and their associated foundations and organizations within Turkey to choose leaders, train clergy, own property, and otherwise function independently of the Turkish government.<sup>30</sup> Grievances are routinely expressed by Members of Congress through proposed congressional resolutions and through letters to the President and to Turkish leaders on behalf of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the spiritual center of Orthodox Christianity based in Istanbul.<sup>31</sup> On December 13, 2011, for example, the House passed H.Res. 306—“Urging the Republic of Turkey to safeguard its Christian heritage and to return confiscated church properties”—by voice vote.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Ayla Albayrak, “Turkey’s Erdogan Promises Probe of Airstrike,” *wsj.com*, December 30, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Emiliano Alessandri, “Democratization and Europeanization in Turkey After the September 12 Referendum,” *Insight Turkey*, vol. 12, no. 4, fall 2010.

<sup>30</sup> The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has included Turkey on its watch list since 2009. The commission’s website carries its 2011 annual report (covering April 2010-March 2011). See also the State Department’s International Religious Freedom Report for July-December 2010, September 13, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> The Patriarchate traces its roots to the Apostle Andrew. The most commonly articulated congressional grievances on behalf of the Patriarchate—whose ecumenicity is not acknowledged by the Turkish government, but also not objected to when acknowledged by others—are the non-operation of the Halki Theological School on Heybeliada Island near Istanbul, the requirement that the Patriarch be a Turkish citizen, and the failure of the Turkish government to return previously confiscated properties.

<sup>32</sup> H.Res. 306 was sponsored by Representative Edward Royce. Other proposed resolutions from the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress (continued...)

During the early years of the Turkish Republic, the state began confiscating the properties of religious groups as part of its efforts to control religious life in the country. In late August 2011, Prime Minister Erdogan announced that Turkey would return properties confiscated since the adoption of a 1936 law governing religious foundations, to the extent the properties are still held publicly.<sup>33</sup> Properties to be returned potentially include schools, orphanages, cemeteries, commercial properties, and hospitals affiliated with various Orthodox and Catholic churches and Turkey's Jewish community. According to one report, "The government's willingness to explore restitution does not yet cover the hundreds, if not thousands, of property seizures from individuals, or the takeovers that occurred before 1936. An even more contentious point is confiscation that occurred prior to the formation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923".<sup>34</sup> According to a U.S. diplomat based in Turkey, a Greek school in Istanbul was returned to a religious community association in November 2011, with more property returns expected in the near future pursuant to each organization's application for return of applicable properties and the determination of the government's General Directorate of Foundations.<sup>35</sup> Prior to this decree, the European Court of Human Rights made multiple rulings requiring Turkey to pay compensation to various religious-affiliated organizations after earlier attempts by the government to remedy the situation did not satisfy the organizations.

## Foreign Policy on Matters of U.S. Interest

### The "Turkish Model" and Regional Stance

As unrest and political change have occurred across much of the Arab Middle East since late 2010, Turkey might perceive that the United States has greater need of Turkish support in the region. Turkey exercises considerable regional influence given its military, economic, and political power—aided by its status as an established Muslim-majority democracy and its membership in NATO.

Political activists in several countries facing leadership transitions or potential transitions—including Tunisia and Egypt—have cited Turkey as a potential model for their own political systems. This has raised questions among leaders and analysts about which aspects of Turkey's system these activists seek to emulate—whether it is its outwardly secular mechanisms, its historical military guardianship, its economic vitality, its political system in which civilian leaders with Islamist leanings have exerted increasing power, or some combination of these.

Arab interpretations of the "Turkish model" tend to emphasize the recent democratic and economic empowerment of Turkey's middle class and the connection between this and Turkey's

---

(...continued)

include H.Res. 180 ("Urging Turkey to respect the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate"), and S.Res. 196 ("A resolution calling upon the Government of Turkey to facilitate the reopening of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Theological School of Halki without condition or further delay").

<sup>33</sup> According to reports, the foundations would receive compensation for property since transferred to third parties. See Sebnem Arsu, "Turkish Government to Return Seized Property to Religious Minorities," *New York Times*, August 29, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Dorian Jones, "Turkey: Making Room for Religious Minorities," *EurasiaNet.org*, October 3, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> CRS correspondence with U.S. diplomat based in Turkey, November 2011.

emergence as a regional power with a foreign policy independent of the West. Some Western views favor some notion of military guardianship of the state from disorder and ideological extremes (a model that many Westerners have historically equated with republican Turkey).<sup>36</sup> While some in both the Arab world and the West suspect that Turkey's government favors the rise of pro-democracy Islamist movements that emulate the AKP, Prime Minister Erdogan was criticized by North African Islamists during his September 2011 trip to Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya for voicing his support for secular democratic mechanisms. Many analysts and Turkish officials have stated that Turkey might more aptly be characterized as an inspiration than as a model because the historical experiences and characteristics of its people, society, and economic system are distinct from those in Arab countries.<sup>37</sup>

Within the context of ongoing regional change, Turkey has sought to balance its support for country-specific democratic reforms with its interests in overall stability. Turkish interests appear to be threefold: (1) It is the leading Muslim-majority democracy in the region with an interest in promoting its political values, (2) it has a significant economic stake in the region, and (3) it is concerned about the regional balance of power and possible spillover effects for its own security. Turkish leaders are particularly concerned about developments at or near its borders with Syria and Iraq, especially given Turkey's own on-and-off struggles with Kurdish separatist militants who maintain safe havens in northern Iraq and who could be further strengthened by their fellow ethnic Kurds in Syria, Iraq, and Iran if those states' governments are weakened.

In 2011-2012, Turkey has shown greater openness to supporting U.S. and NATO goals in the region than it did prior to the widespread political change. One could argue that in the wake of the Iraq war, Turkey believed that U.S. intervention in the region had played a large part in creating or exacerbating political instabilities and sectarian tensions that fueled regional security threats, including the terrorist threat Turkey faces from the PKK. Some analysts postulated that Turkey's opposition to U.N. sanctions against Iran and greater closeness with Iran, Syria, and Hamas were based on a belief in the superiority of a regional security order with more local and less U.S. and Western involvement.

The changes of 2011 appear to have altered Turkey's stance on this question. One of Turkey's concerns is that region-wide unrest, especially in neighboring Syria, could endanger the political stability of the entire area and possibly jeopardize Turkey's political and economic influence in the region. Turkish leaders also may have concluded that U.S. involvement—while perhaps not without risks—is desirable on balance in order to counter Iranian and possibly Syrian capacities and designs for capitalizing on regional uncertainty. This could at least partly account for Turkey's agreement in September 2011 to host the missile defense radar discussed above, which is generally thought to be focused on defending against potential Iranian missile threats to Europe. After Turkish leaders were unable to use their supposedly close relations with the Asad regime in Syria and the Qadhafi regime in Libya to persuade either regime to address demands of protesting citizens and opposition groups, they accepted and to some extent adopted the U.S. and European approach of supporting opposition groups and sanctions against those regimes.

---

<sup>36</sup> For a critique of viewpoints that favor a Turkey-like military-led transition in Egypt, see Steven Cook, "The Turkish Model for Egypt? Beware of False Analogies," *blogs.cfr.org*, February 4, 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Nathalie Tocci, Omer Taspinar, Henri Barkey, Eduard Soler i Lecha, and Hassan Nafaa, *Turkey and the Arab Spring: Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy from a Transatlantic Perspective*, German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2011; Sinan Ulgen, *From Inspiration to Aspiration: Turkey in the New Middle East*, Carnegie Europe, December 2011.

This change in approach by Prime Minister Erdogan seems consistent with his desire to project a regionally populist stance that is not viewed by Arab populations as siding with autocrats or entrenched commercial interests. Turkey may seek even greater U.S. help to maintain regional stability if unfolding events significantly disrupt its security or threaten Turkish trade or attraction of outside investment.

However, as one Turkish analyst has written, interpreting Turkey's changes in regional policy as signaling a fundamental shift toward greater closeness to the West may be overstating matters in the same way that Turkey's supposed shift away from the West may have been overstated in earlier years:

Turkey's behavior is driven by the same objective as ever. Partnership with the West, at this current juncture, is a valuable instrument as long as it enhances Ankara's ability to meet the new challenges and expands the room to maneuver, not because of its inherent value. The quest for strategic autonomy still instructs Turkish leaders' thinking on international affairs, and is unlikely to disappear.<sup>38</sup>

Several observers noted in late 2011 that Turkey's aspirations for a zero-problem foreign policy at its borders may be at an end given reversals in its relations with Syria and Iran. In this regard, two analysts from the International Crisis Group asserted that

Turkey may be left with a foreign policy with no conceptual framework to unite its many contradictions: an unsustainable mix of alliance with the U.S. and confrontation with Israel; a social-economic model built on convergence with Europe but in which the EU negotiation process has stalled; idealistic enthusiasm for Muslim democrats but continued links to other authoritarian leaders; public displays of Muslim piety alongside support for secular constitutions; and bitter arguments with all those keen to capitalize on the above to cast doubt on Turkey's role in the Middle East.<sup>39</sup>

## **Israel**

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Turkey and Israel enjoyed close military ties that fostered and reinforced cooperation in other areas, including a free trade agreement signed in 2000. In recent years, however, Turkey-Israel relations have worsened. This downturn can be attributed to a number of factors, including the May 2010 Gaza flotilla incident (mentioned above) and Turkish-Israeli differences over Israel's invasion of Hamas-controlled Gaza in December 2008. It also parallels the military's declining role in Turkish society, and the greater empowerment of Prime Minister Erdogan and other AKP and national leaders who seem increasingly to believe that criticizing many of Israel's policies is both merited and domestically popular.

Turkey's deteriorated relationship with Israel, which Erdogan may be emphasizing to some extent as part of his strategy to gather populist regional support, presents problems for the United States because of the U.S. desire to coordinate its regional policies with two of its closest allies. Although a lack of rapprochement may not render U.S. security coordination efforts impossible, it could have eventual repercussions for regional order and undermine the alignment of U.S. and

---

<sup>38</sup> Saban Kardas, "Quest for Strategic Autonomy Continues, or How to Make Sense of Turkey's 'New Wave,'" *On Turkey Analysis*, German Marshall Fund of United States, November 28, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Hugh Pope and Peter Harling, "Are there 'zero problems' for Turkey?," *Daily Star* (Lebanon), November 29, 2011. See also Steven Cook, "Turkey: From Zero Problems to Cok Problems," *blogs.cfr.org*, November 14, 2011.

Turkish interests elsewhere in the region. This could especially be the case if Turkey-Israel disagreements on Palestinian issues result in future high-profile incidents or if Turkey seeks to actively exclude Israel from regional security arrangements with Egypt or other countries.

In September 2011, diplomatic efforts aimed at getting Israel to apologize to Turkey for the killing of eight Turks and an American of Turkish origin during the May 2010 Gaza flotilla incident reportedly stalled due to Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's concerns about the potential Israeli public reaction.<sup>40</sup> When the report of the U.N. Secretary-General's panel of inquiry on the incident—also known as the “Palmer Report”<sup>41</sup>—was leaked by the *New York Times* and other outlets, Turkey announced that it was downgrading its diplomatic relations with Israel to the second secretary level—effectively expelling Israel's ambassador to Turkey.<sup>42</sup> It also suspended all Turkey-Israel military agreements. The countries' bilateral free trade agreement remains in effect.

Turkey continues to insist on both an apology and compensation from Israel for families of the Turkish fatalities in return for the possibility of normalization. It also seeks a lifting of the Israeli naval blockade on the Gaza Strip. Erdogan spoke of the possibility of having Turkish naval vessels accompany future aid flotillas to Gaza, but subsequently said that no plans for such voyages were imminent. Erdogan also speculated that international sanctions against Israel could be a source of leverage in solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>43</sup> Though Erdogan supports a negotiated two-state solution to the conflict, he backs Palestinian pursuit of United Nations membership and Fatah-Hamas rapprochement as well.

It is debatable whether an active U.S. brokering role would improve or worsen prospects for Turkey-Israel rapprochement and for future U.S. relations with both countries. In a December 2011 speech, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said:

Like all of you, I've been deeply troubled by the direction of the Turkish-Israeli relationship. Turkey is a key NATO ally and has proven to be a real partner in our effort to support democratic change and stand against authoritarian regimes that use violence against their own people. It is in Israel's interest, Turkey's interest, and U.S. interest, for Israel to reconcile with Turkey. And both Turkey and Israel need to do more to put their relationship back on the right track.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> The deaths took place under disputed circumstances.

<sup>41</sup> The report is available at <http://go.ynet.co.il/pic/news/Palmer-Committee-Final-report.pdf>. The panel was chaired by former New Zealand Prime Minister Sir Geoffrey Palmer, and included former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe and one participant each from Turkey and Israel. The report expressly provided that its findings were not intended to decide legal questions. Upon the report's leak, Turkish officials disputed the report's finding that Israel's naval blockade of the Gaza Strip was legal, notwithstanding the report's criticism of Israel's handling of the incident itself.

<sup>42</sup> Turkey similarly downgraded diplomatic relations with Israel in 1980 following Israel's enactment of a law on the status of Jerusalem that was deemed a violation of international law by U.N. Security Council Resolution 478. Resolution 478 passed on August 20, 1980 by a vote of 14-0, with the United States as the lone abstention. Turkey reinstated Israel's ambassador in 1992 following the 1991 Madrid Conference that signaled the beginning of the Middle East peace process. Linda Gradstein, “No end in sight for downward spiral in Turkish-Israeli ties,” *JTA*, September 6, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> *Time* magazine staff interview with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, *globalspin.blogs.time.com*, September 26, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Transcript of remarks by Secretary Panetta at Saban Forum, Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, December 2, 2011, available at <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4937>.

Many analysts have postulated that growing tension between Turkey and Israel could lead to increased congressional opposition to U.S. strategic cooperation with Turkey and perhaps to greater willingness to consider passing a so-called Armenian genocide resolution (see “Possible Armenian Genocide” below).<sup>45</sup> Following the May 2010 flotilla incident, the Senate passed S.Res. 548 by voice vote on June 24, 2010. The resolution condemned the attack by the “extremists aboard the Mavi Marmara,” invoked Israel’s right to self-defense, and encouraged “the Government of Turkey to recognize the importance of continued strong relations with Israel and the necessity of closely scrutinizing organizations with potential ties to terrorist groups” (a reference to the Turkish Islamist non-governmental organization IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, the main organizer of the flotilla).<sup>46</sup> In early 2011, a *New York Times Magazine* article quoted a Turkish diplomat responsible for U.S. relations as saying, “We’re getting a lot of flak from the Hill. We used to get hit by the Greek lobby and the Armenian lobby, but we were protected by the Jewish lobby. Now the Jewish lobby is coming after us as well.”<sup>47</sup>

## Syria<sup>48</sup>

Before civil unrest broke out in Syria in March 2011, Turkey had cultivated close relations with the regime of Syrian President Bashar al Asad by such means as holding joint military exercises, negotiating free trade and no-visa travel agreements, and mediating Syria’s indirect talks with Israel in 2008. When unrest began in Syria, Erdogan and other Turkish leaders urged Asad to respond by implementing significant political reforms. Asad’s failure to undertake serious reforms and his reliance on violent suppression of demonstrations and targeting of oppositionists led Erdogan to criticize Asad and his tactics with increasing intensity. Erdogan called on Asad to step down in November 2011, following attacks against Turkish diplomatic installations in Syria by pro-Asad demonstrators and against buses carrying Turkish pilgrims returning from Mecca by regime military forces at a security checkpoint. Foreign Minister Davutoglu subsequently announced multiple military, financial, and diplomatic sanctions against Asad’s regime.<sup>49</sup> Turkish leaders reportedly consult frequently on Syria with President Obama and his top national security aides.

Events in Syria have prompted Turkish officials to state that they consider the ongoing unrest a matter of internal Turkish concern, not simply a matter of international affairs. In June 2011,

---

<sup>45</sup> “Turkey-Israel fallout threatens wider damage, say analysts,” *Agence France Presse*, September 2, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> In the House, Representative Dina Titus sponsored H.Res. 1532, which was not passed but garnered 23 co-sponsors. H.Res. 1532 would have called upon the Secretary of State to investigate the “role of any foreign governments, including the Republic of Turkey, which may have aided and abetted the organizers of the recent Gaza Flotilla mission to breach Israeli coastal security and assault the naval defense forces of the State of Israel.”

<sup>47</sup> James Traub, “Turkey’s Rules,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 20, 2011.

<sup>48</sup> For more information, see CRS Report RL33487, *Unrest in Syria and U.S. Sanctions Against the Asad Regime*, by Jeremy M. Sharp and Christopher M. Blanchard.

<sup>49</sup> The initial sanctions announced included: (1) suspending the Turkey-Syria High Level Strategic Cooperation Council; (2) travel ban and asset freeze on leading regime officials and businessmen believed to be responsible for or supportive of violent repression of protests; (3) embargo on sales of weapons and military equipment; (4) preventing the transit of weapons/military equipment to Syria from third countries through Turkey; (5) halting dealings with Syria’s central bank; (6) freezing financial assets of Syrian government in Turkey; (7) halting lending relationships with Syrian government; (8) prohibiting new transactions with Syrian Trade Bank; and (9) suspending the Eximbank credit agreement, which had been intended for financing infrastructure projects in Syria. After Syria retaliated in December 2011 with its own sanctions, including suspending the Turkey-Syria free trade agreement and imposing a tariff (about 30%) and duties on Turkish imports, Turkey responded with a similar tariff on Syrian imports.

security forces loyal to the Asad regime increasingly targeted alleged outposts of rebel sentiment and activity in northwest Syria near the Turkish border. As a result, over 20,000 refugees fled over the border into temporary camps maintained by Turkey. Over half of these returned to Syria, but additional refugee flows in late 2011 and early 2012 have brought the current number to approximately 9,200.<sup>50</sup> Turkey also now serves as a base for exiled leaders in both the Syrian National Council (SNC) and the Free Syrian Army (FSA). The SNC aims to offer a clear political alternative to Asad for the international community, while the FSA is comprised of defectors from Syria's security forces who may be seeking to lead an armed insurrection against the Asad regime. Turkish officials maintain that they do not support violent means of opposition.

Turkey's increasing embrace of the Syrian opposition while Asad remains in power entails risks for Turkey. It also could further antagonize Iran—with possible implications for regional developments in Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere. Some reports state that Turkish officials might consider using military means to establish and maintain a buffer zone in northern Syria under an international mandate supported by the Arab League and United Nations Security Council. A buffer zone—similar to the one Turkey established in northern Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War—could provide a place of refuge for endangered Syrian citizens without involving Turkish territory. However, it also could be a staging area for defectors and oppositionists—possibly with future Turkish and other external assistance—to mount an armed campaign against the Asad regime, similar to the role eastern Libya played for the NATO-backed opposition forces that toppled the Qadhafi regime in 2011. When asked at a December 14, 2011, hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia to describe Turkey's support for the Syrian opposition, Frederic Hof, Special Coordinator for Regional Affairs at the State Department, said:

Turkey has provided shelter to the Free Syrian Army. What the Turks tell us, and we have no reason to disbelieve them, is that they are not arming these folks and sending them across into Syria. That is—that is their position. We have no reason to disbelieve it.

I am sure that—that Turkey is examining many, many, many different options and contingencies right now, based on a variety of scenarios that—that could come up. I am not aware of any near-term plans, you know, to establish safe zones or whatever on Syrian territory.

Some analysts have expressed concern that the AKP government's potential influence with the SNC and FSA could exacerbate sectarian animus between Syria's majority Sunnis and ruling minority Alawites. They also worry it could skew the relative influence of various groups within the Syrian opposition in favor of the Muslim Brotherhood and to the detriment of Syrian Kurds. Reports indicate that Asad might possibly be seeking to placate Syrian Kurds' opposition to his regime while simultaneously encouraging PKK terrorist activity in Turkey by granting Kurds greater autonomy in Syria's northeast.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Ipek Yezdani, "More Syrian refugees come to Hatay camps," *Hurriyet Daily News*, January 7, 2012.

<sup>51</sup> See, e.g., Samia Nakhoul, "Analysis: Turkey and allies want Syria's Assad out, just not yet," *Reuters*, December 16, 2011; Phil Sands, "Assad: friend or foe of the Kurds?," *The National* (United Arab Emirates), January 4, 2012.

## Iran and NATO Missile Defense

In September 2011, Turkey agreed to host a U.S. forward-deployed early warning radar at the Kurecik base near the eastern Turkish city of Malatya as part of a NATO-approved missile defense system that most analysts believe is intended to counter potential ballistic missile threats to Europe from Iran.<sup>52</sup> A senior U.S. Administration official called this agreement “probably the biggest strategic decision between the United States and Turkey in the past 15 or 20 years.”<sup>53</sup> Some Iranian officials, after initially expressing displeasure with Turkey’s decision, have stated that Iran would target the radar in Turkey in the event of a U.S. or Israeli airstrike on Iran. CNN reported in January 2012 that a Turkish foreign ministry official announced that the radar has been activated.<sup>54</sup>

The decision to host the missile defense radar was made within the context of a region with shifting dynamics. Differing Iranian and Turkish interests in the region have led to increased competition for influence over developments in Iraq and Syria, and for the admiration of Arab populations on issues such as championing the Palestinian cause. Turkey’s renewed closeness with the United States has further fueled Turkey-Iran tensions at a time when the Obama Administration is continuing its efforts to isolate Iran because of its nuclear program and its support for various actors seen as destabilizing forces in the region.

Yet, Turkish officials continue to stress the importance of good relations with Iran and meet regularly with Iranian counterparts, in the interests of maintaining stability and trade, and also to keep open the possibility of mediating the international impasse on Iran’s nuclear program. Following some reports that Iran might be assisting the PKK, Iran and Turkey publicly committed in October 2011 to cooperating against the PKK and the Iranian Kurdish separatist organization Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) that also maintains safe havens in northern Iraq. Turkey has stated that it will comply with the U.N. sanctions against Iran that it voted against in 2010 (as opposed to U.S. and EU sanctions, which are not binding on it). Turkish officials still plan to boost trade with Iran from approximately \$15 billion to \$30 billion a year by 2015. Iran accounts for at least 30% of Turkey’s oil imports. To safeguard its energy trade with Iran, reports indicate that Turkey, along with other countries such as Japan and South Korea, may be seeking an exemption from the Obama Administration from U.S. sanctions enacted at the end of 2011 under the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 112-81).<sup>55</sup> These sanctions, which target financial institutions that deal with Iran’s central bank and are seen as aimed at Iran’s oil export business, might otherwise apply to oil import transactions involving the major Turkish refinery Tupras and Turkish public lenders.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> The proposed elements of the European Phased Adaptive Approach to missile defense proposed by the Obama Administration and a deployment timeline are described in a September 17, 2009, White House press release available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/FACT-SHEET-US-Missile-Defense-Policy-A-Phased-Adaptive-Approach-for-Missile-Defense-in-Europe/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/FACT-SHEET-US-Missile-Defense-Policy-A-Phased-Adaptive-Approach-for-Missile-Defense-in-Europe/). See also CRS Report R41549, *Missile Defense and NATO’s Lisbon Summit*, by Steven A. Hildreth and Carl Ek.

<sup>53</sup> Thom Shanker, “U.S. Hails Deal with Turkey on Missile Shield,” *New York Times*, September 15, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> “Part of NATO missile defense system goes live in Turkey,” *CNN*, January 16, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Per section 1245 of P.L. 112-81, these sanctions do not apply to a financial institution if the President determines and reports to Congress that the institution’s primary country of jurisdiction has significantly reduced oil imports from Iran, or if the President waives the sanctions for national security reasons.

<sup>56</sup> Taylan Bilgic, “Iran sanctions bode ill for Turkey’s economy,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, January 6, 2012.



## Iraq and the PKK

Turkey cooperated with the United States in the 1991 Gulf War and following the U.S.-led 2003 Iraq invasion, but the Turkish parliamentary decision in 2003 not to allow U.S. forces to use its territory to open a northern front significantly affected U.S.-Turkey relations. The decision showed the United States that in its strategic relationship with Turkey, it could no longer rely solely on past legacies of cooperation and its close ties with the Turkish military.<sup>57</sup> Starting in late 2007, U.S. willingness to provide greater counterterrorism support to Turkey in its struggle against the PKK helped move U.S.-Turkey priorities in Iraq toward greater alignment.

For Turkey, strong governance and stability in Iraq is important particularly due to Turkish interests in denying the PKK use of Iraqi territory for its safe havens; discouraging the cross-border spread of Kurdish separatist sentiment; countering Iranian influence; and accessing Iraq’s potentially lucrative export markets and ample energy resources (which could eventually lessen Turkey’s dependence on Iranian and Russian energy imports). U.S. officials have repeatedly expressed appreciation for Turkey’s constructive role in post-conflict Iraq, with which it has growing trade and where it has improved relations with the Kurdish Regional Government. Turkey’s role in Iraq is likely to become more significant in light of the U.S. military mission’s transition in Iraq to a civilian security assistance mission at the end of 2011.

Clashes between Turkish forces and the PKK intensified following Turkish national elections in June 2011. The PKK’s renewed resort to violence might be motivated by a number of factors, including the example of insurgencies in Arab countries throughout the region, a desire to take advantage of the fluidity of the regional turmoil, and a hope to gain greater support for Kurdish rights in the domestic political and constitutional debate among Turkish lawmakers and citizens. The PKK and individuals and groups believed to be affiliated with it have carried out multiple attacks on both military and civilian targets. As a result, Turkey has increased air and artillery attacks on PKK safe havens in Iraq, aided by intelligence-sharing from the United States, and has reportedly involved ground forces across the border as well. Given its military drawdown from Iraq, the United States is now reportedly basing the unarmed Predator drone aircraft that it uses to gather intelligence on the PKK at Turkey’s Incirlik air base.<sup>58</sup> Other reports indicate that Prime Minister Erdogan has reiterated Turkey’s desire to purchase drones (including some with armed capability) from the United States for its own use. Such purchases would likely require congressional notification (see “Arms Sales and Military/Security Assistance” below).<sup>59</sup>

**Table 3. PKK Designations by U.S. Government**

| Designation                              | Year |
|--|------|
| Foreign Terrorist Organization           | 1997 |
| Specially Designated Global Terrorist    | 2001 |
| Significant Foreign Narcotics Trafficker | 2008 |

<sup>57</sup> For further information, see CRS Report R41761, *Turkey-U.S. Defense Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges*, by Jim Zanotti.

<sup>58</sup> “US deployed Predators to Incirlik: Davutoglu,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, November 13, 2011. According to Secretary of Defense Panetta, the Iraqi government has given the United States permission to keep flying Predator drones on surveillance missions over northern Iraq. Craig Whitlock, “U.S. drones allowed in Iraqi skies,” [washingtonpost.com/blogs/checkpoint-washington](http://washingtonpost.com/blogs/checkpoint-washington), December 16, 2011.

<sup>59</sup> “Procurement, Turkey,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment - Eastern Mediterranean*, December 16, 2010; “US- (continued...)”

## Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean<sup>60</sup>

Since Cyprus became independent of the United Kingdom in 1960, Turkey has viewed itself and has acted as the protector of the island's ethnic Turkish minority out of concerns over its treatment by the ethnic Greek majority.<sup>61</sup> Responding to Greek and Cypriot political developments that raised concerns about a possible Greek annexation of Cyprus, Turkey's military intervened in 1974<sup>62</sup> and established control over the northern third of the island, prompting an almost total ethnic and de facto political division along geographical lines. That division persists today and is the subject of continuing international efforts aimed at reunification.<sup>63</sup> The ethnic Greek-ruled Republic of Cyprus is internationally recognized as having jurisdiction over the entire island, while the de facto Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the northern third has only Turkish recognition.

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

Turkey has assertively opposed efforts by the Republic of Cyprus and other Eastern Mediterranean countries—most notably Israel—to agree upon a division of offshore energy drilling rights before Cyprus's political future is resolved. In response to drilling initiated in September 2011 by the Republic of Cyprus in the Aphrodite gas field off Cyprus's southern coast, Turkey sent its own seismic research ships with a naval escort to waters off the Cypriot shore in agreement with the Turkish Cypriot regime.<sup>64</sup> Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots oppose Greek

---

(...continued)

Turkey agree on delivery schedule for Predators," *Today's Zaman*, September 25, 2011.

<sup>60</sup> For more information on this subject, see CRS Report R41136, *Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive*, by Vincent Morelli.

<sup>61</sup> Turkey views its protective role as justified given its status as one of the three guaranteeing powers of the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee that was signed at the time Cyprus gained its independence. The United Kingdom and Greece are the other two guarantors.

<sup>62</sup> Turkish intervention in Cyprus with U.S.-supplied arms prompted Congress to impose an embargo on military assistance and arms sales to Turkey from 1975 to 1978. This Cold War-era disruption in U.S.-Turkey relations is often cited by analysts as a major factor in Turkey's continuing efforts to avoid overdependence on the United States or any other country for military equipment or expertise.

<sup>63</sup> Turkey retains between 30,000 and 40,000 troops on the island (supplemented by approximately 5,000 Turkish Cypriot soldiers and 26,000 reserves). "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - Eastern Mediterranean*, October 30, 2009. This is countered by a Greek Cypriot force of approximately 12,000 (including roughly 1,300 Greek officers and soldiers seconded to Cyprus) with reported access to 50,000 reserves. "Cyprus," *Jane's World Armies*, November 3, 2011. The United Nations maintains a peacekeeping mission (UNFICYP) of approximately 900 personnel within a buffer zone headquartered in Cyprus's divided capital of Nicosia. Since the mission's inception in 1964, UNFICYP has suffered 179 fatalities. The United Kingdom maintains approximately 3,000 personnel at two sovereign military bases on the southern portion of the island at Akrotiri and Dhekelia.

<sup>64</sup> "Gas drilling heightens east Mediterranean tension," *UPI*, September 16, 2011.

Cypriot drilling without a solution to the larger question of the island's unification. Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz announced plans in November 2011 for the state-run Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) to begin land drilling for oil and natural gas in northern Cyprus.

Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot regime have indicated that their openness to continued unification talks will end in July 2012 if the Republic of Cyprus assumes the rotating EU presidency as it is currently slated to do. The United States has voiced concern about tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly because the Greek Cypriot drilling is being conducted by Texas company Noble Energy. According to one source, Prime Minister Erdogan told President Obama in September 2011 that Turkish ships would not interfere with Greek Cypriot drilling.<sup>65</sup>

## **Armenia<sup>66</sup>**

In late 2009, Turkey and Armenia, aided by Swiss mediation, agreed to joint protocols that would have normalized relations and opened borders between the two countries. They also would have called for a dialogue and impartial examination of the historical record with respect to “existing problems,” widely believed to refer to the issue of World War I-era deaths of hundreds of thousands of Armenians through the actions of Ottoman Empire authorities. Turkish leaders were unwilling to push for parliamentary ratification of the protocols, however, due to Azerbaijani objections to Turkey-Armenia normalization prior to desired progress on the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>67</sup> Azerbaijan influences Turkish policy on this issue because of its close cultural and economic ties with Turkey, particularly as Azerbaijan is a key energy supplier. Another possible cause for Turkish reluctance was a 2010 Armenian constitutional court ruling that indicated inflexibility on the genocide issue. Subsequently, Turkey and Armenia have made little or no progress toward ratifying the protocols or otherwise normalizing their relations, though the protocols remain under consideration in Turkey's parliament.<sup>68</sup> In December 2011, Turkish media reported that Foreign Minister Davutoglu had consulted with Swiss officials to determine prospects for reviving talks aimed at normalization in the event of Armenia-Azerbaijan progress on Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>69</sup> The tenor of relations between Turkey and Armenia could be an important factor in a potential congressional debate over a future genocide resolution.

## **Afghanistan**

Turkey has twice commanded the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and has had troops participating in ISAF since shortly after its inception in December 2001. Turkey's approximately 2,000 troops concentrate on training Afghan military and security forces

---

<sup>65</sup> CRS conversation with Turkish think tank analyst in Istanbul, September 30, 2011.

<sup>66</sup> For more information, see CRS Report RL33453, *Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Political Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

<sup>67</sup> Nagorno-Karabakh is a predominantly ethnic-Armenian-populated enclave within Azerbaijan's international borders. Disputes over its status led to armed conflict in 1991 in parallel with the Soviet Union's dissolution and the independence of both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The conflict ended with a 1994 ceasefire, but Armenian troops still occupy portions of the territory. The Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (co-chaired by the United States, Russia, and France, and including both Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as Turkey and a number of other European countries) has been trying to negotiate a permanent settlement since then.

<sup>68</sup> In the meantime, Turkey and Azerbaijan signed a 10-year security and mutual assistance agreement in August 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Serkan Demirtas, “Turkey examines ways to revive Armenia dialogue,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, December 7, 2011.

and providing security in Kabul, where Turkey commands ISAF's Regional Command-Capital, as well as in Wardak (just west of Kabul) and Jawzjan (in northern Afghanistan) provinces.<sup>70</sup> In addition, some Afghan police are trained in Turkey.

As with several other NATO and non-NATO contributors to ISAF, Turkey's troops are not involved in combat. Turkey's history of good relations with both Afghanistan and Pakistan and its status as the Muslim-majority country with the greatest level of involvement in ISAF are thought by some analysts to help legitimize ISAF's presence. These relations could become more important to preparing Afghanistan for stable, self-sufficient rule, with the United States and other ISAF countries scheduled to wind down their military presence in Afghanistan in future years.

## **Regional Energy Issues**

### **Turkey as a Transit Corridor and Potential Source<sup>71</sup>**

Turkey's role as a regional energy transport corridor is growing, particularly with respect to natural gas. With supply sources that include Russia, Iran, other littoral Caspian Sea states, and—potentially—Iraq, the importance of Turkey's security for world energy markets has increased. Turkey's location has made it a key country in the U.S. and European effort to establish a southern corridor for natural gas transit from diverse sources.<sup>72</sup>

In October 2011, Azerbaijan and Turkey reached final terms for the transit of Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz Phase 2 natural gas through the southern corridor. The terms specified that 565 billion-700 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas would transit Turkey, of which 210 bcf would be available for Turkey's domestic use.

Recent announcements of significant natural gas resources in the eastern Mediterranean have prompted Turkey to get involved. State-run TPAO has agreed to assist the de facto Turkish Cypriot regime with oil and gas exploration in northern Cyprus, and is pursuing deals with international companies for exploration in and off the coast of Turkey. It is unclear whether these efforts will produce substantial energy finds. It is also unclear whether they will lead to greater political conflict with other countries newly active in Eastern Mediterranean energy exploration—particularly Israel and the Republic of Cyprus, both of which have already made sizeable natural gas discoveries.

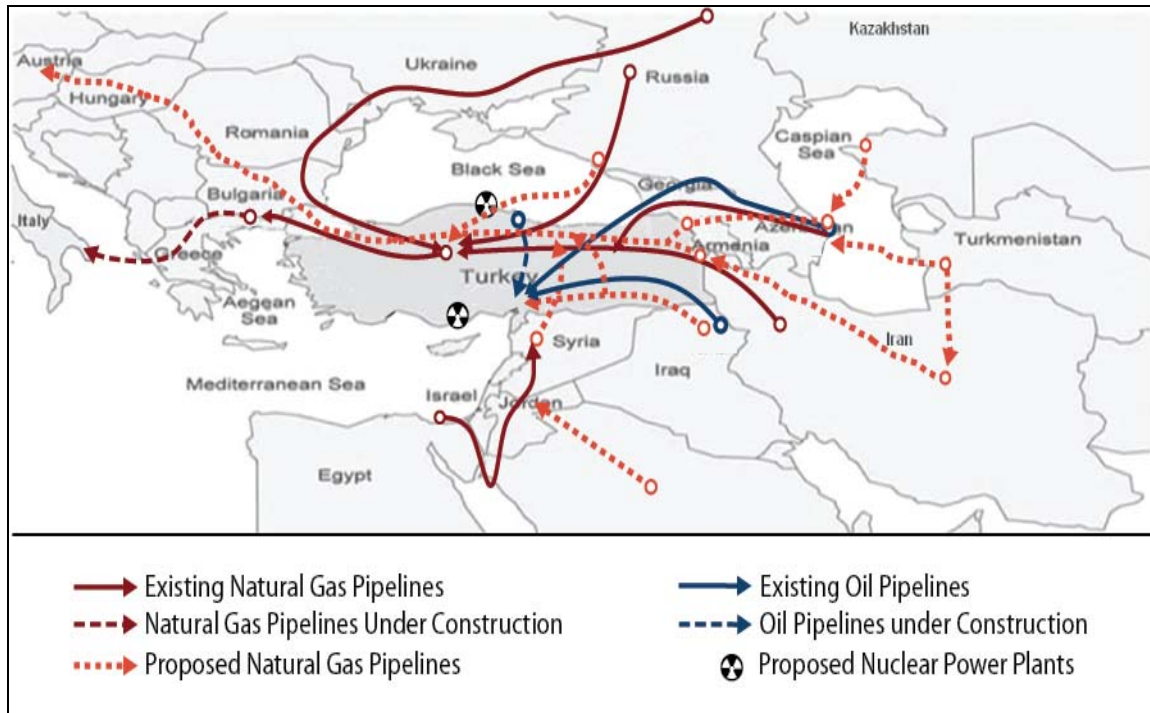
---

<sup>70</sup> Information dated January 2011 provided to CRS by Turkish Embassy in Washington, DC.

<sup>71</sup> This subsection was co-authored with Michael Ratner, Specialist in Energy Policy.

<sup>72</sup> The U.S. energy strategy in Europe is designed to work together with European nations and the European Union to seek ways to diversify Europe's energy supplies. The focus of U.S. efforts has been on establishing a southern corridor route for Central Asian and Middle Eastern natural gas supplies to be shipped to Europe. Turkey factors into the proposed pipeline projects to transport natural gas from the Caspian and the Middle East to Europe in an effort to diversify European natural gas sources. See, e.g., Transatlantic Academy, *Getting to Zero: Turkey, Its Neighbors, and the West*, June 2010.

**Figure 2. Major Pipelines Traversing Turkey and Possible Nuclear Power Plants**  
(as of September 2011)



**Source:** Turkish Economic Ministry, adapted by CRS.

**Notes:** All locations are approximate

## Nuclear Energy

Turkey has had plans for establishing nuclear power generation since 1970 but still does not have any active plants. After carrying out feasibility studies for potential sites, initial efforts to attract tenders from international companies foundered in the 1980s and 1990s due to multiple factors. These included a lack of adequate financing and environmental concerns exacerbated by the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

Given rapidly increasing rates of consumption amid robust Turkish economic growth, environmental and other political objections to nuclear power may no longer outweigh its appeal as a potentially plentiful, locally produced energy source. In addition, the fractious Turkish ruling coalitions of earlier decades have given way to AKP government leaders seemingly confident in their electoral mandate. They portray Turkey's pursuit of nuclear energy as a matter of national self-reliance and prestige.<sup>73</sup>

In June 2008, the United States and Turkey signed a 15-year "123 Agreement" for peaceful nuclear cooperation in line with international nuclear non-proliferation norms.<sup>74</sup> The nature of

<sup>73</sup> Suzanne Gusten, "Forging Ahead on Nuclear Energy in Turkey," *New York Times*, March 23, 2011.

<sup>74</sup> Turkey is also a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and has a safeguards agreement and additional protocol in place with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It is an observer to—not a full participant in—the International Framework for Nuclear Energy Cooperation (IFNEC, formerly known as the Global (continued...))

future U.S.-Turkey cooperation under this agreement is likely to depend in part on whether, when, and how Turkey constructs and operates nuclear power plants in partnership with international companies. In May 2010, Turkey signed an agreement with Rosatom—Russia’s state-run nuclear company—to have it form a subsidiary to build, own, and operate Turkey’s first nuclear power plant for an estimated \$20 billion, to be located in Akkuyu near the Mediterranean port of Mersin. Despite the proposed plant’s location near an earthquake fault line, Turkey and Rosatom reportedly plan to stay with a timetable that has construction beginning in 2012-2013 and operations beginning in 2019, even after the global concerns raised by the Fukushima Daiichi meltdown following the March 2011 earthquake/tsunami in Japan. Given that construction at Akkuyu has been postponed multiple times since the location was approved by Turkey in 1976, skepticism over the viability of the proposed plant might persist up to and even after operations begin. In addition to financial or technical obstacles, political controversy could revive over geological or environmental concerns, and proponents of diversification could increasingly oppose construction of a plant that might further Turkey’s energy dependence on Russia. Turkey is reportedly considering a contract with a Japanese company to build a second nuclear power plant in the northern town of Sinop on the Black Sea coast.<sup>75</sup>

The full range of motivations underlying Turkey’s potential use of nuclear energy is unclear, though many analysts express confidence that Turkish decision-making on the issue is significantly influenced by regional security considerations. One has written:

At this point, little evidence exists to suggest that Turkey’s nuclear energy goals are tied to future plans for weaponization. Nevertheless, it is clear that Turkey’s nuclear program, no matter how explicitly “peaceful,” is ultimately strategic in nature. Either by relieving Ankara of its dependence on foreign energy supplies or providing a hedge against potential long-term security threats, Turkey’s nuclear program has been designed with its neighbors clearly in mind.<sup>76</sup>

## Turkey and the European Union<sup>77</sup>

The Turkish government uses its demographic profile to support a bid for EU membership, arguing that it would bring a young, dynamic population to the aging ranks of Europe and boost EU influence in the Muslim world. Turkey first sought to associate itself with the then European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959, and Turkey and the EEC entered into an agreement of association in 1963. EU accession talks, which began in 2005, have been stalled owing to the opposition of key EU states—most notably France and Germany—to Turkey’s full membership.

---

(...continued)

Nuclear Energy Partnership) founded by the United States, Russia, China, France, and Japan in 2007. IFNEC promotes the peaceful use of nuclear energy by helping establish reprocessing centers for nuclear fuel.

<sup>75</sup> See World Nuclear Association website, “Nuclear Power in Turkey,” updated December 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Adam P. Williams, “Amid Growing Hopes for the Future, Turkish Nuclear Energy Ambitions Suffer Setback,” *WMD Insights*, December 2008/January 2009. Turkey is one of the regional countries analysts routinely mention could decide to pursue its own nuclear weapons program in the event that one or more countries in the region, such as Iran, achieves or declares a nuclear weapons capability. Israel is generally believed by most analysts to have had a nuclear arsenal since the late 1960s, but it maintains a policy of “nuclear opacity” wherein its nuclear weapons status remains officially undeclared. For discussion of Turkey and nuclear weapons, see CRS Report R41761, *Turkey-U.S. Defense Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges*, by Jim Zanotti.

<sup>77</sup> For more information on this subject, see CRS Report RS22517, *European Union Enlargement: A Status Report on Turkey’s Accession Negotiations*, by Vincent Morelli.

Opponents generally articulate empirical rationales for their positions, but many analysts believe that resistance to Turkish EU accession is rooted in fear that Turkey's large Muslim population would fundamentally change the cultural character of the EU and dilute the power of the EU's founding Western European states to drive the policy agenda.

Since 1995, Turkey has had a full customs union with the EU. It also is a member of the Council of Europe, along with several other non-EU states (including Russia), and is subject to the jurisdiction of the Council's European Court of Human Rights. Waning domestic expectations of and support for full accession to the EU, along with fundamental concerns over the economic and political soundness of the EU given the ongoing eurozone crisis, have contributed to an environment in which Turkish leaders, including Prime Minister Erdogan, now proclaim that the EU may need Turkey more than Turkey needs the EU.<sup>78</sup> As mentioned above, Turkey's unwillingness to normalize diplomatic and trade relations with EU member Cyprus presents a major obstacle to its accession prospects.<sup>79</sup> Other EU concerns over Turkey's qualifications for membership center on the treatment of Kurds and religious minorities, media freedoms, women's rights, and the proper and transparent functioning of Turkey's democratic and legal systems.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, the EU provides over \$1 billion in annual pre-accession financial and technical assistance to Turkey aimed at harmonizing its economy, society, bureaucracy, and political system with those of EU members.<sup>81</sup>

## Other International Relationships

As Turkey continues to exercise increased political and economic influence, it seeks to establish and strengthen relationships with non-Western global powers. It is expanding trade and defense industrial ties with China, Russia, and other countries in Asia and Africa. Turkey also has held joint military exercises with China on Turkish soil.

Turkey additionally seeks to expand the scope of its regional influence, with its officials sometimes comparing its historical links and influence with certain countries—especially former territories of the Ottoman Empire—to the relationship of Britain with its commonwealth. Through hands-on political involvement, as well as increased private trade and investment and public humanitarian and development projects, Turkey has enhanced its influence and image as a leading Muslim-majority democracy with Muslim-populated countries not only in the Middle East, but also in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Dan Bilefsky, "For Turkey, Lure of Tie to Europe Is Fading," *New York Times*, December 4, 2011. According to the *Transatlantic Trends* surveys of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the percentage of Turks who think that Turkish EU membership would be a good thing was 73% in 2004 and 48% in 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Turkey's unwillingness to open its ports to Greek Cypriot trade according to the Additional Protocol that it signed at the outset of the accession process in 2005 has prompted the EU Council to block eight out of the 35 chapters of the *acquis communautaire* that Turkey would be required to meet to the Council's satisfaction in order to gain EU membership. Thus far, one of the chapters has been fully negotiated, and 13 others have been opened.

<sup>80</sup> European Commission Staff Working Paper, Turkey 2011 Progress Report, October 12, 2011.

<sup>81</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/candidate-countries/turkey/financial-assistance/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/candidate-countries/turkey/financial-assistance/index_en.htm) for further information.

<sup>82</sup> See, e.g., Hajrudin Somun, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Balkans and 'Neo-Ottomanism': A Personal Account," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 13, no. 3, summer 2011; Yigal Schleifer, "Turkey's Neo-Ottoman Problem," *World Politics Review*, February 16, 2010; Greg Bruno, "Turkey's Near Abroad," Council on Foreign Relations Analysis Brief, September 19, 2008.

## U.S.-Turkey Relations

### Overview

The United States and Turkey have enjoyed a decades-long alliance dating from the onset of the Cold War. At the outset of the Obama Administration, U.S. officials made clear their intent to emphasize the importance of a multifaceted strategic relationship with Turkey. Subsequent bilateral and NATO-related developments during the Obama Administration have led to questions about the extent to which U.S. and Turkish strategic priorities and values converge on both a short- and long-term basis.

In April 2009, President Obama, speaking of a “model partnership,” visited Turkey during his first presidential trip abroad and addressed the Parliament in Ankara, saying that “Turkey is a critical ally.... And Turkey and the United States must stand together—and work together—to overcome the challenges of our time.” One month later, Ahmet Davutoglu, a foreign policy academic-turned-advisor to Prime Minister Erdogan, became Turkey’s foreign minister, giving Davutoglu greater visibility with regard to the more independent and assertive Turkish foreign policy course he had helped to establish when the AKP came to power in 2002. His course envisions Turkey being “in the centre of its own sphere of influence” through “strategic depth” based largely on regional soft power through geopolitical, cultural, historical, and economic influence, and having “zero problems” with the countries in its vicinity.<sup>83</sup>

Subsequent Turkish and U.S. actions and statements on Armenia, Iran, and Israeli-Palestinian issues revealed tensions between the Obama Administration and AKP government visions for overcoming regional challenges. A vote in March 2010 by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs to report H.Res. 252 on the question of a possible Armenian genocide for consideration by the full House led Turkey to temporarily recall its ambassador.

Then, in May and June 2010, two developments raised significant concerns regarding U.S.-Turkey relations:

1. Turkey’s Iranian nuclear diplomacy with Brazil—the Tehran Declaration on possible nuclear fuel swaps, followed by the Turkey-Brazil “no” vote on U.N. Security Council enhanced sanctions on Iran in Resolution 1929.
2. The *Mavi Marmara* Gaza flotilla incident and its aftermath

Some Members of Congress and Administration officials, viewing Turkey’s rhetoric and actions as (1) undermining a top U.S. priority in the Iranian nuclear issue and (2) being at odds with the U.S. characterization of Israel as an ally and Iran as a threat, openly questioned Turkey’s orientation on global security issues. Philip Gordon, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, said in June 2010,

We think Turkey remains committed to NATO, Europe and the United States, but that needs to be demonstrated. There are people asking questions about it in a way that is new, and that

---

<sup>83</sup> See Gareth Jenkins, “On the edge – The AKP shifts Turkey’s political compass,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, August 2, 2010.



in itself is a bad thing that makes it harder for the United States to support some of the things that Turkey would like to see us support.<sup>84</sup>

Officials' and analysts' questions about Turkey's foreign policy direction intensified following reports that the 2010 version of the Turkish National Security Policy Document (also known as the "Red Book") downgraded or did not explicitly list possible threats from Iran, Syria, Greece, and Armenia that were listed in previous versions. At the same time, the Red Book reportedly defined Israel's actions in the region as a threat—claiming that they induce conditions of instability.<sup>85</sup> As discussed above, however, in 2011 concerns about the compatibility of U.S. and Turkish strategic priorities and values were partly allayed by shared U.S.-Turkey interests in promoting democratic transition in the Middle East and in preventing actors such as Iran from exacerbating regional sectarian tensions and security dilemmas.

Many U.S. observers have criticized Erdogan and Davutoglu for perceived double standards and selective implementation of Turkey's stated zero-problem foreign policy. Erdogan has adamantly denounced Israel's treatment of Palestinians, especially in the Gaza Strip, and has suggested that international sanctions against Israel could help end the stalemate in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Yet, he has met with Hamas leaders in Turkey and has dubbed its members "resistance fighters" instead of terrorists; he was one of the first world leaders to congratulate Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on his disputed reelection in June 2009; and he has said in defending Sudanese President Omar al Bashir regarding allegations from Darfur and elsewhere that it is "not possible for those who belong to the Muslim faith to carry out genocide." Even as events in 2011 have led Turkey to coordinate more closely with its U.S. and other NATO allies, Erdogan has questioned their positions and/or motivations.<sup>86</sup> Though Erdogan supports a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he routinely criticizes the U.S.-led approach to the peace process in the international media.

One U.S. analyst has asserted that Erdogan's rhetoric and actions are largely calculated to appeal to and influence Turkish domestic public opinion.<sup>87</sup> A late 2010 poll indicated that despite the longtime U.S.-Turkey alliance, and despite several potential threats along Turkey's borders, a plurality of Turks see the United States as Turkey's biggest external threat.<sup>88</sup> This sentiment exists within a context of Turks' generally low favorability ratings for foreign countries, partly based on historical concerns about encirclement by outside powers—particularly the West and Russia.

---

<sup>84</sup> "US official: Turkey must demonstrate commitment to West," *Today's Zaman*, June 28, 2010.

<sup>85</sup> Ercan Yavuz, "Israeli-caused instability makes its way to Turkey's security document," *Today's Zaman*, October 29, 2010.

<sup>86</sup> For example, during a September 2011 trip to Libya, Erdogan criticized what he perceived to be Britain's and France's overly commercial interests in the country—despite Turkey's own well-documented commercial interests in Libya and participation in and support for the 2011 NATO operation there.

<sup>87</sup> Carol Migdalovitz, "AKP's Domestically Driven Foreign Policy," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 4, spring 2011.

<sup>88</sup> Sevil Kucukkosum, "Turks see U.S. as biggest external threat, poll results show," *Hurriyet Daily News & Economic Review*, January 5, 2011. A December 2010 poll, taken by the MetroPOLL Strategic and Social Research Center, which is affiliated with Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), stated that 43% of respondents viewed the United States as Turkey's primary external threat, with Israel in second place with 24%. Iran was a distant third with 3%. Reports posit that the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq is a major shaper of the Turkish people's threat perception, along with U.S. closeness to Israel and congressional action on Armenia. Ibid.

However, an early 2011 poll indicated improvements in Turkish perceptions of U.S. influence in the world.<sup>89</sup>

## **Bilateral and NATO Defense Cooperation<sup>90</sup>**

The U.S.-Turkey alliance has long centered on the countries' defense relationship, both bilaterally and within NATO. With several challenges to U.S. national security emanating from the greater Middle East, Turkey is arguably a more significant ally for the United States at present than during the Cold War. Turkey's location near several global hotspots makes the continuing availability of its territory for the stationing and transport of arms, cargo, and personnel valuable for the United States and NATO. Announcements during 2011 that Turkey would host the early warning missile defense radar and that NATO would transform its air command center in Izmir into a ground forces command center while closing land bases in Germany and Spain have reinforced Turkey's strategic importance for the alliance.

Although the Turkish military remains the most trusted institution in the country and retains greater power in the political process than most (if not all) of its NATO counterparts, its decline in influence in the last decade has led many observers to conclude that the military's traditional role as the primary interlocutor for the United States and other NATO allies is in jeopardy, if not already obsolete. Adjusting to changes in the Turkish civil-military power structure presents a challenge for U.S. officials in adjusting future modes of bilateral interaction. It might lead to an approach that is more multidimensional than the well-established pattern some observers see in which the State Department and other U.S. officials rely on the "Pentagon to wield its influence."<sup>91</sup>

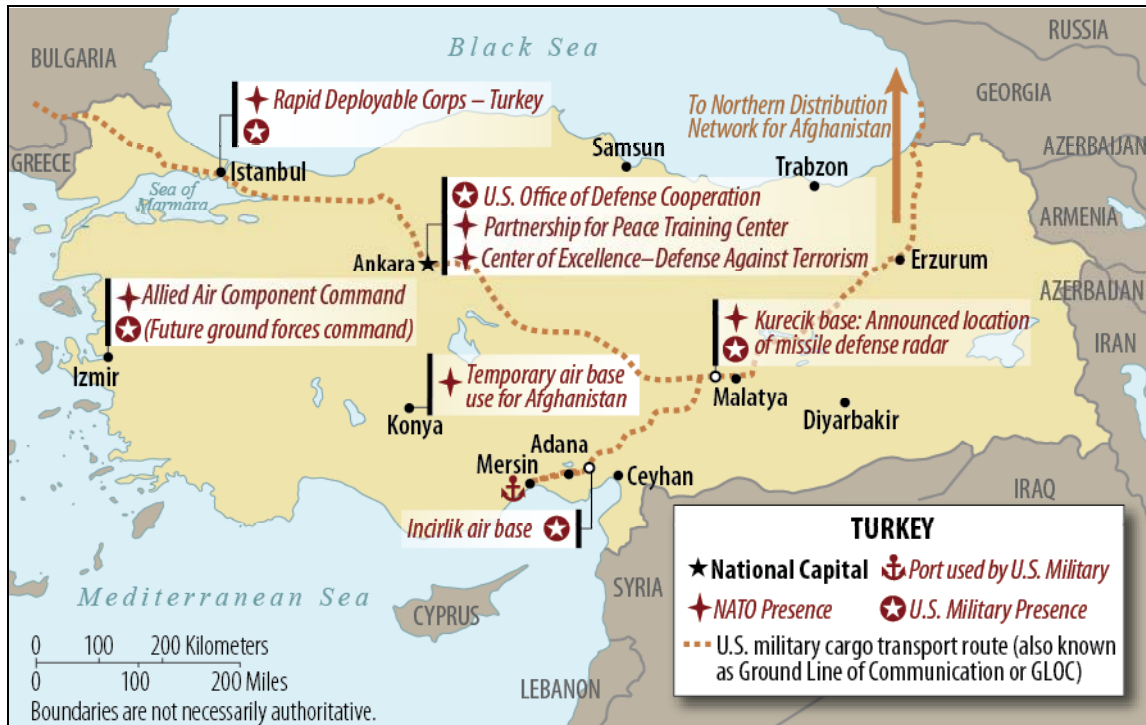
---

<sup>89</sup> British Broadcasting Corporation World Service Poll, "Views of US Continue to Improve in 2011 BBC Country Rating Poll," March 7, 2011. The BBC poll, which was conducted from December 2010 to February 2011, claimed that 35% of Turks believe that U.S. influence in the world is positive (up from 13% in 2010), and that 49% believe that U.S. influence is negative (down from 68% in 2010).

<sup>90</sup> For detailed information on this subject, see CRS Report R41761, *Turkey-U.S. Defense Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges*, by Jim Zanotti.

<sup>91</sup> Henri J. Barkey, "Turkey's New Global Role," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 17, 2010. The challenge for U.S. officials to manage cooperation with Turkey could be magnified by the way the U.S. government is structured to work with Turkey. Former U.S. ambassador to Turkey Mark Parris has said, "For reasons of self-definition and Cold War logic, Turkey is considered a European nation. It is therefore assigned, for purposes of policy development and implementation, to the subdivisions responsible for Europe: the European Bureau (EUR) at the State Department; the European Command (EUCOM) at the Pentagon; the Directorate for Europe at the [National Security Council (NSC)], etc. Since the end of the Cold War, however, and progressively since the 1990-91 Gulf War and 9/11, the most serious issues in U.S.-Turkish relations – and virtually all of the controversial ones – have arisen in areas outside "Europe." The majority, in fact, stem from developments in areas which in Washington are the responsibility of offices dealing with the Middle East: the Bureau for Near East Affairs (NEA) at State; Central Command (CENTCOM) at the Pentagon; the Near East and South Asia Directorate at NSC." Omer Taspinar, "The Rise of Turkish Gaullism: Getting Turkish-American Relations Right," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 13, no. 1, winter 2011, quoting an unpublished 2008 paper by Mark Parris.

**Figure 3. Map of U.S. and NATO Military Presence and Transport Routes in Turkey**



**Source:** Department of Defense, NATO; adapted by CRS

**Notes:** All locations are approximate. Incirlik air base is a Turkish base, part of which is used for limited purposes by the U.S. military. Additional information on the U.S./NATO military presence in Turkey is available in CRS Report R41761, *Turkey-U.S. Defense Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges*, by Jim Zanotti.

Since 1948, the United States has provided Turkey with approximately \$13.8 billion in overall military assistance. Current annual military and security assistance, however, is limited to approximately \$6 million annually in International Military Education and Training (IMET); International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE); and Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR) funds. This assistance facilitates U.S.-Turkey counterterrorism cooperation against Al Qaeda and other worldwide terrorist networks.

**Table 4. U.S. Foreign Assistance to Turkey**

(\$ in millions)

| Account  | FY2010     | FY2011     | FY2012     |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| International Military Education and Training (IMET)                   | 5.0        | 4.0        | 4.0        |
| International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE)            | --         | 0.5        | 0.5        |
| Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR) | 3.0        | 1.4        | 1.1        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>8.0</b> | <b>5.9</b> | <b>5.6</b> |

**Source:** U.S. Department of State.

**Note:** All amounts are approximate.

## Possible U.S. Policy Options

Although U.S. and Turkish interests and policies intersect in many respects, Turkey's growing regional influence and military, economic, and political self-reliance have decreased its dependence on the United States. The appeal of U.S. and Western power, prestige, values, and military technology might currently outstrip that of potential competitors, but Turkish actions might be affected by possible perceptions of decreasing U.S. global and regional preeminence. Given the impact Turkey has and potentially could have on a number of major U.S. priorities, a prescriptive approach that defines the U.S. relationship with Turkey in terms of one or two specific issues may have negative repercussions for cooperation on matters of significant U.S. interest.

Members of Congress might consider maintaining or initiating active congressional inquiry into and coordinating with Obama Administration positions on Turkey. U.S. policymakers might consider cultivating other NATO and Middle Eastern allies whose cooperation will increase the attractiveness for Turkey of cooperation with the United States. One U.S. analyst wrote in December 2011:

Despite record levels of communication and travel between top leaders in Ankara and Washington, the societal and institutional connections are still in need of revitalization and strengthening.... [C]oordination and policy on Turkey continues to affect vital interests throughout Washington, which ideally must go beyond the administration to the Hill and society at large even if there is short-term turbulence.<sup>92</sup>

Although short-term prospects may not be favorable for Turkish accession to the European Union, U.S. support for eventual Turkish EU membership, supplemented by U.S. consultations with Turkey and EU actors on the use of pre-accession aid and other means of increasing Turkey-EU harmonization, could help further anchor Turkey's domestic and foreign policies within the West. However, if U.S. policymakers believe that an open-ended EU accession process in the face of current obstacles to Turkish membership is counterproductive, they might discuss alternative or parallel courses of action in hopes of maximizing the benefits of the U.S.-Turkey alliance on the issues discussed below.

## Influencing Regional Change and Promoting Stability

Turkey is likely to play a key role in affecting the outcomes of ongoing political change and unrest in the broader Middle East, including Iraq and Afghanistan as both countries transition from U.S.-led military occupation to greater self-rule. In partnering with Turkey to influence regional change and promote stability, the following options are available for Members of Congress and Obama Administration officials to adopt or continue:

- Determine whether and how to discourage further deterioration in Turkey's relations with Israel. For example, should the United States mediate Turkey-Israel security understandings and encourage either a discreet or a more public Turkey-Israel rapprochement? Policymakers could condition various modes of

---

<sup>92</sup> Joshua W. Walker, "U.S.-Turkish Relations: Modesty and Revitalization," *On Turkey*, German Marshall Fund of the United States, December 15, 2011.

U.S. cooperation with Turkey on its relations with Israel, but this could lead Turkey to decrease its overall cooperation with the United States and increasingly look to other countries to address its demands.

- Determine the proper nature and extent of bilateral and NATO military and intelligence cooperation, including joint use of Turkish bases and territory, as well as information sharing to assist in countering the PKK and in facilitating interdiction of illegal arms shipments from other countries or non-state actors.
- Determine whether and how to encourage Turkish political and financial support for individuals and groups opposing autocratic regimes, and whether and how such backing should be linked to support for democratically accountable and economically viable transitions in countries experiencing unrest or leadership changes.
- Determine whether and how to coordinate with Turkey to impose and enforce unilateral, multilateral, or international sanctions (diplomatic, military, and/or economic) that have the potential to effectively weaken or change the behavior of regimes or other actors violating human rights or otherwise contravening international laws and norms. Examples include the Asad regime in Syria for violently suppressing popular protest and the Iranian regime for its nuclear program and support of regional terrorist groups.
- Determine whether and how to support Turkish efforts to coordinate regional security with other local actors, especially other U.S. allies.

Action on any of these options will take place in a complex regional and strategic environment whose trajectory has probably become more unpredictable in the past year, perhaps increasing the difficulty of calculating risks and determining probable outcomes.

## **Arms Sales and Military/Security Assistance**

Turkey continues to seek advanced U.S. military equipment (i.e., fighter aircraft, drone aircraft, helicopters, and missile defense systems), and its defense industry participates in joint ventures with the United States (e.g., on the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter). However, Turkey's growing defense industry and its increased willingness to engage in arms import-export transactions or joint military exercises with non-NATO countries, such as China, Russia, Pakistan, and South Korea, indicate Turkey's interest in diversifying its defense relationships and decreasing its dependence on the United States. U.S. military and security assistance programs for Turkey are designed to cultivate closeness in relationships and practices between Turkish military officers and security officials and their U.S. counterparts.

Turkey is particularly interested in acquiring armed drones from the United States to use against the PKK. It has reportedly sought to purchase four MQ-1 Predator drones and six MQ-9 Reaper drones (more advanced versions of the Predator) since 2008.<sup>93</sup> In September 2011, according to Turkish media outlet *Today's Zaman*, Prime Minister Erdogan claimed that Turkey had reached

---

<sup>93</sup> "Procurement, Turkey," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - Eastern Mediterranean*, December 16, 2010. Previous potential sales of Reapers to NATO allies such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy were notified to Congress in 2008 and 2009 with the understanding that the drones would be used to support coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

agreement in principle with the Obama Administration to either lease or purchase U.S. drones, and Turkish Defense Minister Ismet Yilmaz subsequently announced that delivery was expected in June 2012,<sup>94</sup> though this has not been publicly confirmed or denied by U.S. officials. In October 2011, the Administration notified Congress of a possible \$111 million Foreign Military Sale to Turkey of three AH-1W SuperCobra attack helicopters from the U.S. Marine Corps inventory. Though Representative Shelley Berkley introduced a joint resolution on November 3, 2011 (H.J.Res. 83)—co-sponsored by 12 Members—proposing disapproval of the sale, the 15-day notification period elapsed without congressional action to delay or block the potential sale, allowing it to go forward.

Lack of effective opposition from Congress on the helicopter sale could signal a general willingness to support Turkish priorities in countering terrorism and stabilizing Iraq given the U.S. military drawdown and in light of Turkey's seeming willingness to oppose Iran on issues such as the NATO missile defense radar and the future of Syria. Nevertheless, reports have indicated that some Members of Congress have balked at the drone sale.<sup>95</sup> In October 2011, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Alexander Vershbow reportedly said in a speech to the American-Turkish Council, "This topic is influenced by the problems in Turkish-Israeli relations. This is not a secret. But just to repeat it, we do support the sale."<sup>96</sup> Concerns about sensitive technology transfer might also exist that are less applicable to the helicopter sale, partly because Turkey already possesses some SuperCobras. With the region's stability in question, one could additionally question whether drones initially intended to fight the PKK in Turkey and possibly Iraq could be used in the future for other purposes. By redeploying the four U.S. Predator drones from Iraq to Turkey in late 2011,<sup>97</sup> the Obama Administration might have bought time for further consultations with Congress on a potential drone sale.

## **Possible Armenian Genocide**

Congress's involvement on Turkey-Armenia issues has the potential to strongly influence U.S.-Turkey relations. In March 2010 during the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs voted to report H.Res. 252 for consideration by the full House (by a vote of 23-22). H.Res. 252 characterized actions of the Ottoman Empire against Armenians from 1915 to 1917 as genocide. Similar resolutions had been reported multiple times by congressional committees since 1984 (see **Appendix C** for a full list), and President Ronald Reagan referred to a "genocide of the Armenians" during a Holocaust Remembrance Day speech in 1981.

H.Res. 252 did not pass, but in response to the March 2010 committee action, Turkey recalled its ambassador from the United States for one month, and at least one prominent AKP lawmaker reportedly warned that "the relationship would be downgraded on every level" in the event of House passage of the resolution. This warning was commonly interpreted as including a threat to curtail at least partially or temporarily U.S. access to Turkish bases and territory for transporting non-lethal cargo to missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>98</sup> Representative Robert Dold introduced

---

<sup>94</sup> "US-Turkey agree on delivery schedule for Predators," *Today's Zaman*, September 25, 2011.

<sup>95</sup> "U.S. Vows to Support Turkey over Kurdish Rebels," *Agence France Presse*, December 18, 2011.

<sup>96</sup> Craig Whitlock, "Pentagon agrees to sell three attack helicopters to Turkey," *Washington Post*, November 1, 2011.

<sup>97</sup> "US deployed Predators to Incirlik: Davutoglu," *Hurriyet Daily News*, November 13, 2011.

<sup>98</sup> Robert Tait and Ewen McCaskill, "Turkey threatens 'serious consequences' after US vote on Armenian genocide," *Guardian* (UK), March 5, 2010.

H.Res. 304—virtually identical to H.Res. 252—in June 2011 during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. The proposed resolution has garnered over 85 co-sponsors and has been referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Nineteen countries other than Armenia have recognized the Ottoman-era deaths as genocide in some way, including 10 of the 27 EU member states.<sup>99</sup> France is one of these countries, and in December 2011, the lower house of the French parliament approved legislation that, if enacted after passing its upper house, would criminalize denial of an Armenian genocide. In response, Prime Minister Erdogan recalled Turkey’s ambassador from France and halted all Turkey-France diplomatic consultations and military dealings—likely increasing tensions related to Turkey’s EU accession process.<sup>100</sup>

## Bilateral Trade Promotion

Although successive U.S. Administrations have cited the importance of increased trade with Turkey, and the Obama Administration has reemphasized this in articulating its vision for a multifaceted bilateral strategic relationship with Turkey, it is unclear how effective government efforts to promote U.S.-Turkey trade can be. A Department of Commerce official told CRS that total U.S.-Turkey trade volume is growing (estimating \$20 billion for 2011, an approximate 45% increase from 2010), and said that Turkish exports to the United States are growing faster than exports to the rest of the world.<sup>101</sup> As mentioned above, the United States is Turkey’s fourth-largest trading partner, and according to the Department of Commerce, Turkey ranks 26<sup>th</sup> among countries to which the United States exports merchandise and 47<sup>th</sup> among countries from which it imports goods.

**Table 5. U.S. Merchandise Trade with Turkey**

(\$ in Millions)

|              | 2007   | 2008   | 2009   | 2010   |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Exports      | 6,500  | 9,960  | 7,090  | 10,550 |
| Imports      | 4,600  | 4,640  | 3,660  | 4,200  |
| Total Volume | 11,100 | 14,600 | 10,750 | 14,750 |

**Source:** U.S. Department of Commerce, Foreign Trade Division, U.S. Bureau of Census

Both U.S. and Turkish officials repeatedly state their desire to enhance bilateral trade and investment ties. The two countries signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement in 1999. Annual meetings for the U.S.-Turkey Framework for Strategic Economic and Commercial Cooperation began in 2010 at the cabinet ministerial level. The goal of the Framework is to intensify bilateral economic relations in a wide range of areas. One current project is the Near-Zero Zone, a public-private partnership initiative which seeks to incentivize U.S. investment in efforts to increase the capacity and efficiency of Turkish energy companies located in Izmir. The

<sup>99</sup> The EU states recognizing a genocide are France, Italy, Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Greece, and Cyprus.

<sup>100</sup> Sebnem Arsu, “Turkey Lashes Out Over Bill About French Genocide,” *New York Times*, December 23, 2011. Switzerland and Slovenia have previously criminalized denial of an Armenian genocide.

<sup>101</sup> CRS correspondence with Department of Commerce official, December 2011.

U.S. government has designated Turkey as a priority market and the interagency Trade Policy Coordination Commission has developed an Export Enhancement Strategy for Turkey.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, H.R. 2362 (the Indian Tribal Trade and Investment Demonstration Project Act of 2011) was ordered to be reported by the House Natural Resources Committee in November 2011. If enacted, this bill would ease the process by which Turkish companies could do business on American Indian reservations.

U.S. and Turkish advocates for expanded bilateral, non-defense trade seek greater private sector contacts and information campaigns facilitated by government officials—including Members of Congress—through business delegations and contact groups in fields such as energy, property development, high tech engineering and construction, medical supplies, systems management, and marketing.<sup>103</sup> Turkish officials have occasionally proposed a U.S.-Turkey preferential trade agreement<sup>104</sup> or U.S. legislation establishing qualified industrial zones (QIZs) in Turkey without success. Some policymakers and observers claim that even if past economic conditions may have limited U.S. trade with Turkey, recent growth in Turkish consumer demand, quality of products and services, and global competitiveness and brand recognition have increased Turkey's value as an import source, target market, and place of investment for U.S. companies.<sup>105</sup> The Turkish Ministry of Economy has identified six U.S. states as the focus of its efforts to increase bilateral trade: California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, and Georgia.<sup>106</sup>

## Conclusion

Turkey's importance to the United States appears to be growing both because of its increasing economic and political influence and because the United States is relying increasingly on Turkey to support U.S. interests in the Middle East as Washington seeks a more economical military and aid strategy. The feasibility of U.S. reliance on Turkey is likely to be tested in relation to developments in Syria, Iraq, and Iran, where U.S.-Turkey interests appear to be more aligned than they were a year ago. Closeness between U.S. and Turkish interests remains subject to fluctuation as events develop, particularly with regard to Turkey's troubled relations with Israel and concerns over strategic preeminence and energy exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean. Congressional action on the possible sale of drone aircraft to Turkey to counter the PKK or on a potential Armenian genocide resolution could significantly affect U.S.-Turkey relations, particularly if Members of Congress link their stances on these issues to the state of Turkey-Israel relations.

The positions Members of Congress take on specific issues concerning Turkey—including defense cooperation, trade promotion, and Turkish domestic developments—also will indicate U.S. priorities at a critical time for global and regional stability and for the Turkish republic's political and constitutional evolution. This could influence Turkish leaders' future foreign policy

---

<sup>102</sup> For more detailed information on bilateral efforts to promote trade, see U.S. Department of Commerce Fact Sheet: U.S.-Turkey Framework for Strategic Economic and Commercial Cooperation, October 14, 2010.

<sup>103</sup> CRS conversation with representative of Turkish business association, December 2011.

<sup>104</sup> Given Turkey's customs union with the EU, a full free trade agreement between the United States and Turkey would not be possible without a U.S.-EU free trade agreement.

<sup>105</sup> In December 2011, the *New York Times* profiled Turkey as an attractive destination for foreign capital given its growing consumer market and relative political and financial stability. Mark Scott, "In Turkey, Western Companies Find Stability and Growth," *New York Times*, December 23, 2011.

<sup>106</sup> Information provided to CRS by Turkish Ministry of Economy, September 2011.



rhetoric, decisions, and alignments, which in turn will likely have implications for regional security and for Turkey's EU accession prospects. Congressional positions could also influence Turkey's commitment to civilian-led, democratic government that enshrines individual, media, and minority rights; rule of law; and due process.

## Appendix A. Profiles of Key Figures in Turkey

### Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Prime Minister Erdogan was born in Istanbul in 1954 and spent much of his childhood in his family's ancestral hometown of Rize on the Black Sea coast. He and his family returned to Istanbul for his teenage years, and he attended a religious *imam hatip* school. In the 1970s, Erdogan studied business at what is today Marmara University, played soccer semi-professionally, and became politically active with the National Salvation Party, led by the pioneering Turkish Islamist figure (and eventual prime minister) Necmettin Erbakan. After the military banned all political parties in the wake of its 1980 coup, Erdogan became a business consultant and executive. When political life in Turkey resumed, Erdogan became a prominent local leader and organizer for Erbakan's new Welfare Party.

Erdogan was elected mayor of Istanbul in 1994 at the beginning of a wave of Islamist political victories in Turkey in the mid-1990s. He was removed from office, imprisoned for six months, and banned from parliamentary politics for religious incitement after he recited a poem in the southeastern city of Siirt in December 1997 that included the passage (translated from Turkish): "The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers."

After Erbakan's government resigned under military pressure in 1997 and the Welfare Party was disbanded, Erdogan became the founding chairman of the AKP in 2001. The AKP won a decisive electoral victory in 2002, securing the single-party rule that it has maintained since. After the election, a legal change allowed Erdogan to stand for parliament in a 2003 special election in Siirt, and after he won, Erdogan replaced Abdullah Gul as prime minister.

Erdogan and his personal popularity and charisma have been at the center of much of the domestic and foreign policy change that has occurred in Turkey in the past decade. In January 2009 at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, following the Gaza Strip conflict between Israel and Hamas, he left the panel discussion in which he was participating after perceiving a slight by the moderator (*Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius) and pointedly criticizing his fellow panelist Shimon Peres, president of Israel. His criticism of Israel and its actions has boosted his popularity at home and throughout the Muslim Middle East, where polls show that he may be the region's most popular world leader.

Erdogan is married and has two sons and two daughters. His wife Emine and daughters wear the headscarf. He is not fluent in English.

### President Abdullah Gul

President Gul was born in 1950 in Kayseri in central Turkey. He studied economics in Turkey and England, and received his Ph.D. from Istanbul University, becoming a university professor and an economist at the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Gul was first elected to parliament from Kayseri in 1991 as a member of the Islamist Welfare Party, then, after it was disbanded, stayed on as a reform-minded member of the Islamist Virtue Party. Gul served on parliamentary assemblies of NATO and the Council of Europe. When the AKP was formed in 2001, he became deputy chairman and—briefly—its first prime minister after the successful

election of 2002. When Erdogan took over the prime ministry in 2003, Gul became Turkey's foreign minister and helped accelerate Turkey's EU accession process.

In 2007, the AKP nominated Gul for the presidency amid substantial secularist opposition, partly owing to statements from his early political career that indicated distaste for the secular nature of Turkey's republic. Parliament nevertheless elected Gul president. Many observers believe him to be a moderating influence on the Erdogan government.

Gul is married with two sons and a daughter. His wife Hayrunissa and daughter wear the headscarf. He speaks fluent English.

## **Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu**

Foreign Minister Davutoglu was born in 1959 in Konya in central Turkey. He attended a German international school in Istanbul and received a Ph.D. in Political Science and International Relations from Bosphorus University. He became a university professor, spending time in Malaysia in the early 1990s before establishing himself as a scholar known for applying academic theory to practical matters of Turkish foreign policy and national security strategy. His book *Strategic Depth*, which was published in 2001 and has been translated into other languages but not English, is thought by some to represent a blueprint of sorts for the policies Davutoglu has since helped implement.

Following the AKP's victory in 2002, Davutoglu was appointed chief foreign policy advisor to the prime minister. Upon his appointment as foreign minister in 2009, he quickly gained renown for articulating and applying his concepts of zero problems and strategic depth. He advocates for a preeminent role for Turkey in its surrounding region, but disputes the characterization of his policies by some observers as "neo-Ottomanism." He won an AKP parliamentary seat for the first time in June 2011.

Davutoglu is married with four children. His wife Sare is a medical doctor. He speaks fluent English, as well as German and Arabic.

## **Opposition Leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu**

Kilicdaroglu, the leader of the main opposition CHP, was born in 1948 in Tunceli province in eastern Turkey. After receiving an economics degree from what is now Gazi University in Ankara, Kilicdaroglu had a civil service career—first with the Finance Ministry, then as the director-general of the Social Security Organization. After retiring from the civil service, Kilicdaroglu became politically active with the CHP and was elected to parliament from Istanbul in 2002. He gained national prominence for his efforts to root out corruption among AKP officials and the AKP-affiliated mayor of Ankara. When CHP leader Deniz Baykal was forced to resign over a videotape sex scandal in May 2010, Kilicdaroglu was elected to replace him. In the first national election with him as party leader in June 2011, the CHP gained 23 seats in parliament, although not as many as some observers expected.

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

## **PKK Leader Abdullah Ocalan**

Abdullah Ocalan was born in or around 1949 in southeastern Turkey (near Sanliurfa). After attending vocational high school in Ankara, Ocalan served in civil service posts in Diyarbakir and Istanbul until enrolling at Ankara University in 1971. As his interest developed in socialism and Kurdish nationalism, Ocalan was jailed for seven months in 1972 for an illegal student demonstration. His time in prison with other activists helped inspire his political ambitions, and he became increasingly politically active upon his release. Ocalan founded the Marxist-Leninist-influenced PKK in 1978 and launched a separatist militant campaign against Turkish security forces—while also attacking the traditional Kurdish chieftain class—in 1984. He used Syrian territory as a safe haven. Syria forced Ocalan to leave in 1998 after Turkey threatened war for harboring him. After traveling to several different countries, Ocalan was captured in February 1999 in Kenya—possibly with U.S. help—and turned over to Turkish authorities. The PKK declared a cease-fire shortly thereafter. Ocalan was sentenced to death, in a trial later ruled unfair by the European Court of Human Rights, but when Turkey abolished the death penalty in 2002, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He resides in a maximum-security prison on the island of Imrali in the Sea of Marmara, and was in solitary confinement until 2009.

Although acting PKK leader Murat Karayilan and other commanders have exercised direct control over PKK operations during Ocalan's imprisonment, some observers believe that Ocalan still ultimately controls the PKK through proxy communications. Although PKK violence resumed in 2003 and has since continued off-and-on, Ocalan has indicated that the organization is seeking a negotiated resolution that does not require forming a Kurdish state, and has reportedly engaged in talks with Turkish intelligence to that end.

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

American Friends of Turkey (<http://afot.us/>)

American Research Institute in Turkey (<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/ARIT/>)

American Turkish Society (<http://www.americanturkishsociety.org/>)

American-Turkish Council (<http://www.the-atc.org/>)

Assembly of Turkish American Associations (<http://www.ataa.org/>)—component organizations from 17 states and District of Columbia

Ataturk Society of America (<http://www.ataturksociety.org/>)

Federation of Turkish American Associations

Institute of Turkish Studies (<http://turkishstudies.org/>)

SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (<http://setadc.org>)

Turkic American Alliance (<http://www.turkicamericanalliance.org/>)

- West America Turkic Council (West region)—includes Pacifica Institute
- Turkish American Federation of Midwest (Midwest region)
- Turquoise Council of Americans and Eurasians (South region)—includes Institute of Interfaith Dialog
- Turkic American Federation of Southeast (Southeast region)—includes Istanbul Center
- Council of Turkic American Associations (Northeast region)
- Mid Atlantic Federation of Turkic American Associations (Mid-Atlantic region)—includes Rumi Forum

Turkish Coalition of America (<http://www.tc-america.org/>)

Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON)  
(<http://www.tuskonus.org/tuskon.php>)

Turkish Cultural Foundation (<http://www.turkishculturalfoundation.org/>)

Turkey Policy Center (<http://www.turkishpolicycenter.com/>)

## Appendix C. Congressional Committee Reports of Armenian Genocide-Related Proposed Resolutions

| Date Reported or of Vote for Report | Proposed Resolution(s)    | Committee                           |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| April 5, 1984                       | S.J.Res. 87               | Senate Judiciary                    |
| September 28, 1984                  | S.Res. 241                | Senate Foreign Relations            |
| July 9, 1985                        | H.J.Res. 192              | House Post Office and Civil Service |
| July 23, 1987                       | H.J.Res. 132              | House Post Office and Civil Service |
| August 3, 1987                      | H.Res. 238                | House Rules                         |
| October 18, 1989                    | S.J.Res. 212              | Senate Judiciary                    |
| October 11, 2000                    | H.Res. 596 and H.Res. 625 | House Rules                         |
| October 10, 2007                    | H.Res. 106                | House Foreign Affairs               |
| March 4, 2010                       | H.Res. 252                | House Foreign Affairs               |

### Author Contact Information

Jim Zanotti  
Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs  
jzanotti@crs.loc.gov, 7-1441

### Acknowledgments

Some of this report includes or is derived from material initially written by Carol Migdalovitz, retired CRS Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs.