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## Cold Turkey: Will the Recent Freeze in Turkish NATO Relations Spiral into a Bigger Problem?

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## Introduction

This article forecasts geopolitical trends involving conflicts between Turkey and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This study employs a methodology similar to the research and analytical methods employed by the U.S. Intelligence Community. In order to best accommodate the diversity of sources, as well as address all relevant aspects of the issue, this study implements a modified DIME approach. This structure encompasses the four instruments of national power (diplomacy, informational accuracy, military power, and economic strength), while adding historically relevant events, cultural characteristics, and national identity. These sectors involved collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from sources such as academic journals, open-source economic and military tools, and interviews with subject matter experts. This information was then assessed using a linear framework of Structured Analytic Techniques. The techniques employed, in order, were a Key Assumptions Check, Endstate Generation, Event Trees, Indicator Evaluation, Analysis of Competing Hypotheses, and Counterfactual Reasoning.

While this study predicts that Turkey will remain a NATO member despite antagonism from both sides, tensions between Turkey and other NATO members will probably increase due to further hostile incidents. This impacts other major actors with interests in the region, such as China and Russia, as they most likely will seek to leverage the situation to further splinter NATO. The primary factors driving this finding are internal to Turkey: proud nationalism, negative perceptions of foreign nations, and increasing pushes towards authoritarianism. This assessment is limited to the next five years, assuming no high-impact, low-probability events occur.

## Historical Background

Anatolia and the Armenian Highlands have historically been highly influential due to their strategic location. The land mass has access to the Black Sea to the north and the Mediterranean Sea to the south, allowing for expansive maritime opportunities. Europe is to the northwest, and the Levant is to the southeast, allowing for ease of diplomacy, trade, and travel across land and sea. Beginning in the eighth and ninth centuries, this land was conquered by displaced Turkish tribes who expanded westward from Central Asia.<sup>1</sup> Eventually, these tribes gave rise to the Ottoman Empire, which, at its peak in the sixteenth century, stretched from Austria to the Persian Gulf, controlling vast amounts of trade and wealth. However, the empire fell at the close of World War I, and the modern-day Republic of Turkey rose out of its ashes. After World War II and the onset of the Cold War divided Europe, Turkey joined NATO in 1952, coinciding with the anti-Soviet influence of the Truman Doctrine, which sought to keep Greece and Turkey out of Stalin's clutches.<sup>2</sup> Turkey contributed a strong military and strategic location as it allowed the U.S. to project power along the southern flank of the Soviet Union.

## Culture

Turkey has had a rocky history with virtually every European power. Many NATO member states have at one point been at war with Turkey or its cultural antecedent, the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>1</sup> "A Brief Outline of Turkish History," Turkish Cultural Foundation, accessed March 8, 2021, <http://www.turkishculture.org/general/a-brief-outline-1067.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> "Transcript of Truman Doctrine (1947)," Our Documents - Transcript of Truman Doctrine (1947), accessed July 2, 2021, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=81&page=transcript>.

This is also true of Russia, which could arguably be considered the most prevalent and persistent adversary in Turkic history.<sup>3</sup> These clashes with Europe are not only the inevitable clashes of powers expected of nations on each other's peripheries, but they also tie into the vast cultural gulf lying between both the Christian West and East and their tensions with Islam. While the secularization of the past century has facilitated a détente of the cultural divide, Erdoğan's leadership and encouragement of Turkey as an Islamic state has rekindled the flame of religion and has now placed Turkey on a collision course with the West.

Additionally, Russia's influence towards Turkey has also contributed to this internecine conflict between Turkey and its fellow NATO partners, irrespective of its historical status as a rival and cultural antithesis to Turkey. It is unfair, however, to chalk up Turkish disdain for their NATO partners as solely due to a difference of religion. Plainly stated, the Turkocentric mindset of the vast majority of the Turkish population puts them at odds with everyone not Turkish; Europeans and Americans simply fall into that category. Turkish public opinion of the Arab world as well as the West is remarkably low, as evidenced by a poll conducted by the German Marshall Fund. It found that Turkish citizens hold overall negative opinions of other nations, particularly other NATO members.<sup>4</sup> An additional study, from December 23 to December 30, 2020, was conducted by the team behind this research project through social media in order to verify these results. It found that 84% of tweets geotagged from within a 100km radius of Ankara and containing the keyword 'NATO' displayed an unfavorable view towards the alliance.

### Leadership

Much of this shift in Turkish foreign and domestic policies toward a more hostile stance against NATO can be traced back to the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who served as prime minister for Turkey from 2003-2014.<sup>5</sup> In 2014, he was elected president, and his presidency survived the 2016 coup attempt, an event that served as a turning point in his presidency and foreign relations.<sup>6</sup> He implemented thirty State of Emergency Executive Decrees, containing nearly 1,200 articles in total and cementing his grip on power in the wake of the failed takeover.<sup>7</sup> Since then, Erdoğan has made changes to the judiciary, military, and legislature, such as pressuring judges, jailing swaths of soldiers seen as less-than-loyal, and overturning election results.<sup>8</sup> These actions all culminate in a strategic shift from an institutional democratic state to a more centralized, authoritarian government.

The decisions coming from Ankara are extremely pragmatic as Erdoğan has proven himself to value his strategic goals of regional dominance over an alliance or partnership with any one nation. According to Gen. (Ret.) Armfield, former Vice Director for Strategy, Plans and Policy of USCENTCOM, "In my observation, Erdoğan is more focused on influencing the Middle East than

<sup>3</sup> Cook, "NATO to Probe France-Turkey Med Naval Incident," <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/world-news/2020/06/france-accuses-turkey-of-violating-un-arms-embargo-on-libya/>.

<sup>4</sup> "Turkish Perceptions Survey," The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2015, [https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/TurkeySurvey\\_2015\\_web1.pdf](https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/TurkeySurvey_2015_web1.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Baris Kesgin, "Turkey's Erdoğan: leadership style and foreign policy audiences," *Turkish Studies* 21, no. 1 (February 2020) <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2019.1575735>.

<sup>6</sup> "Turkey coup attempt: State of emergency announced," BBC News, last modified July 21, 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36852080>.

<sup>7</sup> Ishmet Akça, et al. "When State of Emergency Becomes the Norm: Impact of Executive Decrees on Turkish Legislation" (January 2018). [https://tr.boell.org/sites/default/files/ohal\\_rapor\\_ing.final\\_version.pdf](https://tr.boell.org/sites/default/files/ohal_rapor_ing.final_version.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Zafer Yılmaz, "Turkey's deepening authoritarianism and the fall of electoral democracy," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 49 no. 1. (July 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2019.1642662>

he is with influencing Europe.”<sup>9</sup> This includes the NATO alliance as well as Russia, NATO’s chief adversary. Turkey’s purchase of the S-400 missile systems from Moscow proved a major blow to U.S.-Turkish relations, but it does not serve as an absolute signal of the Russia-Turkey relationship developing to the level of a strategic partnership. In 2015, Turkey shot down a Russian fighter jet on its way to Syria, resulting in a diplomatic freeze and an increase in suspicion and hostility between the two nations that has yet to be fully resolved, although later agreements to cooperate in Syria have helped ease the tensions.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is another point of strain between Turkey and Russia. Turkey remains Azerbaijan’s chief supporter, providing diplomatic and military support and refusing to normalize diplomatic relations with Armenia.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, Russia’s nominally neutral stance leans in favor of Armenia.<sup>12</sup>

### NATO in the Modern Era

NATO began as a security collective expressly designed to counter Soviet influence and the expansion of communism on the European continent. By 1955, the USSR and several Eastern Bloc nations established the Warsaw Pact, which began to act as a counter-alliance to NATO. When the USSR collapsed, NATO faced a significant change. It had outlasted its rival, the Warsaw Pact, and witnessed the close of the Cold War. However, the collapse also left the alliance without a purpose. Absent this threat, NATO also lost the operating paradigm it had possessed since its inception.<sup>13</sup>

To justify its continued existence, NATO has progressed into a collection of Western democracies which collaborate on common defense issues.<sup>14</sup> However, Turkey is the notable exception to this trend of Western-thinking democracies.<sup>15</sup> Post-coup Ankara is decidedly undemocratic and increasingly authoritarian. Furthermore, Erdoğan has increasingly played agitator with his Western allies. Turkey is traditionally a highly independent and nationalistic country, which has caused friction within NATO in the past; however, Erdoğan’s actions in recent years have aggravated these underlying tensions to produce real concerns and points of conflict.

For example, Mediterranean neighbors Turkey and Greece have a long history of antagonism dating back to the Battle of Manzikert and the gradual expulsion of the Byzantines from Anatolia by the Seljuks and the Ottomans after them, which culminated in the fall of

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<sup>9</sup> Armfield, interview by authors.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Russell, “Russia–Turkey Relations: A Fine Line between Competition and Cooperation - Think Tank,” February 11, 2021, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_BRI%282021%29679090](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI%282021%29679090), 1-12.

<sup>11</sup> Durna Safarova, “Coup Attempt Ripple Effect: Azerbaijan Closes TV Station,” Eurasianet, July 9, 2016, <https://archive.vn/20200804195952/https://eurasianet.org/coup-attempt-ripple-effect-azerbaijan-closes-tv-station>.

<sup>12</sup> Sergey Markedonov, “Russia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Careful Balancing,” Istituto Per Gli Studi Di Politica Internazionale, March 12, 2018, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/russia-and-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-careful-balancing-19832>.

<sup>13</sup> “The North Atlantic Treaty,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, (April 1949). [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm)

<sup>14</sup> Matthias Matthijs, “Democracy and the NATO Alliance: Upholding Our Shared Democratic Values,” Council on Foreign Relations (Council on Foreign Relations, November 13, 2019), <https://www.cfr.org/report/democracy-and-nato-alliance-upholding-our-shared-democratic-values>.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Katz and Torrey Taussig, “An Inconvenient Truth: Addressing Democratic Backsliding within NATO,” Brookings (Brookings, July 10, 2018), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/07/10/an-inconvenient-truth-addressing-democratic-backsliding-within-nato/>.

Constantinople in 1453.<sup>16</sup> Recently, Turkey and Greece have clashed over natural gas drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean—both nations claim the deposits are part of its continental shelf.<sup>17</sup> Turkey escalated these tensions by exerting its military presence in the region, sending multiple naval warships to accompany research vessels in the area. Turkey also managed to aggravate tensions with fellow NATO member France. Secular France and increasingly Islamic Turkey had already been at odds when Turkish naval warships broke a French weapons embargo on Libya and then intimidated the French into standing down.<sup>18</sup> The conflict with France is not simply one-sided: French President Emanuel Macron has contributed as well. Following the beheading of a French schoolteacher, Macron authorized dozens of raids on suspected extremists and closed a mosque. Erdoğan retaliated by denouncing these steps, going so far as to personally insult Macron and call him mentally impaired.<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, Turkey has aggravated tensions with the U.S. on multiple occasions. Following the 2016 coup attempt, Erdoğan demanded that the U.S. extradite Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish-Islamic scholar living in exile in Pennsylvania.<sup>20</sup> Turkey claimed that Gülen was the mastermind behind the Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETO), which executed the coup.<sup>21</sup> However, the U.S. declined to do so, citing the lack of evidence needed to secure such an extradition. Erdoğan's government is still pursuing repatriation, and this affair has done more harm than good to U.S.-Turkey relations. In addition to the Gülen affair, Turkey has also recklessly violated NATO arms agreements via its purchase of Russian S-400 defense systems, which are designed to counter U.S. combat aircraft. In response, America levied sanctions, removing Turkey from the Joint Strike Fighter program in order to prevent Russian intelligence gathering of the F-35's capabilities.<sup>22</sup>

In spite of all this, Turkey has signaled its commitment to remaining a NATO member. The Turkish Foreign Minister announced renewed commitment to Europe in December 2020 and

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<sup>16</sup> Alexis Heraclides and Gizem Alioglu Çakmak, *Greece and Turkey in Conflict and Cooperation: from Europeanization to De-Europeanization* (London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2019).; Halil Karaveli, "Turkey's Decline," *Foreign Affairs*, March 13, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2016-03-02/turkeys-decline>.; Tony Bunting, "Battle of Manzikert," *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., March 17, 2017), <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Manzikert>.

<sup>17</sup> Elena Becatoros, "Greece Slams Turkish Move on Gas Exploration in Eastern Med," *AP News* (Associated Press, August 10, 2020), <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-europe-cyprus-greece-9bc8257ee9d64cdc7fb600081e52dd9c>.

<sup>18</sup> Lorne Cook, "NATO to Probe France-Turkey Med Naval Incident," *Federal News Network*, June 18, 2020, <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/world-news/2020/06/france-accuses-turkey-of-violating-un-arms-embargo-on-libya/>.

<sup>19</sup> Steven Erlanger, "Muslim Countries Denounce French Response to Killing of Teacher, Urge Boycott," *The New York Times*, November 25, 2020, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/27/world/europe/French-Muslims-Turkey-crackdown.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Sasha Ingber, "Trump Says Extraditing Turkish Cleric Fethullah Gulen Is 'Not Under Consideration'," *NPR* (NPR, November 17, 2018), <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/17/668898939/trumps-says-extraditing-turkish-cleric-fethullah-gulen-is-not-under-consideratio>.

<sup>21</sup> Country of Origin Information Service, "Country Policy and Information Note - Turkey: Gülenism" (Home Office, April 2017), <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1008341/download>.

<sup>22</sup> "The United States Sanctions Turkey Under CAATSA 231 - United States Department of State," U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State, December 14, 2020), <https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-united-states-sanctions-turkey-under-caatsa-231/index.html>.

affirmed that ties between Turkey and the West run deep.<sup>23</sup> Turkey has been one of NATO's most committed members to date, contributing valuable manpower and currency to NATO's missions. Brigadier General Richard Armfield (retired)[the] Turks have proven to be a reliable contributor of significant military capability to the NATO mission...they're a valued member of the alliance."<sup>24</sup> Additionally, due to its strategic position near both Russia and the Middle East, the U.S. has for decades used Turkey as one of its key military projection-of-power bases in the region. Perhaps most importantly, no NATO member state has ever left or been removed from the alliance. To set such a precedent, significantly more pressure would likely need to be applied.

In order to accomplish its national goals on the international stage, Turkey can operate a number of strategic levers at its disposal. However, regarding the West and Russia, Turkey is vulnerable to economic pressure, and as such, is reticent to retaliate economically. According to Brigadier General (retired) Armfield, "Military and economy are the things that empower diplomacy...without a strong economy, you have a lot less options to achieve influence...all of [Turkey's] influence becomes military because that's the only lever they've got."<sup>25</sup> The Turkish economy has a significant downturn with inflation skyrocketing to nearly 15% in January 2021.<sup>26</sup> After the 2016 coup, Turkey's GDP has steadily decreased to the tune of \$100 billion, and unemployment has risen as well, recently spiking due to COVID-19 at 13%.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, Turkey will likely increasingly press military influence rather than adopting potential soft power alternatives.

### Historical Comparisons

Despite the fall of the Soviet Union, NATO continues in its existence as a military alliance in spite of the absence of an existential threat. As such, this study conducted research in order to examine if this occurrence, a military alliance without an enemy, is unique in history or relatively common. NATO's major opponent during the Cold War, the Warsaw Pact, provides an excellent point of comparison. The Warsaw Pact met its end alongside the fall of the Soviet Union as the political ties binding the nations dissolved, and the remaining members were unable to continue to support the alliance economically.<sup>28</sup> Like the Warsaw Pact, many of the political and ideological ties that once united NATO have faded, leaving the allied nations only slightly bound by Western worldviews. Turkey however, maintaining neither a distinctly Western nor Eastern worldview, does not fit this cultural adhesion. While this could be an indicator of NATO's decline, this cultural, political, and ideological divide between the member states of NATO has continued for

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<sup>23</sup> Lauren Toms, "Turkey-Russia Partnership Will Not Interfere in NATO Alliance: Turkish Foreign Minister," *The Washington Times* (The Washington Times, December 29, 2020), <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/dec/29/turkey-russia-partnership-will-not-interfere-nato/>.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Armfield, interview by authors, Niceville, January 8, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> "Turkish Inflation Surges to Nearly 15%, High Rates Stay in Focus," *Daily Sabah*, Daily Sabah, accessed February 3, 2021, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/economy/turkish-inflation-surges-to-nearly-15-high-rates-stay-in-focus>.

<sup>27</sup> "GDP (Current US\$) - Turkey," Data. World Bank, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=TR>.; "Turkey Unemployment Rate 2005-2020 (Data: 2021-2023)," Trading Economics, accessed March 8, 2021, <https://tradingeconomics.com/turkey/unemployment-rate>.

<sup>28</sup> "What Was the Warsaw Pact?," NATO, accessed March 8, 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/declassified\\_138294.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/declassified_138294.htm).

decades, and it is likely that NATO would have already dissolved if this was the primary cause of NATO's fall. On the other hand, many NATO states, unlike their Warsaw Pact counterparts, still maintain the capability to economically and militarily support the alliance and to lend a helping hand to those nations which falter. Indeed, many former members of the Warsaw Pact, including Poland, and even former member states of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) have since joined NATO. Consequently, the Warsaw Pact does not provide a strong parallel for the possible departure of individual member states such as Turkey or dissolution of NATO.

Another comparable alliance from years past is the Sacre Ligua, formed during the Great Turkish War in the seventeenth century.<sup>29</sup> Composed of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Hapsburg Empire, the Venetian Republic, and Tsarist Russia, the Sacre Ligua existed to counter the Ottoman Empire's incursion into Europe.<sup>30</sup> It is comparable to NATO for obvious reasons: it united much of Europe, and it faced a common enemy seeking to divide the continent. However, the alliance dissolved in 1699 after peace was made with the Ottomans.<sup>31</sup> Here, it diverged from NATO. Whereas the Sacre Ligua disbanded after the threat dissipated, NATO has advanced into a military alliance without an existential or peer threat.

Continuing the evaluation of defensive alliances, one of the likely candidates for establishing a parallel to Turkey's situation is the League of the Three Emperors. Though similar to NATO in its intentions to maintain peace throughout Europe, the League of the Three Emperors sought to use benevolent neutrality of the participating states (Russia, Germany, and Austria) rather than true collective security. This alliance was dissolved not by the inability to support the alliance, but rather, the alliance found its end in the very tensions that had existed from the alliance's creation.<sup>32</sup> Like the distrust that exists between Turkey and the other NATO member states, none of the members of the alliance trusted the other two to refrain from creating alliances outside of the initial agreement. As this tension increased, Russia sought to cut out whom they believed to be the weaker member of the alliance and exchange the triple alliance for a dual alliance with Germany.<sup>33</sup> The alliance in turn dissolved as each of the other member states attempted to do the same. While this is a possibility for the member states of NATO, it seems unlikely that this would be the straw that breaks the camel's back. There have been decades of varying degrees of partnerships between the members of the alliance, and Turkey's inclination to play both sides of an issue points to the need to force Turkey out if such a situation were to occur. As discussed previously, there is no route for NATO to push member states out of the alliance currently, and such a provision would have to gain Turkey's approval to be implemented. As such, Turkey will only leave the NATO alliance of its own accord, and, one would assume, if the highest level of decision makers in Turkey deem it to be in Turkish interests.<sup>34</sup>

### Structured Analytical Techniques

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<sup>29</sup> Rifa'at A. Abou-El-Haj, "Ottoman Diplomacy at Karlowitz," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 87, no. 4 (1967): 498-512.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Serge Goriainov, "The End of the Alliance of the Emperors," *The American Historical Review* 23, no. 2 (1918): 324-49.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ashlyn Cowell, Reagan Nelson, Paul Prentice, Brent Schuliger, and Nathan Waite, "Cold Turkey: Will the Recent Freeze in Turkish-NATO Relations Spiral into a Bigger Problem," (Lecture, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, April 12, 2021).



As useful as the above information is, it must be processed and assessed in order to produce the desired forecast for the next five years. This study implements a structured methodology in order to accomplish this task. This structure helps ensure uniformity of evaluation between quantitative and qualitative data, established objectivity, and promoted transparent and reproduceable analytic processes.

Before any of the analytical steps of the structure could be implemented, any major assumptions underneath the gathered information were identified and evaluated. This allowed for an examination of the basis of these assumptions to determine if they are supported or unfounded. For example, one of the assumptions developed was that Turkey seems to be playing the East and the West off of each other and reaping the benefits of each. After examining the information gathered, it was deemed supported and consistent with the facts. On the other hand, one assumption was that there is not significant external influence on Turkey. This was not consistent with the research, and was thus deemed unsupported and removed from consideration as an unactionable assumption.

The next step involved generating and accounting for all possible results regarding the future of Turkey’s NATO membership. Using scenario branching techniques, nine endstates were generated which encompassed all possible outcomes. Of these nine, five were deemed most plausible and the other four were disregarded as not likely. These top five results were then fleshed out using pathway techniques in order to build a wider basis for evaluation (See Figure 1).

The supporting pieces of evidence for these five endstates were then compiled into a matrix and individually assessed for its support. This process supported endstate eight, that Turkey would remain in NATO but tensions between Turkey and other NATO members would increase, and determined that it was the outcome which was both closest to reality and best corroborated by the data. As the final step, endstate eight was then used as the basis for brainstorming techniques in order to extrapolate impacts onto major world actors such as China, the U.S., and Russia.

			<i>Endstate Generation</i>
Turkey’s Future Relations with NATO	Turkey Exits NATO	NATO Ceases to Exist	1. NATO is disbanded by its member states
			2. NATO ceases to exist for reasons outside of its control
	Turkey Leaves NATO of its Own Accord	3. Turkey leaves primarily due to factors external to NATO	
		4. Turkey leaves primarily due to factors internal to NATO	
	Turkey is Force Out of NATO	Turkey is Force Out of NATO	<b>5. Hot conflict</b> (Tensions increase and Turkey and a/multiple NATO member(s) become physically aggressive, other members of NATO agree Turkey must be removed)
			<b>6. Cold conflict</b> (Tensions increase but remain only diplomatic, other members of NATO agree Turkey must be removed)

	Turkey Remains in NATO	7. Turkey stays, inter-NATO tensions reduce
		8. Turkey stays, inter-NATO tensions increase
		9. Turkey stays, inter-NATO tensions stagnate

**Figure 1. Endstate Generation**

### Impacts

As mentioned, this study's conclusion has a significant impact on other major presences in the Middle East. Nations which are external to the region but wield significant influence have not been discussed at length, but are nonetheless vital to the discussion. Endstate eight states that incidents involving Turkey which increase tensions with Europe will continue to occur. Should this become reality in the next five years, this would spur notable reactions from Germany, Russia, China, Greece, and the United States. This study simulated these reactions using the Counterfactual Reasoning model discussed above, and it generated a scenario for each of the countries mentioned. Berlin is likely to side with Washington and leverage economic pressure on Ankara, despite significant trade ties. Russia, on the other hand, will capitalize on these circumstances to further splinter NATO, facilitating economic and military deals with Turkey. China will follow in this vein of exacerbating tensions by funding Turkey's economic and energy ventures, specifically ones in the eastern Mediterranean, which are causing strife with Greece. Greece, for its part, will cry foul and ratchet up tensions on its side by mirroring the Turkish strategy of naval patrols by contested territories. The U.S. will likely attempt to reconcile one of its most strategic allies and the alliance it helped create. In the face of admittedly low intensity, but unabashed antagonism from Erdogan, will begin to implement harsher penalties on Turkey.

### Conclusion

While Turkey will remain hostile and largely opposed to U.S. national interests in the Middle East, ultimately, this study shows that Turkey will likely remain in NATO and work alongside Washington as an ally as doing so still remains within Turkey's national interest. The U.S. has already proved to have a high tolerance for Turkish tomfoolery and has not in any real sense punished Turkey for anything it has done within its interests that runs contrary to those of the U.S. By playing Russia for advantages and antagonizing the West, though not aggravating its western allies to the point of no return, Erdoğan is able to play both sides. In such a manner, he is able to benefit Turkey's interests the most, which is his ultimate end as a pragmatic leader.

This study also shows however, that it may not always remain in Turkey's national interest to remain in NATO. Additionally, the growing gulf between Turkey and the West may soon be too large to bridge and will ultimately tear a rift between the two sides if something is not done to buttress it. With the recent incidents of the past few years, it is clear that Ankara is doing all it feels it can get away with as a regional superpower, irrespective of the opinions of Washington or Moscow. These indicate that while the next five to ten years likely will not see a break between NATO and Turkey, the future beyond that is far hazier.

Turkey's continued, tension-filled membership with NATO impacts policy in two meaningful ways. First, as long as Turkey remains in NATO and adheres to the general status quo, it must still be treated like a NATO member. As it stands, "the [U.S.] needs Turkey" but "Turkey does not need the [U.S.]," according to Serdar Kilic, the Turkish envoy to the U.S.<sup>35</sup> Conversely, NATO should start planning for a life beyond Turkey, which would ultimately allow for a more unified and ideologically driven alliance. Turkey is well aware of its strategic value, which it has leveraged to its advantage on multiple occasions. As such, it would be prudent for the U.S. to revise its strategic goals to reduce any dependency on Turkey.

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<sup>35</sup> Serdar Kilic, Quoted in "US Needs Turkey More than Turkey Needs US: Envoy," Middle East Monitor, last modified December 22, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191222-us-needs-turkey-more-than-turkey-needs-us-envoy/>.

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