



A Farewell to the West?

Turkey's Possible Pivot in the Aftermath of the July 2016 Coup Attempt

HCSS The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, StratMon 2016-2017



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Volatility and Friction in the Age of Disintermediation: HCSS StratMon Annual Report 2016/2017

The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies

ISBN/EAN: 978-94-92102-51-5

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This study is part of seven research projects that make up the HCSS Strategic Monitor 2016-2017.

The full report can be accessed at <http://hcss.nl/report/volatility-and-friction-age-disintermediation>.

The HCSS StratMon Program offers strategic assessments of global risks to Dutch national security. The Program gratefully acknowledges its financial support from the Dutch Government within the context of the Dutch Government's Strategic Monitor.

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Introduction

Could Turkey really bid “adieu” to the West in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt of 15-16 July 2016? This was one of the questions on the minds of policymakers and pundits around the world as the government in Ankara started consolidating power and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan felt abandoned by his Western allies.

For decades, Turkey has been among the most important strategic partners for the West and also one of the most difficult ones. Sitting at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, the strategic sea lanes of the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean and straddling a vast area from the Balkans to the Caucasus to the Middle East, Turkey is one of the most crucial pivot states¹ of the modern age. In a previous work, HCSS placed Turkey among the top four countries in the world in terms of its strategic importance to the great powers.² Its support is needed in the fight against ISIS, to solve Europe’s refugee crisis and to end the longstanding Cyprus dispute.

The critical role Turkey plays in international affairs adds to its pivotal status. Whether it is tackling the problem of ISIS, ending the atrocious civil war in Syria, curbing the flow of refugees into Europe, or serving as a conduit for meeting Europe’s energy needs, Turkey is simply too important to ignore for NATO, the United States – and above all: the EU. The traumatic coup attempt has turned the question of Turkey’s pivot from a thought exercise into a potential existential game-changer that could alter its foreign policy, as well as those of its Western partners. At the same time, even if Turkey sticks with the West, the question of its reliability and cooperation will continue to dominate discussions.

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Western countries, then, have little interest in pushing Turkey away, but they are also not inclined to accept Erdogan’s apparent lurch towards autocracy without protest. At the same time, Turkey feels it is not wedded to its Western partners. It at times seems to be courting Vladimir Putin’s Russia and also seeks to expand ties with Iran, China and Saudi Arabia, among others. But if Turkey pivots away from the West, which way will it go? Will it re-align with another great power? Will it chart a more independent course? And beyond these possible ‘external’ choices, how will domestic dynamics affect the foreign policy choices of the Turkish political elite?

This study examines the conditions that could lead Turkey to pivot away from the West and change its foreign policy direction in the near future. In discussing Turkey’s potential pivot, the study explores four possibilities:

- » Turkey will move toward the “Silk Road” alternative—Russia, Iran, China.
- » Turkey will pivot to the Middle East and assume a stronger leadership position in the Arab and Muslim world.

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1. A 2014 study by HCSS described a “pivot state” as follows: “Pivot states possess military, economic or ideational strategic assets that are coveted by great powers. They are caught in the middle of overlapping spheres of influence of these great powers as measured by associations that consist of ties that bind (military and economic agreements and cultural affinities) and relationships that flow (arms and commodities trade and discourse). A change in a pivot state’s association has important repercussions for regional and global security. See Sweijts et al., *Why Are Pivot States so Pivotal?*, 4:8.

2. *Ibid.*, 4:2. The great powers were defined as the US, Russia, China and the EU.

- » Despite Turkish complaints about the lack of tangible solidarity from the West after the coup, along with the erosion of democracy and the rule of law in Turkey, Ankara will stick with the West.³
- » Turkey will chart a middle course broadly equidistant to all of the above alternatives—nominally remaining in NATO, yet substantially decreasing cooperation with the Atlantic Alliance and slightly pivoting to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Muslim world—while assuming a much more independent posture in its foreign relations.

Turkey as a Pivot State

Foundations of Turkish Foreign Policy

Throughout the modern era, Turkey has been of crucial interest to the great powers. For Russia, Turkey matters because of access to the waters of the Mediterranean; for Britain, it was about access to India and protecting its empire against Russia and Germany. This is why the survival of the Ottoman Empire, “the sick man of Europe,” preoccupied European powers in the 19th century. During this period, the Ottoman political elite tried to balance European powers against each other while cracking down on domestic opponents.⁴

World War I was the definitive turning point. The Ottoman Empire’s decision to join the Great War on Germany’s side resulted in massive territorial losses and the Allied occupation of the capital Istanbul and other Turkish lands. Geopolitically, the most important consequence was that predominantly Arab lands were severed from the former empire and falling under the sway of Western outsiders. Under Mustafa Kemal (later known as Atatürk), the Turks took back Anatolia and Eastern Thrace from the Allies, moved their capital to Ankara and founded the Republic of Turkey in 1923.⁵

Atatürk’s single-party government under the Republican People’s Party (CHP) engaged in a rapprochement with Greece and improved relations with its former adversaries—France, Britain and Soviet Russia. In 1932, Ankara joined the League of Nations and, with the rise of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, signed non-aggression pacts with its Balkan and Middle Eastern neighbors. Except for using coercive diplomacy against French Syria to secure the sanjak of Alexandretta (present-day Hatay province) in 1936-1939, Turkish diplomacy in the interwar period was multilateral and neutralist, adhering to Atatürk’s maxim, “peace at home, peace in the world.”⁶ Under AKP rule, this maxim would find an echo in its policy of “zero problems with neighbors.”⁷

World War II and the Cold War changed all that. Faced with Joseph Stalin’s territorial demands in 1945-1946, Turkey pivoted to the West and transitioned to democracy. After beating the CHP in the 1950 elections, the Democrat Party (DP) boosted Turkey’s Western pivot by joining NATO as a full

3. Eric Lob, “Realists Should Expect America and Turkey to Stick Together,” Text, *The National Interest*, (August 24, 2016), <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/realists-should-expect-america-turkey-stick-together-17461>.

4. Leon Carl Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East: Old Rules, Dangerous Game* (I.B.Tauris, 1984), 21–81.; M. S Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations* (London; Melbourne; New York: Macmillan; St. Martin’s P., 1966); William M Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000* (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), 45–56.

5. Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Andrew Mango, *Ataturk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1999), 361–466.

6. Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000*, 44–78.; Sarah D Shields, *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

7. See *The Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, “Policy of Zero Problems with Our Neighbors,” Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/policy-of-zero-problems-with-our-neighbors.en.mfa>.

member in 1952. In 1963, Turkey signed an association agreement with the European Community (EC).⁸ In the 1960s and 1970s, much like other U.S. and Soviet allies during the Cold War, Ankara exercised greater autonomy in its foreign affairs and improved its political and economic ties with communist and non-aligned countries. Successive crises in Cyprus from 1963 until 1974 pitted Turkey against NATO ally Greece.⁹

Despite its autonomous leanings, Turkey did not ignore the Occident. During and after the Gulf War in 1991, Ankara supported the U.S.-led coalition against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ankara tried to act as a "big brother" to the newly independent Turkic republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Following its application for full membership to the EC in 1987, Turkey entered into a customs union with the EU in 1995 and became a candidate for full EU membership in 1999. Relations with Israel improved. Turkey also joined international peacekeeping missions in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo in the 1990s.¹⁰

Turkey's pro-Western autonomy continued at the turn of the 21st century. In 2003, while Turkish troops took part in the U.S.-led international mission in Afghanistan, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM, the parliament) did not allow U.S. troops to invade Iraq from Turkish territory. Ankara carried out comprehensive reforms and initiated accession negotiations with the EU in 2005. Meanwhile, Moscow became one of Ankara's main commercial partners through expanding trade, tourism and energy ties with Russia. Turkey also began establishing closer political and economic ties with Middle Eastern and North African countries.¹¹

How Turkey's Domestic Dynamics Impact Foreign Policy

Turkey's domestic developments and foreign policy have reinforced each other for a long time. Military coups in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997 turned the armed forces into the guardian of Atatürk's secular legacy and Turkey's Western-aligned foreign, defense and security policy. As a result, the gap between Turkey's political system and democratic culture and those of its Western allies widened. Today, Turkish democracy lacks a system of checks and balances, focusing solely on electoral legitimacy. The electoral system itself is unfair: Turkey retains the world's highest national threshold of 10 percent in general elections, barring minor parties from entering the TBMM.¹²

For much of the 1980s and 1990s, the secular establishment failed to reform Turkey's sclerotic economy while Istanbul's secular industrial-commercial class began to lose ground to the dynamic and socially conservative business conglomerates (the so-called "Anatolian tigers") from the Turkish heartland. The "Anatolian tigers" helped to catapult Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) into power in November 2002.¹³

These developments took Turkey's foreign relations into uncharted directions. In March 2002,

General Tuncer Kılıç, secretary-general of Turkey's then-powerful National Security Council (MGK) and a prominent player in the ouster of the Islamist-led coalition in 1997, argued that Turkey should abandon the EU and "search for new initiatives to include Russia and Iran." Kılıç's views showed that a strong anti-EU and possibly anti-Western streak had taken hold among Turkey's formerly pro-Western military.¹⁴

As Turkey's secular cadres turned against one of their main Occidental partners, formerly anti-Western Islamists embraced the long march West in part because they saw the EU's emphasis on democracy and human rights as the best way to undermine their secular opponents. When the AKP came to power, the Erdoğan government passed a series of reforms, such as increasing the representation of civilian leaders in the MGK, relaxing restrictions on freedom of speech (including the usage of Kurdish in mass media) and abolishing the death penalty.¹⁵

Turkey under the AKP rose to global prominence because (at least then) it showed that political parties with Islamist roots could embrace liberal democracy, rule of law and a free market economy. Turkey's "soft power"—its status as an attractive tourist destination and the popularity of its soap operas and other cultural icons—increased. The AKP's "zero problems with neighbors" slogan improved Ankara's diplomatic clout. As a result, for the first time since the early 1960s, Turkey became a non-permanent member to the UN Security Council in 2009. Adding to Turkish "soft power," the UN's "Alliance of Civilizations" (UNAOC) initiative that Erdoğan co-sponsored with Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero became one of the main forums for fostering global dialogue and combatting xenophobia.

Closer to home, Ankara mediated indirect talks and came very close to forging a peace accord between Israel and Syria on the eve of the Gaza war of 2008-2009. In the Caucasus, the AKP government took bold steps to overcome its troublesome past with Armenia. In the Balkans, it oversaw the reconciliation among Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. In 2010, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu facilitated Serbian President Boris Tadić's attendance to the commemoration for the victims of the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica. In this context, Turkish and foreign observers wondered whether Turkey could be a "model" country for its fellow Muslim countries in the MENA region—an idea that people from MENA countries liked.¹⁶

From 2011 onwards, however, Erdoğan began to fill the AKP's list with his own loyalists and expanded his role in the party and the Turkish state. As Erdoğan consolidated his position, he assumed greater say over foreign affairs through Davutoğlu, his former advisor who served as foreign minister from 2009 until 2014 and replaced Erdoğan as prime minister when the latter became president. Davutoğlu, who had coined "zero problems with neighbors" to explain the AKP's regional and global vision, also bore pan-Islamist and neo-Ottomanist dreams of turning Turkey into a regional hegemon.¹⁷

8. Onur İşçi, *Russophobic Neutrality: Turkish Diplomacy, 1936-1945*, 2014, <http://hdl.handle.net/10822/709778>; V. M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 36–40; Barın Kayaoğlu, "Strategic Imperatives, Democratic Rhetoric: The United States and Turkey, 1945-52," *Cold War History* 9, no. 3 (2009): 321–45.; Melvyn P. Leffler, "Strategy, Diplomacy and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey and NATO, 1945-1952," *American History The Journal of American History* 71, no. 4 (1985): 807–25.; Mehmet Döşemeci, *Debating Turkish Modernity: Civilization, Nationalism and the EEC* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 25–55.

9. Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War in the Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Claude Nicolet, *United States Policy towards Cyprus, 1954-1974: Removing the Greek-Turkish Bone of Contention* (Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2001).

10. Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000*, 135–206.

11. *Ibid.*, 207–248.

12. Ergun Özbudun, "Turkey's Search for a New Constitution," *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 1 (2012): 39–50.

13. Banu Eligür, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 201–13.; Neseacan Balkan, Erol M. Balkan and Ahmet F. Öncü, *The Neoliberal Landscape and the Rise of Islamist Capital in Turkey* (New York: Bergahn Books, 2015).

14. Murat Gürgen, "Orgeneral Kılıç: Avrupa bize uymaz [Europe is unsuitable for us]," *Radikal*, August 3, 2002, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=31291>; Yusuf Demir and Nuri Sefa Erdem, "Türkiye, Rusya ve İran'la ittifak arayışında olmalı [Turkey must search for an alliance with Russia and Iran]," *Sabah*, March 8, 2002, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2002/03/08/p01.html>.

15. There are two basic narratives about the AKP and democratization: While some argue that its first term witnessed considerable reforms that improved Turkish democracy, Erdoğan's subsequent rise as an autocrat opened trapdoors of authoritarianism. See M. Hakan Yavuz, *The Emergence of a New Turkey*, Utah Series Turkish Islamic Studies (University of Utah Press, 2006), <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy.library.uu.nl/book/41442>. The alternative viewpoint is that the AKP slowly but steadily eroded Turkey's hard-earned democratic gains from 1950 onward. See Erik Meyersson, "The Reversal of (What Little) Liberal Democracy (There Ever Was) in Turkey," *Erik Meyersson*, October 4, 2016, <https://erikmeyersson.com/2016/10/04/the-reversal-of-what-little-liberal-democracy-there-ever-was-in-turkey/>.

16. Mustafa Akyol, "Turkey Vs. Iran," *Foreign Affairs*, March 21, 2012, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2012-03-21/turkey-vs-iran>. In 2011, a majority of Egyptians stated that they wanted their country to resemble Turkey: Shibley Telhami, "2011 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey" (Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development, October 2011), https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1121_arab_public_opinion.pdf.

17. Özkan Behlül, "Turkey, Davutoğlu and the Idea of Pan-Islamism," *Survival* 56, no. 4 (2014): 119–40.; Behlül Özkan,

Once the Arab Spring broke out in 2010-2011, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu's biases worked against them. At home, Erdoğan played on his supporters' religious sentiments by emphasizing the Alevi faith¹⁸ of CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. Abroad, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu underlined the Nusayri-Alawite identity of Syrian President Bashaar al-Assad, whom they had called a "brother" before the Arab Spring. Anti-Shia biases also soured the AKP government's relations with Iraq and Iran. A reconciliation attempt with Armenia foundered on the hard realities of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict with Azerbaijan, a Turkic cousin and close energy partner of Turkey.

Whereas a juggernaut of reforms had led to Turkey's rise on the international front between 2002 until 2010, after 2011, a feedback loop of diplomatic missteps, crackdowns against domestic opponents, a restive population (as evidenced by the mass protests of June 2013) and the relative slowdown of the economy became the salient features of AKP rule. In the general elections of June 2015, the electorate punished Erdoğan and his party by denying them a majority in the TBMM. But when subsequent PKK and ISIS attacks against civilians and security forces escalated, a fearful public brought the AKP back to power in the "repeat" elections of November 2015.¹⁹

Meanwhile, from late 2013 onward, tensions between Erdoğan and his former ally Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish cleric based in Pennsylvania who controls a global network of schools, business and NGOs (as well as a sizable coterie of secret followers within the Turkish state), came out into the open. Many Turks from across the political spectrum believe Gülen and his followers to be the masterminds of the coup attempt of 15-16 July 2016 that resulted in the deaths of more than 300 people.²⁰

At a time when Turkey's state institutions and political culture lurch to authoritarianism and the West seemingly lacks sympathy for the victims of the failed putsch, Turks weigh their foreign policy options. The surge of nationalism, economic and security risks and Erdoğan's insistence that only a new constitution giving him an executive presidency could protect the country, make a Turkish pivot away from the West more probable. Still, while opportunities for new partnerships elsewhere emerge, a variety of factors mean a hard pivot away from the West is not predetermined.

Four Pivoting Perspectives

Turkish foreign policy today carries multiple objectives. EU membership is still one of them and so is ensuring that "an ever enlarging NATO has much more to do in serving global peace" and that the G-20 gives "new impulse to the quest for [a] more representative and democratic global system." Despite the row over Gülen's residency in Pennsylvania and the rise of anti-American sentiments among Turkish people, Ankara maintains dialogue with Washington to address regional and global issues.²¹

¹⁸ "Turkey's Imperial Fantasy," *The New York Times*, August 28, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/29/opinion/ahmet-davutoglu-and-turkeys-imperial-fantasy.html>.

¹⁹ Barın Kayaoğlu, "What's the Greatest Risk to Turkey's Economy?," *Al-Monitor*, August 27, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/turkey-economy-political-uncertainties-greatest-risk.html>; Daron Acemoğlu and James Robinson, "The Political Economy of Turkey," February 27, 2013, <http://whynationsfail.com/blog/2013/2/27/the-political-economy-of-turkey.html>.

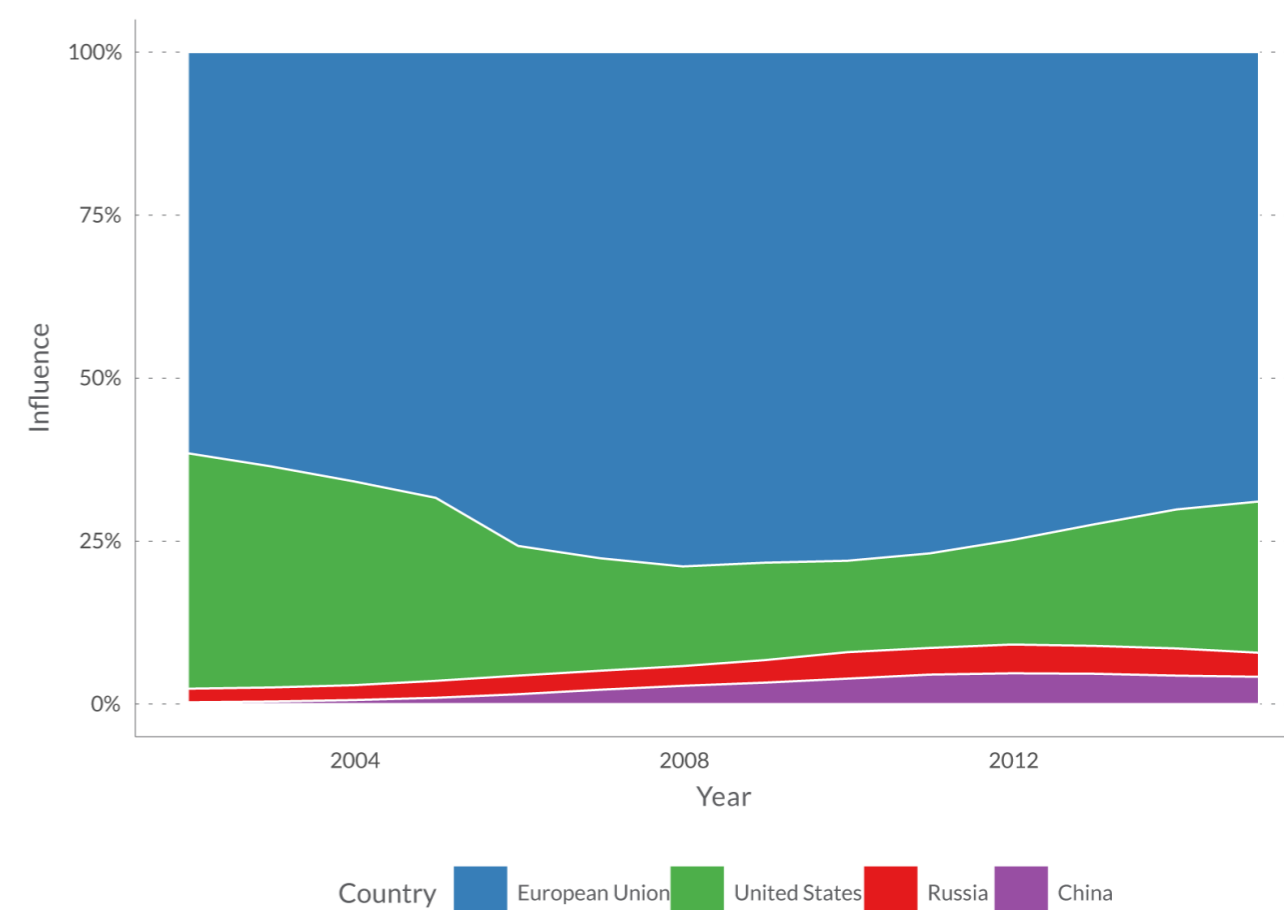
²⁰ Dexter Filkins, "Turkey's Thirty-Year Coup," *The New Yorker*, October 17, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/10/17/turkeys-thirty-year-coup>.

²¹ The Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Synopsis of the Turkish Foreign Policy," *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 2016, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/synopsis-of-the-turkish-foreign-policy.en.mfa>.

Turkey is also determined to revitalize historical and cultural ties with countries in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia, while diversifying its global options by strengthening its connections to the Caribbean, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and southeast Asia. Closer to home, continuing rapprochement with Russia, as well as ending the civil wars and refugee crises in Iraq and Syria are meant to cement the geostrategic importance of Turkey.²² Despite occasional verbal spats with leaders of the Greek Cypriot-dominated Republic of Cyprus, Ankara still carries hope that "the Cyprus issue would be sorted out."²³

The graph below depicts the influence of global powers over Turkey. It shows that, while U.S. and EU influence over Turkey has decreased in the past 15 years, suggesting that a Turkish pivot away from the West is probable, Ankara's ties with its Western partners are unlikely to break completely, given the total size of the influence of Western powers.

Figure 3.28 E28, U.S., Chinese and Russian influence exerted vis-à-vis Turkey, 2002-2015



²² Ibid.

²³ İHA, "Eski Rum Vekil: Darbe Gecesi Biz de KKTC'ye Saldırabilirdik [Former Greek Cypriot Deputy: We Could Have Attacked TRNC on the Night of the Coup]," *Milliyet*, July 19, 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/eski-rum-vekil-darbe-gecesi-biz-gundem-2280403/>; Emine Kart, "Ankara: Greek Cyprus Trying to Score Political Points over Fire," *Hürriyet Daily News*, June 22, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?pageID=238&nID=100802&NewsCatID=510>.

Pivot to the 'Silk Road': Russia, Iran and China

The apparent lack of U.S. and European support in Ankara's fight against Fethullah Gülen is one of the most important factors that could push Turkey toward Russia, Iran and China. Many Turks believe that U.S. and European leaders did not condemn the coup attempt on 15-16 July 2016 until it became clear that it would fail. Likewise, while Turks across the political spectrum see Gülen and his followers as the main culprits of the failed coup—and the AKP government has promised not to stop until they are punished—Western governments point out that the best way to fight such a network is through strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law. EU leaders also warn President Erdoğan that his idea of bringing back the death penalty would destroy Ankara's membership prospects in the European club. Meanwhile, the AKP's insistence on an expansive definition of "terrorism" threatens the March 2016 deal between Brussels and Ankara that would grant visa-free travel to Turkish citizens in the EU in return for Turkey's tougher control over the flow of Syrian refugees into Europe.²⁴ Compare all that with the allegedly unqualified support that Turkey received from Russia and Iran during and after the failed coup and it is easy to see why Ankara could pivot away from the United States, the EU and NATO.²⁵

Middle Eastern events, too, could trigger a Turkish pivot to the "Silk Road." The American connection is especially salient here. Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the Obama administration has rebuffed Turkish calls to create a "safe zone" in northern Syria. In September 2013, when President Barack Obama walked back from his "red line" against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad—that his regime's use of chemical weapons would result in U.S. attacks—and seemed content with Damascus's chemical disarmament, he disappointed Erdoğan. Washington, for its part, became upset over Ankara's apparent negligence of the ISIS threat in Iraq and Syria.²⁶ Despite relative improvements in U.S.-Turkish differences over Syria, Ankara seems to be happier with the cooperation it receives from Moscow than the U.S. backing it gets for the anti-ISIS and anti-PKK military campaign it initiated in Syria on 24 August 2016. The Turks are so satisfied with Russia that, for the first time in history, they are considering cooperation in joint defense industry projects.²⁷

Beyond frustrations with the West, Ankara has further good reasons to "go East." Since Ankara and

The apparent lack of U.S. and European support in Ankara's fight against Fethullah Gülen is one of the most important factors that could push Turkey toward Russia, Iran and China.

24. Hürriyet Daily News, "EU Visa Deal 'naturally Dead' If Not Implemented by Year's End: Turkish EU Minister," *Hürriyet Daily News*, October 19, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?pageID=238&nID=105134&NewsCatID=510>. Onur Ant, "Here's Why Turkey Could Walk Away From Its EU Deal," *Bloomberg.com*, August 18, 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-08-18/eu-s-troubled-ties-with-turkey-hamper-crunch-call-on-refugees>; Duncan Robinson and Mehul Srivastava, "US and EU Leaders Warn Turkey's Erdogan over Post-Coup Crackdown," *The Financial Times*, July 18, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/b82ef35a-4cc3-11e6-88c5-d83e98a590a>.

25. Hürriyet Daily News, "Turkey Thanks Putin for Unconditional Support over Coup Attempt," *Hürriyet Daily News*, July 25, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?PageID=238&NID=102062&NewsCatID=510>; Nikola K. Gvosdev, "Putin May Be Turkey's New Buddy after the Failed Coup," *The National Interest*, July 19, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/putin-may-be-turkeys-new-buddy-after-the-failed-coup-17037>.

26. Jamie Dettmer, "How Long Can US Mask Disagreements With Turkey?," *VOA*, June 2, 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/a/united-states-turkey-islamic-state/3359235.html>; Zeina Khodr, "US and Turkey Differ over Post-ISIL Strategy in Syria," August 1, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/middleeast/2015/07/turkey-usa-differ-post-isil-strategy-syria-150731191010466.html>.

27. Al-Monitor, "Did Putin Give Green Light to Turkish Attack on US-Backed Syrian Kurds?," *Al-Monitor*, October 23, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/10/russia-putin-green-light-attack-turkey-kurds-syria.html>; Frida Ghitis, "Biden's Tacit Support for Turkey's Syria Incursion Sent an Ominous Signal," *World Politics Review*, September 1, 2016, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/19784/biden-s-tacit-support-for-turkey-s-syria-incursion-sent-an-ominous-signal>; Paul Iddon, "A Complicated Triangle: Russia, Turkey and the Syrian Kurds," *Rudaw*, August 29, 2016, <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/29082016>; Güntay Şimşek, "Rusya'yla Savunma Sanayii İşbirliği Nasıl Olacak? [How Will Defense Industry Cooperation with Russia Work?]," *HaberTürk*, August 11, 2016, <http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/guntay-simsek-1019/1280147-rusya-yla-savunma-sanayii-isbirligi-nasil-olacak>.

Moscow initiated their rapprochement in summer 2016 after the Turkish air force's downing of a Russian jet in November 2015, energy and tourism ties between the two sides are on the rise again. Ankara and Moscow intend to increase bilateral trade from the 2012 high of \$33 billion to \$100 billion by 2020.²⁸ With respect to neighboring Iran, Ankara and Tehran have a vested interest in containing the advance of Kurdish groups amidst the civil war in Syria. Beyond security concerns, Turkey's private sector hopes to enter the Iranian market with the end of international sanctions against Iran.²⁹

The links between Turkey's present domestic conditions and foreign affairs also make a "Silk Road pivot" possible. At the onset of the Cold War, Ankara had allied with the West because of the Soviet threat, Turkish leaders' dislike of Communist ideology and their desire to establish a democratic regime.³⁰ Today, the opposite is the case: not only do Turks worry less about Russian designs against their country, they perceive the EU and especially the United States as a threat.³¹ Furthermore, Erdoğan's dreams of creating an executive presidency are strikingly similar to Putin's dominant role in Russia. Even Turkey's once pro-Western military is jumping on the anti-Occident bandwagon.³²

Turkey actually has been assessing the "Silk Road" alternative for some time. In early 2013, before his relations with the West had begun to sour, Erdoğan was mulling whether Turkey should abandon the EU and opt for the Russian and Chinese-led SCO, given Brussels's perceived lack interest in Turkey and the Shanghai group's growing economic and political might. Later that year, Ankara awarded its high-altitude missile defense contract to a Chinese company, although that plan has since been scrapped.³³

But a *hard* Turkish pivot toward the "Silk Road" faces considerable limits. Russian leaders have expressed skepticism how an EU candidate and NATO ally could join the SCO. Likewise, amidst all the talk of Turkish-Russian relations turning a new page, General Valery Gerasimov, chief of general staff of the Russian armed forces, made statements in September 2016 that could be interpreted as a rebuff against Ankara.³⁴

28. Luke Baker, "NATO's Second Largest Military Has Reached a 'Critical Juncture' between East and West," *Business Insider*, October 11, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/after-coup-turkey-is-at-a-critical-juncture-2016-10>; Mehmet Çetingülec, "Can Turkey-Russia Trade Reach \$100 Billion Target?," *Al-Monitor*, August 22, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/turkey-russia-trade-reach-100-billion-target.html>; Zülfikar Doğan, "Putin Gets Big Kiss-and-Make-up Gift from Erdogan," *Al-Monitor*, August 16, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/turkey-russia-nuclear-plant-special-status.html>.

29. Semih İdiz, "Turkey, Iran Rekindle Courtship but Take Things Slow," *Al-Monitor*, August 16, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/turkey-iran-ties-take-turn-for-better.html>; Hamidreza Azizi, "Why Iran Should Focus on Turkey, Not Russia, for Syria Cooperation," *Al-Monitor*, May 18, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/05/iran-russia-syria-disconnect-turkey-cooperation.html>; Barın Kayaoğlu, "How Turkish Energy Giant's Plans to Light up Iran Could Boost Rouhani," *Al-Monitor*, June 21, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/06/turkey-iran-energy-project-rouhani-election.html>; Zülfikar Doğan, "Turkish Private Sector Gears up for Iran Push," *Al-Monitor*, July 27, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/07/turkey-iran-nuclear-deal-private-sector-gears-up.html>.

30. Kayaoğlu, "Strategic Imperatives, Democratic Rhetoric."

31. Interestingly, a public opinion survey from May 2016 shows that Russia was perceived as the second largest "threat" to Turkey after the United States. But the Turkish-Russian rapprochement in summer 2016 is likely to have mellowed Turkish popular views toward Moscow. See Kadir Has University, "Kadir Has Üniversitesi Dış Politika Kamuoyu Algıları Araştırması Sonuçları Açıklandı [Results of Kadir Has Üniversitesi Foreign Policy Public Opinion Perceptions Survey Announced]," Kadir Has Üniversitesi, May 2016, <http://www.khas.edu.tr/news/1367>.

32. Metin Gürcan, "Why US-Educated Turkish Officers Could Soon Be out of Their Jobs," *Al-Monitor*, October 18, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/10/turkey-coup-attempt-purges-intellectual-assets.html>; Metin Gürcan, "Power Struggle Erupts in Turkey's Security Structure," *Al-Monitor*, October 12, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/10/turkey-power-struggle-between-islamists-and-secularists.html>.

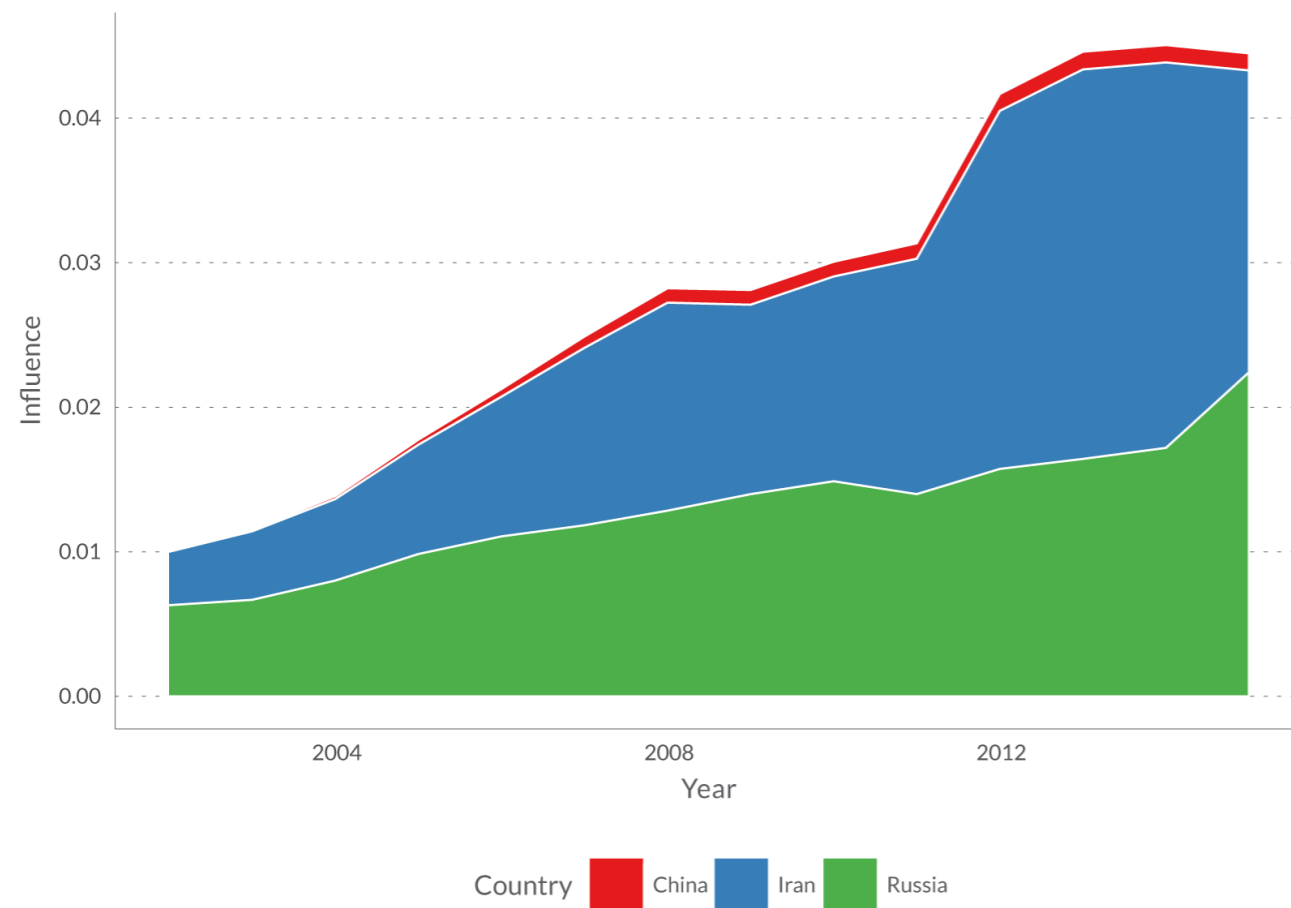
33. Murat Yetkin, "Tired of Brussels, Erdoğan Asks for Shanghai," *Hürriyet Daily News*, November 23, 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?pageID=449&nID=58407&NewsCatID=409>.

34. Semih İdiz, "Can Turkey Really Turn to Russia?," *Al-Monitor*, August 2, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/turkey-russia-coup-attempt-strategic-ties-not-realistic.html>; Deniz Berktaş, "Rusya Şanghay Çıkışını Nasıl Yorumluyor?" [How Does Russia Interpret Shanghai Statement?], *Deutsche Welle*, February 23, 2013, <http://www.dw.com/tr/rusya-%C5%9Fanghay-%C3%A7%C4%B1k%C4%B1%C5%9F%C4%B1n%C4%B1-nas%C4%B1-yorumluyor/a-16624248>; Joshua Kucera, "Russia Claims 'Mastery' Over Turkey in Black Sea," *EurasiaNet*, September 25, 2016, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/80636>.

Broader strategic matters, too, are likely to prevent Turkey's long march to Russia, Iran and China. Putin continues to support Syria's Assad, whom Erdoğan hates viscerally. Iran's Shia outlook in the region clashes with Turkey's Sunni proclivities. China, for its part, is too distant and Turks view the Central Kingdom as too anti-Turkic and anti-Muslim. During Beijing's brutal crackdown on protests in Xinjiang (which Turks usually refer to as "East Turkestan") in the summer of 2009, Erdoğan had accused Chinese authorities of committing "genocide."³⁵

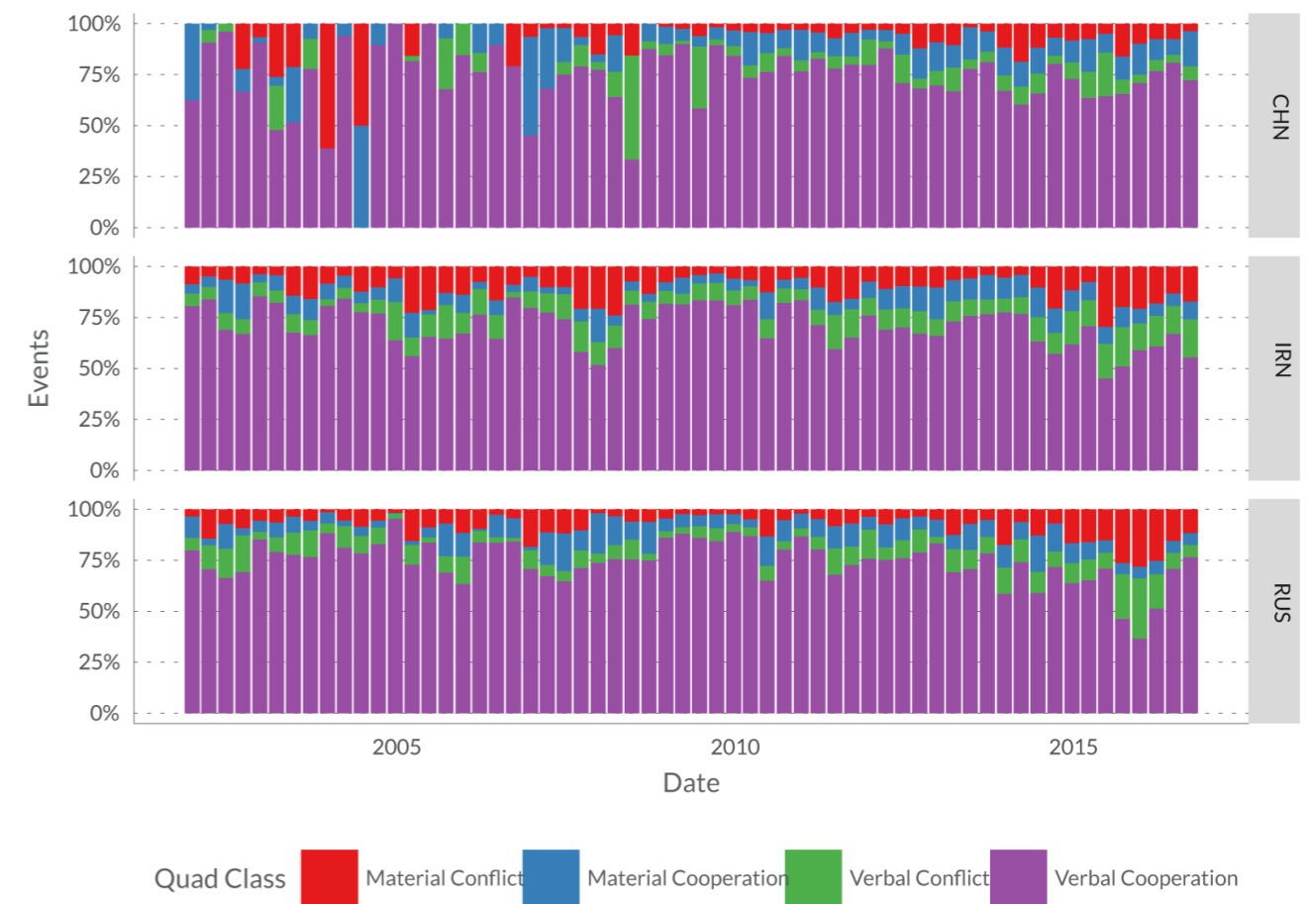
Broader strategic matters, too, are likely to prevent Turkey's long march to Russia, Iran and China. Putin continues to support Syria's Assad, whom Erdoğan hates viscerally. Iran's Shia outlook in the region clashes with Turkey's Sunni proclivities.

Figure 3.29 Turkey influence exerted, 2002-2015



35. France 24, "Turkish PM Erdogan Likens Xinjiang Violence to 'Genocide,'" *France 24*, July 10, 2009, <http://www.france24.com/en/20090710-turkish-pm-erdogan-xinjiang-violence-genocide-turkey-uighurs-han-trade-beijing-china>. For a more detailed study on why Ankara and Beijing are unlikely to deepen their relationship, see Karen Kaya, "Turkey and China: Unlikely Strategic Partners," *Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, KS*, 2013, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Turkey-and-China.pdf>.

Figure 3.30 A visual account of Turkish interactions with China, Iran, and Russia, 2002-2017



Pivot to the Arab/Muslim World (Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf)

As the graph below shows, Turkey's overall influence in the MENA region expanded after 2001, even though relations with Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel and Syria declined in the 2010s. A Turkish pivot to the south and east appears more likely than ever.

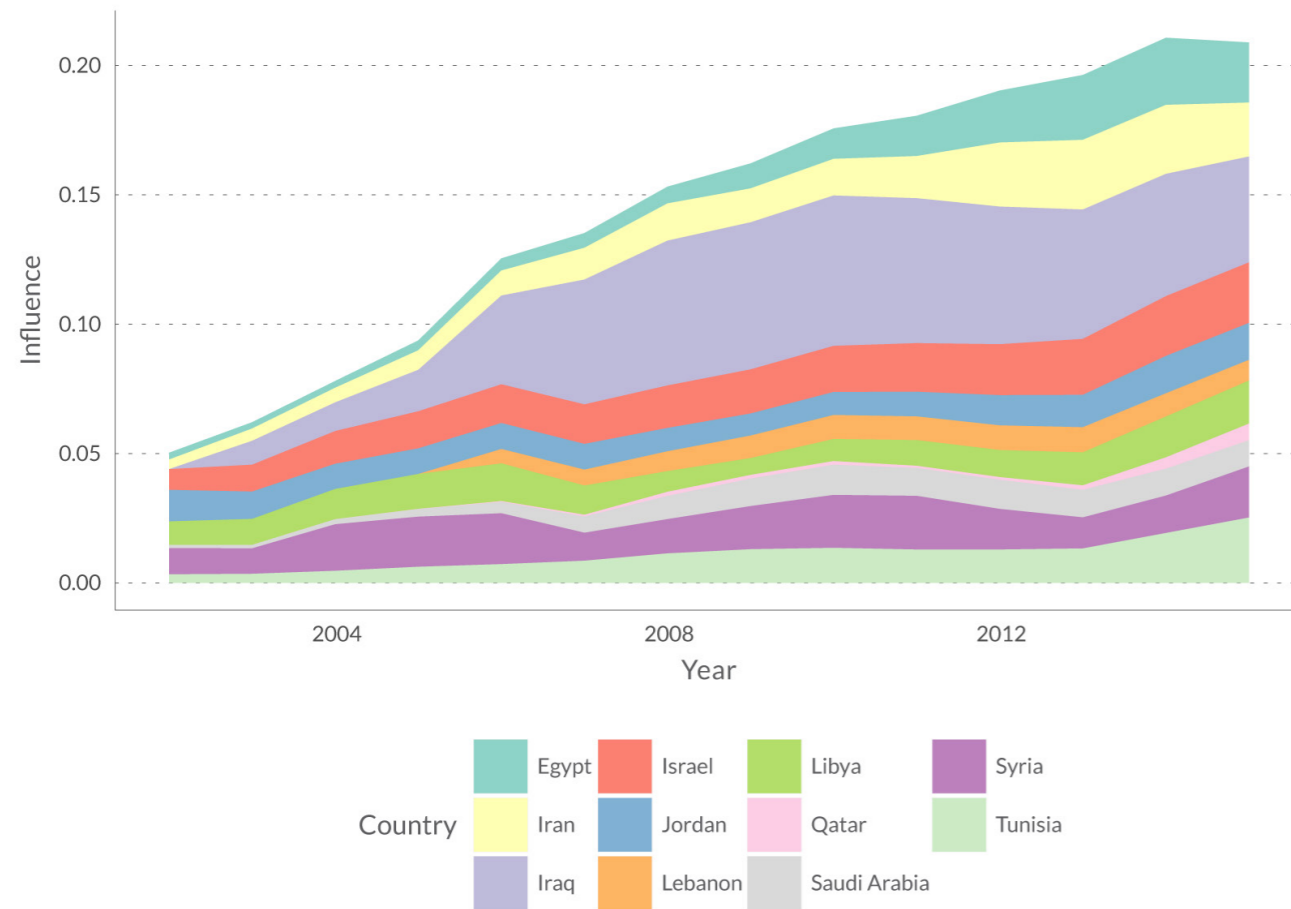
Interestingly, Turkey was actually pivoting toward the MENA region even before the AKP assumed power. After peacefully resolving their 1998 standoff over PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's presence in Syria, Ankara and Damascus began to cooperate in the fields of defense/security, investment, trade and tourism—a dynamic that accelerated under the AKP. As Turkey's relations with one of the most important Arab countries improved, its trade with the MENA region surpassed \$30 billion—a sevenfold increase from 2002 until 2009. In the first decade of the 21st century, Turkey reciprocally lifted travel visas with Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya and Qatar. In the summer of 2010, Ankara began discussions on a free trade zone with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.³⁶

The popular protests and mass revolutions that toppled the likes of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Muammar Qadhafi in Libya in 2011 seemed like an historic opportunity for Turkey. Expecting the

36. *The Economist*, "Looking East and South," *The Economist*, October 29, 2009, http://www.economist.com/node/14753776?Story_ID=E1_TQSVSSG; BBC News, "Turkey Agrees to Plans for Arab 'Free Trade Zone,'" *BBC News*, June 10, 2010, sec. Middle East, <http://www.bbc.com/news/10290025>.

rapid downfall of their former partner Assad, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu began providing the Syrian opposition with political and material assistance in early 2012. But not only did the Erdoğan-Davutoğlu duo's hopes for Assad's quick demise not materialize, their Islamist ally in Egypt, President Mohammed Morsi, was overthrown in General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's coup in July 2013.

Figure 3.31 Turkish influence exerted vis-à-vis selected Middle Eastern countries and the great powers (U.S., China, E28 and Russia)



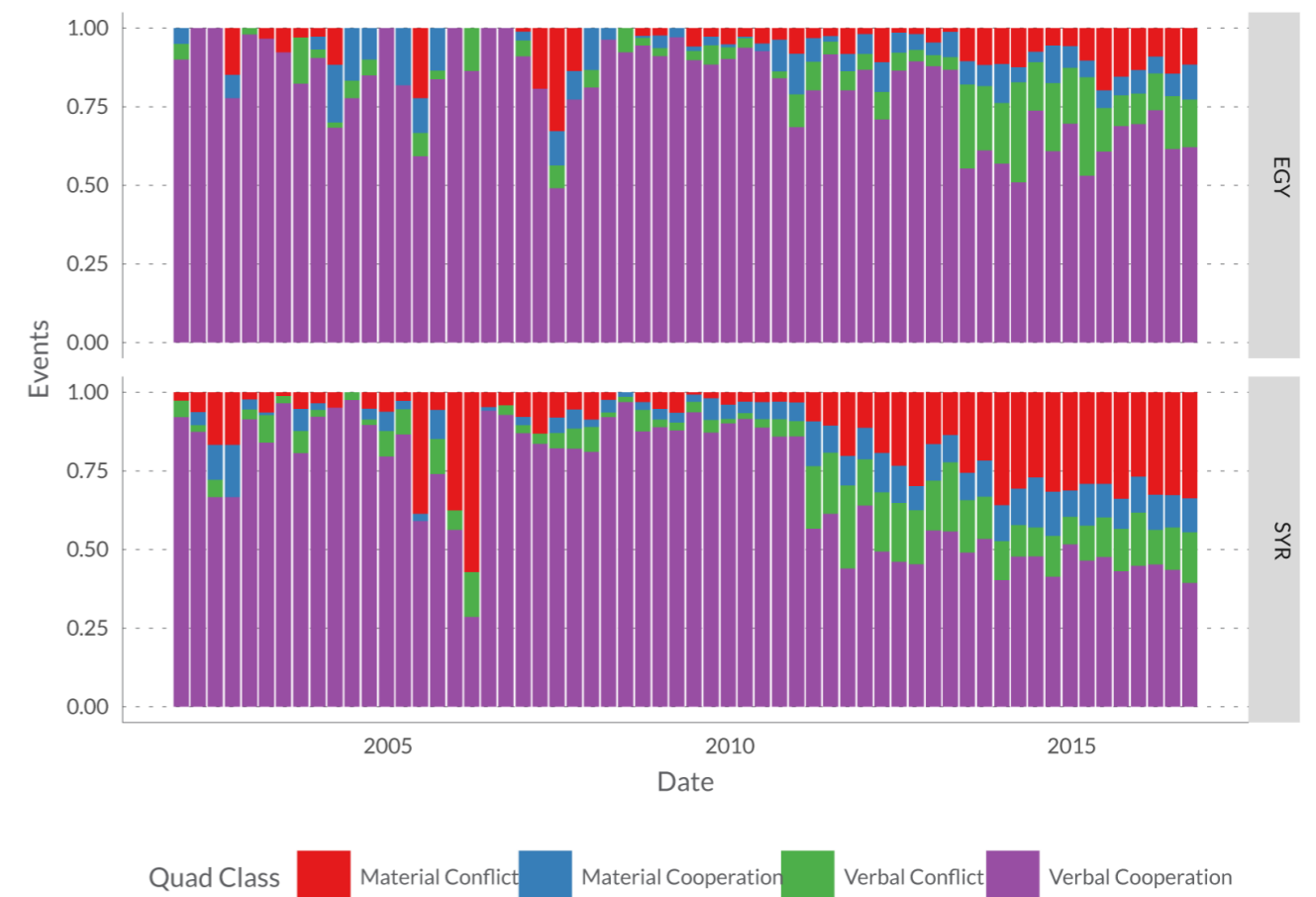
As the Arab Spring descended into chaos, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu consistently bet on the wrong horse. They demanded Morsi be reinstated in Egypt, called for Assad to step down, lashed out at Iraqi and Iranian leaders for their support of the Syrian dictator and exploited their differences with Israel for domestic gains (such as in the Mavi Marmara crisis of 2010). They also berated the Israeli government for its excesses against Palestinian civilians while remaining conspicuously silent on Hamas attacks against Israel. Worse, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu backed unpopular Sunni groups throughout the region.

Although Ankara's open door policy to shelter more than three million refugees fleeing the fighting in Syria and Iraq was admirable (not to mention its spending billions of dollars to that end), its initial indifference to extremist groups in those conflicts damaged Turkish credibility around the world. Worse, as the MENA region turned into a battleground pitting the "Sunni axis" of Saudi Arabia and Qatar against the "Shia axis" of Iran, Iraq and Syria, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu, who had embraced

fellow Muslim countries in a non-sectarian fashion under "zero problems with neighbors" in the 2000s, now saw that slogan turn into "zero neighbors without problems."³⁷

But Turkey is yet to give up its quest for regional leadership, as it expands energy and defense ties with Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Riyadh is considering purchasing billions of dollars in arms from Ankara. Meanwhile, a Turkish military base commenced operations in Qatar in April 2016—the first of its kind in the region. Two months later, around the time of the rapprochement with Russia, Turkey ended its diplomatic row with Israel.³⁸

Figure 3.32 A visual account of Turkish interactions with Egypt and Syria, 2002-2017



But these developments do not mean a pivot to the MENA region is a foregone conclusion. For one thing, Turkey's south and east pivot would work only if it maintains its Western connections. Without serving as a meeting point between east and west, Ankara is not much use to either side. Even the leaders of MENA countries think so. Before Turkey's relations deteriorated with Iran and

37. Piotr Zalewski, "How Turkey Went From 'Zero Problems' to Zero Friends," *Foreign Policy*, August 22, 2013, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/08/22/how-turkey-went-from-zero-problems-to-zero-friends/>.

38. Ufuk Şanlı, "Erdoğan's Secret Economic Weapon," *Al-Monitor*, May 4, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/05/turkey-erdogan-secret-economic-weapon.html>; Tom Finn, "Seeing Shared Threats, Turkey Sets up Military Base in Qatar," *Reuters*, April 28, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-qatar-turkey-military-idUSKCN0XP2IT>; Metin Gürçan, "What Are Turkish Troops Going to Do in Qatar?," *Al-Monitor*, June 3, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/06/turkey-qatar-what-are-turkish-troops-going-to-do.html>; Zülfikar Doğan, "Amid Financial Hardship, Erdogan Looks to Qatar as 'Rich Daddy,'" *Al-Monitor*, December 29, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/12/turkey-israel-russia-qatar-money-props-up-erdogan.html>.

Syria in 2011, both Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bashar al-Assad would emphasize how Ankara's EU membership would benefit both Europe and its southern and eastern neighbors.³⁹

The Turks also need to exercise subtlety and humility when dealing with their fellow Middle Easterners, as Erdoğan's October 2016 spat with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi demonstrated. On the eve of the operation to expel ISIS from Mosul, the Turkish president got into a public row with Abadi and made remarks suggesting that Ankara may have irredentist aims toward the oil-rich areas of northern Iraq.⁴⁰ Tone deafness and hubris are the most important factors that prevent Turkey from "pivoting" toward the east and playing a useful role in its neighborhood.

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Hold, Raise, or Fold: Pivot Away from the West or Stay the Course?

Since the early Cold War, Western countries -especially the United States- have remained consistent in their approach toward Turkey: to deny the Soviet Union -and later Russia- a strong foothold in the eastern Mediterranean and MENA; to that end, to maintain Turkey's economic growth and social development; and in order to prevent domestic disorder from reversing socioeconomic gains, to support Turkey's democratic institutions. That security-development-democracy template has remained steady since Turkey's *hard* pivot to the West in the late 1940s. Despite crises such as the Cyprus war in 1974, the subsequent U.S. and European arms embargo on Ankara and the TBMM's refusal to permit U.S. forces passage to invade Iraq through Turkish territory in 2003, the West preferred and managed to keep Ankara on its side.⁴¹

But the nearly-seventy-year-old irony is that neither the EU nor the United States have figured out a way to anchor Turkey to the West permanently. In fact, several dynamics today make it probable for Turkey to pivot away from the West. As discussed earlier, these include "pull factors" toward the "Silk Road" axis or the MENA region and "push factors" such as the lack of European and American support for Ankara in its struggle against the Gülen network, limited Western burden-sharing with Ankara to assist Syrian and Iraqi refugees, European and U.S. refusal to consider decisive military options to oust Assad in Syria and Ankara's stalled accessions negotiations with the EU.

Western countries, too, have legitimate grievances against their Turkish ally. Ankara's continuous attempts to drive a "hard bargain" with NATO allies to conduct operations in Syria and Iraq through Turkish bases, coupled with Ankara's threats to derail the West's complicated alliances with local (especially Kurdish) groups against ISIS frustrate Western partners. As a result, even retired U.S. generals who served in Turkey in the past and have positive memories of the country, are calling for finding alternatives to Turkish bases and downgrading cooperation with Ankara.⁴²

Disagreements between Ankara and NATO over strategic and operational matters could have been manageable (after all, the Alliance's history is nothing if not a history of disagreements and bickering among members) were it not for Turkey's troubling internal situation. Erdoğan's

39. Barın Kayaoğlu, "Is Turkey Giving Up on EU Membership?," *Al-Monitor*, September 23, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/turkey-giving-up-eu-membership.html>.

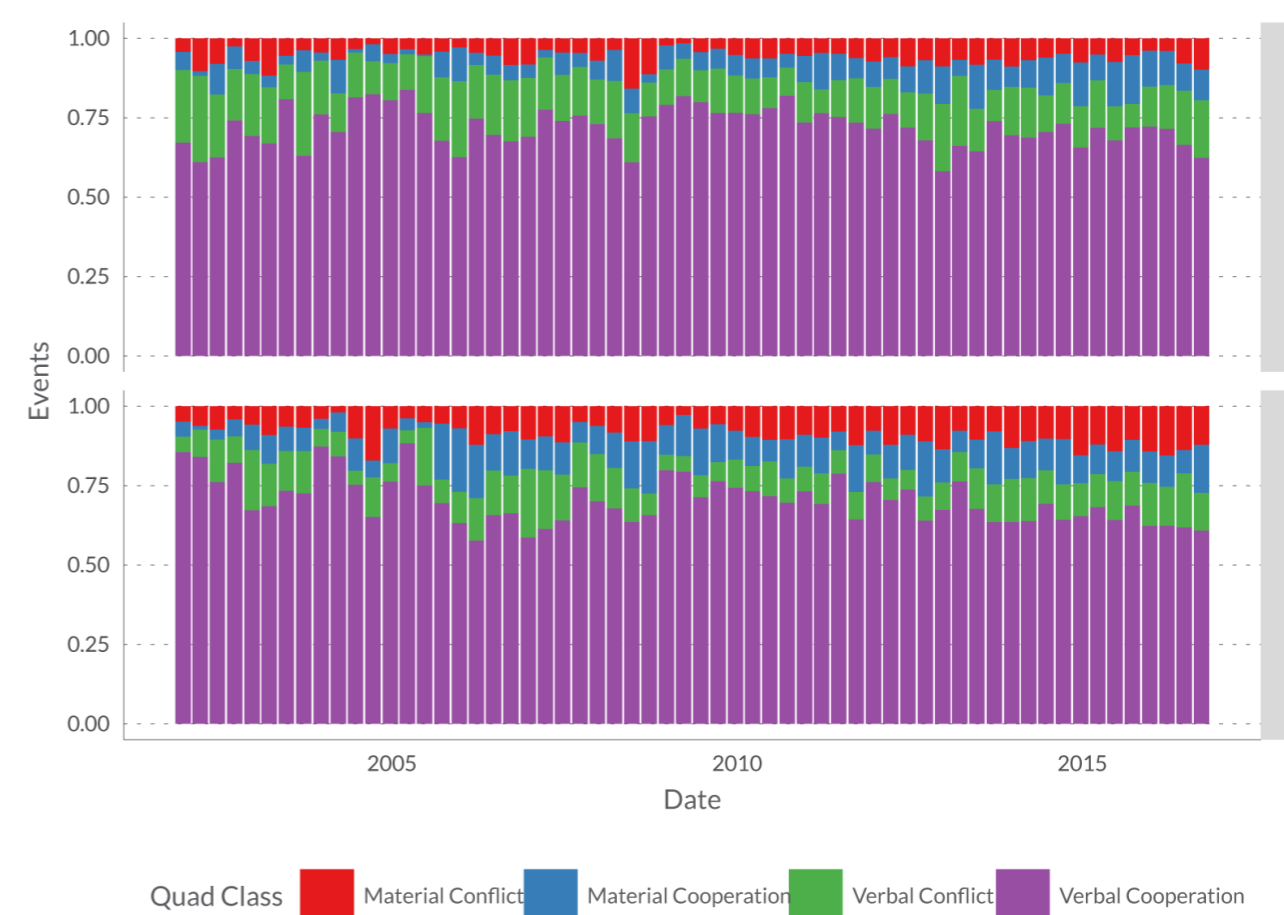
40. Nick Danforth, "Turkey's New Maps Are Reclaiming the Ottoman Empire," *Foreign Policy*, October 23, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/23/turkeys-religious-nationalists-want-ottoman-borders-iraq-erdogan/>.

41. A version of this paragraph previously appeared on Barın Kayaoğlu, "H-Diplo Article Review: 'Malleable Modernity: Rethinking the Role of Ideology in American Policy, Aid Programs and Propaganda in Fifties' Turkey,'" *H-Diplo Article Review* 601 (March 24, 2016), <http://tiny.cc/AR601>.

42. Charles F. Wald, "Get Ready to Walk Away from Incirlik," *Defense One*, October 24, 2016, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2016/10/get-ready-walk-away-incirlik/132585/>.

increasing authoritarianism has caused consternation in Western capitals since the Gezi protests rocked Turkey in June 2013. In the aftermath of the failed coup of July 2016, instead of reversing course and improving democratic standards and the rule of law, Erdoğan and the AKP seem bent on crushing their remaining opponents. In October-November 2016, the Turkish government jailed the editor-in-chief and several columnists of the secular/liberal leftist *Cumhuriyet* newspaper along with nine deputies from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), including the party's co-chair, the charismatic Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş. Given the fact that the three-month state of emergency that the TBMM had passed after the failed coup was extended for another three months in October 2016, it is fair to wonder whether Erdoğan is trying to marginalize any serious opposition before he attempts to amend the Turkish constitution to finally attain his dreams for a super-presidency.⁴³

Figure 3.33 A visual account of EU and US interactions with Turkey, 2002-2017



None of this bodes well for the future of Turkish relations with the West. Whereas U.S. and European leaders used to wax lyrical about Turkey's accomplishments in the 2000s, verbal spats and tugs-of-

43. Cengiz Çandar, "Is Turkey on the Fast Track to Fascism?," *Al-Monitor*, November 4, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/11/turkey-might-be-heading-to-fascism.html>; Amberin Zaman, "Turkey Detains Editor, Staff of Leading Opposition Paper," *Al-Monitor*, October 31, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/10/turkey-opposition-paper-cumhuriyet-detained-crackdown-coup.html>; Ayla Jean Yackley, "'Kurdish Obama' Challenges Perceptions with Turkish Presidential Bid," *Reuters*, August 9, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-election-kurds-idUSKBN0G90CI20140809>.

war between Ankara and its Western partners have come to grab headlines. As the graphs below show, Turkey has experienced a slow but steady rise in its verbal and material “conflict” with both the EU and the United States since 2011, peaking at around the time of the July 2016 coup attempt. All of this makes it more likely that Turkey may “pivot away” from the West.

Yet several factors make it unlikely for Turkey to engage in a *hard* pivot away from the West. Beyond its reliance on the United States, NATO and the EU for its defense and security needs, Ankara also needs its Western partners to grow its economy through trade, investment, tourism and innovation. Turkey receives close to 80 percent of its foreign direct investment (FDI) from the West. On a country-by-country basis, companies from the United States remain Turkey’s top foreign job creator and source of FDI.⁴⁴ It is not realistic to expect that Russia, even when combined with China and the greater MENA region, could invest that sort of FDI in Turkey.

Thus, although Ankara’s pivot away from the West may seem more likely than ever, the Turkish side has not given up on global institutions where Western countries are heavily represented, such as NATO and G-20. Despite years of complaining about the slow pace of the membership talks with the EU, Erdoğan and the AKP have not abandoned their country’s Western outlook; Turkey’s broader foreign policy objectives still tilt toward its Occidental options. Given issues such as ISIS, postwar reconstruction in Syria and Iraq and the status of millions of refugees in Turkey, whether they like it or not, Turkey and the West still need each other more than ever.

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“Self-Pivot”: Turkey as a New Pole in a Multipolar World?

Turkey’s fourth and final alternative in its foreign relations would be to assume a more independent bearing. Under this scenario, Ankara would chart a course that maintains some elements of all the options discussed above: it would nominally remain in NATO and go through the motions of the accession negotiations with Brussels, but it also would downgrade its participation in Western defense and security arrangements while pivoting to the “Silk Road” and Middle East/North Africa/Gulf alternatives.

This “self-pivot” could play out in several ways: Ankara could fuse the Silk Road, MENA and Western alternatives to pursue a sophisticated, balanced and multilateral foreign policy reminiscent of the AKP’s first two terms from 2002 until 2011. Such a diplomatic recalibration would involve a revival of the “peace at home, peace in the world” and “zero problems with neighbors” approaches, as well as dialing down the confrontational rhetoric against other actors. Instead of worsening regional and global conflicts, Ankara could act as an honest broker between conflicting parties or reach out to its adversaries—as it did when it mediated indirect talks between Israel and Syria in 2007-2008 and signed the Zurich Protocols with Armenia in 2009.

But for the prickly Erdoğan to walk back from his personal ambitions and build consensus at home and rebuild bridges abroad (especially with Syria and Iraq) would be something of an earthly miracle. Given Turkey’s relative marginalization by regional and international actors, a “self-pivot,” instead of a genuine attempt at reconciliation with Turkey’s adversaries, would look more like the “precious

44. Ernst & Young Global Limited, “Ernst & Young’s Attractiveness Survey, Turkey 2013: The Shift, the Growth and the Promise,” Attractiveness Surveys (Ernst & Young, 2013), 24, [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Turkey_attractiveness_survey_2013/\\$FILE/turkey_attractiveness_2013.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Turkey_attractiveness_survey_2013/$FILE/turkey_attractiveness_2013.pdf). Also see The World Bank, *Trading up to High Income: Turkey Country Economic Memorandum* (The World Bank, 2014), <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/turkey/tr-cem-trade-eng.pdf>.

loneliness” idea that Erdoğan’s press secretary and national security advisor İbrahim Kalın had coined to justify the AKP’s diplomatic missteps after 2011.⁴⁵ And even if Erdogan and the AKP make all the right moves in the domestic and international scene, it is far from certain whether Turkey’s neighbors would respond as positively to Turkish overtures today as they did in the 2000s, after holding the Turks responsible for the troubles and turmoil that gripped the MENA region since 2011.

At any rate, if Ankara assumes a more flexible and independent posture abroad, it may not even look like a “self-pivot.” Instead, it could act with autonomy within the Western alliance the way it did in later Cold War years and the 1990s and get the best of all worlds. Because Turkey is unlikely to leave NATO or abandon its membership talks with the EU in the foreseeable future, distinguishing a “self-pivot” from “stay the course with the West” option may be a serious practical challenge.

Conclusion: Whither Turkey?

This report maintains that Turkey’s foreign policy in the next 5 to 10 years will walk a fine line between the third and fourth options discussed above—staying the course with the West and pursuing an independent foreign policy.

This assumption is based on a realistic assessment of Turkish behavior: by maintaining its main Western links —NATO membership and EU candidacy—Turkey would be in a much better position to pursue its regional and global interests. Without political and economic connections to the West, Ankara would not be as alluring to its non-Western partners, nor would it assume as many risks in its international affairs as it could as a NATO ally and EU candidate.

But what would the revival of “autonomy within the West” imply? Assuming President Erdoğan keeps his authoritarianism in check and Turkish domestic turmoil does not spin out of control, this scenario would mean a continuation of the transactional relationship between Turkey and the West since 2011. The two sides would haggle over issues such as NATO access to Turkish airspace and İncirlik airbase, U.S. support for Kurdish groups and Turkish support for armed religious groups in Syria, or how much the EU would have to pay for Ankara to keep Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Meanwhile, both the United States and the EU would tone down their objections to Erdoğan’s excesses.

Of course, Turkey’s autonomy within the Western alliance would be neither easy nor pleasant. Ankara will probably not be as stable and reliable a partner as it was in the 1990s and 2000s. There will be shocking incidents such as the downing of the Russian plane in November 2015, the July 2016 coup attempt, or worrisome developments such as the Turkish intervention in Syria. The United States and EU countries would need to brace themselves for unpleasant surprises in dealing with their Turkish partner.

And if Turkey were to engage in a *hard* pivot away from the West, its reliability also would be a concern for its new partners in the “Silk Road” group and/or the MENA region. For one, those countries would be within their right to question the potential headaches that could come from aligning with Turkey, or whether Ankara could pivot back to the West again. As the graph below shows, Turkey’s influence relationships have gone up and down in the past few years; one can only assume that a similar dynamic will be at play for the next 5-10 years. One thing, however is certain: future events will not be easy for the people of Turkey, the West, or the rest of the world.

45. Kadri Gürsel, “Turkey Finds out One Is the Loneliest Number,” *Al-Monitor*, October 29, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/10/turkey-perilous-loneliness-turkey-middle-east.html>; Hürriyet Daily News, “Turkey Not ‘lonely’ but Dares to Do so for Its Values and Principles, Says PM Adviser,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, August 26, 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?pageID=238&nID=53244&NewsCatID=338>.

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Cover picture

Anti-coup protesters after 15 July 2016 Turkish coup d'état attempt. Author: Maurice Flesier.