



Turkey to Choose Dictatorship?

How NATO Can Respond

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Tough Love for Turkey

By Robert “Bud” McFarlane

The republic of Turkey, a beautiful country, has been an ally of the West, but that alliance is in trouble. The Eastern Flank of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance may be at risk. Turkey served as the southern anchor of NATO during the Cold War. It is easy to see why: It is the land bridge from Asia to Europe and from the Mideast to Central Asia. Europe and Turkey need each other: More than 6 million Turks are part of European economies. Turkey is also important because of the latest threat to civilization: terrorism. But Turkey is no longer a reliable ally in this war. The overtly radical vision of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan leans toward extremist, political Islamism.



Recent events in Turkey are setting off alarms: the closing of all independent media, purges of pro-Western officials and the toleration of jihadist organizations. Can Turkey can still secure NATO's vision to “safeguard ... democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law”? Regrettably, Turkey's rule of law is in decline. Respected scholars conclude that President Erdogan is deeply corrupted and has put his own ambitions above the security of his nation and of NATO. Case in point: He reportedly has used a Turkish-Iranian businessman to handle huge money transactions between Iran and Turkey, breaching sanctions against Iran. His illicit support for terrorist organizations in Syria has been documented. Due to the upheaval that followed the failed attempted coup in Turkey last year, the Turkish people have been traumatized. But their president has made a bad situation worse by using the coup as an opportunity to expand his own political power. After the coup collapsed, the authorities began arresting many citizens who had nothing to do with it: reporters, military officers, policemen and teachers. More than 150,000 were arrested — many tortured. The purged officials were replaced by the president's cronies, political opportunists and radical, political Islamists. Turkey will hold a national referendum on April 16th. It asks the Turkish people to take power from the parliament and give it to the president — who would have almost unlimited power to rule by decree. But would more power to the president mean Turkey would do more to win the war against terrorism? No, it would not. Turkish authorities have tolerated the presence of terrorists on Turkish territory for years — a tragic miscalculation. In 2015, Turkey did not carry out a single pre-planned counterterrorism operation on its soil against the Islamic State. Turkish authorities recently discovered 100 Islamic State safe houses in Istanbul. The Islamic State infiltration is very widespread. Even worse, thousands of Turkish and foreign Islamic State fighters in Syria and Iraq are expected to return to Turkey this year.

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North Atlantic Treaty Organization



Credit: Image courtesy of ABSNTV

Democracy on Trial in Ankara



By Rep. Dana Rohrabacher

Ten years ago, Turkey was a solid NATO ally, a staunch opponent of radical Islam and a friend of the United States. Today all that is in question.

Turkey's current government is emphatically Islamist. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has become more aggressive in his Islamic beliefs. There are two reasons for us to be seriously concerned:

First, the Turkish government has become steadily more aligned with Islamist terrorists in the Middle East. Turkey's emerging democracy, in the past one of the strongest and most developed multiparty systems in the Middle East, is sliding into a dictatorship. President Erdogan is creating not only a cult of personality, but also a centralized state in which all power lies in his hands.

Second, the government blinded itself to the years-long presence of Islamic terrorists on its territory until 2016, when the Islamic State launched a series of bloody attacks on its soil.

The Turkish people will vote in a public referendum on April 16 on whether to give the president expanded executive powers. However, free elections are tough to hold in the absence of a free press, which President Erdogan has deliberately eliminated.

When the Republic of Turkey joined NATO in 1952, it was a secular republic. Although the Turkish military toppled several of the elected governments, in every case it restored power to civilian governance within a short time.

As many have noted, the nation's faith in its military was devastated by the failed coup of July 15, 2016. Understandably, the Turkish people rallied round their president. He leveraged that support to imprison thousands of Turkish leaders who opposed his expanding dictatorship.

President Erdogan overplayed his hand by using the coup as a pretext for purging every branch of the government of potential opponents, shutting down any print and broadcast media that could challenge his view of reality.

Declaring a state of emergency, the government arrested myriads of journalists, secularists, military officers and government officials — virtually anyone who did not agree with President Erdogan's vision for Turkey. More than 100,000 were sacked, more than 40,000 arrested. Many suffered torture.

The Turkish government blames its travail on a geriatric Turkish religious philosopher living in exile on a Pennsylvania farm. Many Turkish citizens, despite the lack of evidence, have accepted the absurd claim that Fetullah Gulen personally planned and ordered the coup — President Erdogan's pretext for establishing tyranny.

One example of how far these ridiculous purges have gone: Turkish soccer authorities announced they have fired 94 officials, including a number of referees, for their ties to the coup.

Tens of thousands of citizens have been arrested, and Turkey's government is using this coup to settle old scores and to clean out the house of those it does not see as sufficiently loyal to President Erdogan's vision for Turkey.

Perhaps the most bizarre element of this episode was last month's report that Turkey would release 38,000 criminals from prison to make room for those taken into custody in these purges. Murderers, rapists and thieves were released in order to make room for political opponents. It does not get much worse than that.

I want to underline my desire to see Turkey become an economically strong partner with the United States, with the nations of Europe, and with Turkey's neighbors in the Middle East. The Turks have been superb allies of the American people. They are essential to the NATO alliance.

We must wish the Turkish people well and do what we can to try to help them through these confusing times. America should do all it can to help the Turkish people succeed. For them to succeed, Turkey must have strong democratic institutions, a free press and a country in which people abide by the rule of law.

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President Erdogan has cooperated with the European Union to slow down the flood of migration from Turkey to Europe. At least 5 million refugees are sheltering in Turkey. Yet, he threatens to unleash millions of refugees into Europe.

And there are other threats to Europe stemming from Turkey's instability.

- Turkey's civil war against the Kurds could get bigger due to the president's actions. Both the Kurdistan Workers Party and the newly emerged Islamic State are Turkey's enemies. Growing civil war could close the energy supply to Europe by shutting down oil and gas pipelines.
- Due to the prospect of a wider civil war, the arsenal of nuclear weapons at the NATO base in Incirlik is in danger of being captured.
- More than 50 atomic weapons are believed to be located there.

So, what should the United States and NATO do to protect Western countries from a destabilized Turkey?

We can look to the successful strategies of the Reagan administration for clues.

President Reagan opted to stand firm against the threat of Soviet expansion, but at the same time, he reached behind the Iron Curtain to speak to people who were oppressed.

The NATO alliance must engage the Turkish people and do three things.

- 1.) First, pursue criminal charges against President Erdogan at the International Criminal Court in The Hague for aiding terrorists;
- 2.) Second, the West should draw down its NATO forces in Turkey and relocate sensitive

weapons to other countries.

3.) Third, apply "tough love" when dealing with the Turkish strongman government.

Trade sanctions should be considered. But Washington should reach out to all the peoples of Turkey — Turks, Kurds, Muslims and non-Muslims — who want a stability that only a republic of laws can give them. Encourage efforts to restore Turkey's free press and give humanitarian aid.

America desires to see Turkey become an economically strong partner that is at peace, both at home and with its neighbors. The Turks have been wonderful allies of the American people.

Fact is, the Turkish people are resilient, and Turkish democracy can flourish again. The United States must not enable a dictatorship but help the Turkish people choose freedom, faith and prosperity.

With the wisdom of constitutional government supporting its democracy and with good-faith partners in NATO, the best days of Turkey are still ahead.

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Kurds Hold Key to Regional Balance of Power



By Ernie Audino

The Turkish referendum on April 16 has the potential to effect the greatest consolidation of constitutional presidential powers in the history of the modern Republic of Turkey. Naturally, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expects a big win. His challenge is that Turkey's real problem — an ascendant Iran — will still be there on the day after. He needs the Kurds to help him. Here's a good reason why.

His European friends are fed up with him, and he has few others.

Mr. Erdogan's support for anti-democratic trends, including the repression of his own Kurdish citizens, is objectionable to Turkey's NATO allies and clouds Turkey's long-term need, which is a matter of unavoidable geography. Should Mr. Erdogan fall asleep at the switch, he will wake to Iranian neighbors moving in against the Turkish (and NATO) southern border. As a result, Iran, the dominant power in the Gulf, stands to dramatically improve its ability to constrain Turkey and project Iranian combat power into the Mediterranean.

Turning this around is possible, but it requires appreciation for some practical realities.

First, all major actors in the region need Kurdistan. She is the terrestrial common denominator

in the region. Gaining control of Kurdish soil in Syria and Iraq is essential to Tehran, in particular, as it provides a seamless link from Iran through Iraq, into Syria along the southern border of Turkey, to the city of Afrin west of Aleppo, and nearly to the Russian naval base at Tartus on the Syrian shoreline.

The ayatollahs have a special lust for the Kurdish soil to the west of Mosul in Iraq, which is why they have invested a sizable proxy force to seize it. These are the 15,000 Iraqi Shia militiamen — armed and influenced by Iran — who now occupy terrain near the town of Tal Afar, located between Mosul and the Syrian border. Tehran's ability to consolidate combat power there sets the foundation for an Iranian land-bridge into northern Syria.

Of course, disrupting these Iranian ambitions is in the long-term interest of the United States, as well as Turkey, which is why they too need Kurdistan. She possesses the last remaining geographic position open for the introduction of combat power in quantities capable of counterbalancing Iran.

Second, a Kurdish-based solution can be acceptable to Ankara.

Ankara's brutal passion to crush the internal threat posed to it by the guerillas of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) is well known, and to a Western audience, Turkey seems spring-loaded toward distrust of any foreign-policy option that enables Kurdish interests anywhere in the region. Nowhere is this truer than in the case of the military units of the de facto Kurdish government in northern Syria — the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which provide the main effort in the U.S.-led operation to seize Raqqa, capital of the Islamic State. Ankara refuses to help with this fight because it considers the YPG a branch of the PKK.

In the face of this, a silver bullet is required — a course of action purposed to develop a persistent counterforce, beginning in Kurdistan, but one that is also acceptable to Ankara. It can begin with three elements.

—Establish a U.S.-led safe zone over Rojava, the Kurdish-populated region in northern Syria. This is necessary to help retain terrain seized from the Islamic State, but it also checks Iranian (and allied Russian) influence in Syria. Ankara demanded a Turkish-controlled version last year, but will provide support to one led by the United States if the ground force that complements it is not primarily of the YPG.

—Raise an indigenous ground force in the Kurdish north of Syria that is capable of deterring regional threats but not threatening Turkey. So long as the YPG remains unacceptable to Ankara, a suitable force must incorporate other Kurds, such as those of the Kurdish National Council (KNC). The KNC is the umbrella group of Syrian Kurds not aligned to the YPG or its political leadership in the Democratic Union Party (PYD). The KNC has the support of both Ankara and Erbil, and with their help raised the Rojava Peshmerga as an armed alternative to the YPG. Composed of Kurds displaced from Syria, they have been operating against the Islamic State in Iraq for the past two years.

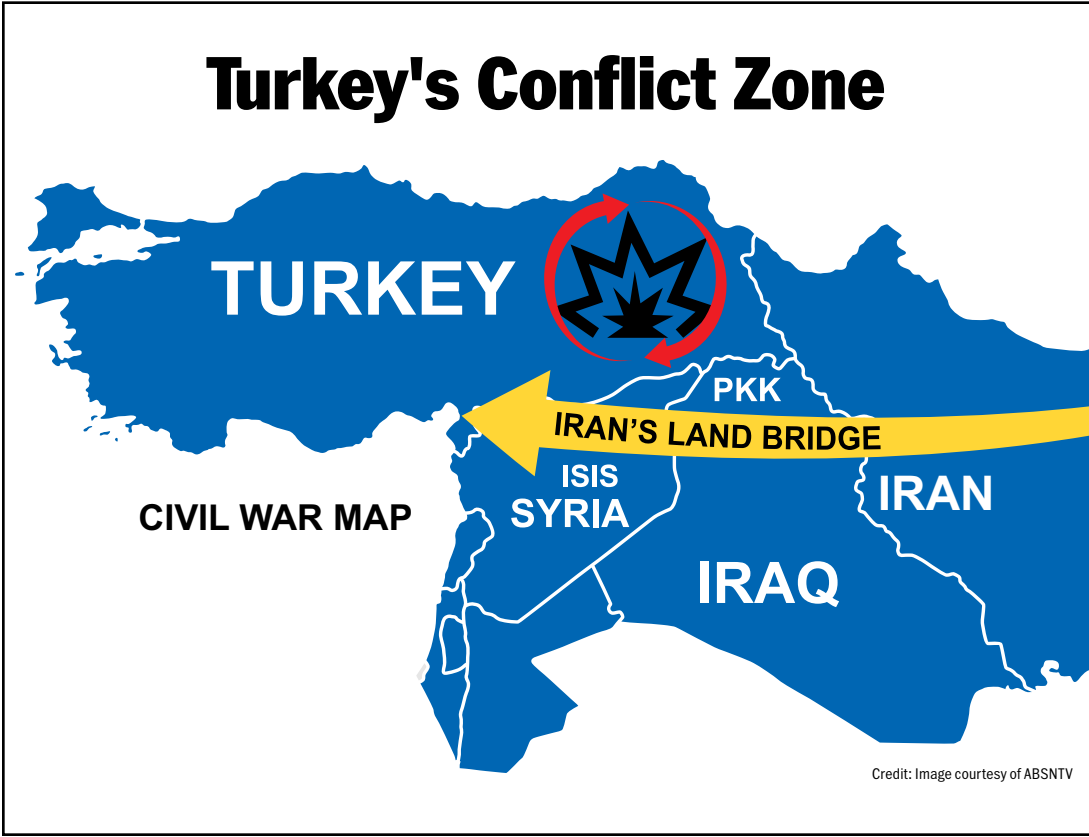
They have only 6,000 fighters, but Erbil and Ankara have expressed intent to add 4,000 more. The KNC says they have another 20,000 waiting. The real challenge comes from the YPG, who are opposed to the return of the Rojava Peshmerga to Syria. Three previous agreements to do so ran aground. A fourth will be needed, and that will likely require heavy pressure from Washington, combined with the carrots inherent in a U.S.-led safe zone.

—Construct a permanent U.S. base in the Kurdish Region of Iraq. Make it similar to U.S. bases in Germany during the Cold War. Exploit the 7,300-foot runway the Coalition Forces currently use at Bashur Airfield at Harir or the 15,700-foot runway at Erbil International Airport. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has long encouraged such a base. Ankara will welcome it too, as the U.S. presence will greatly complicate Tehran's ability to throttle the KRG, Ankara's primary source of Middle Eastern crude oil.

Of course, few things are easy in the Middle East, but that doesn't make the necessary any less necessary. Nor will passage of the Turkish referendum make the difficult any easier. Iran will still be there on the day after.

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U.S. and Turkey Headed for Showdown



By Eric Brown

A scenario President Harry S. Truman once feared — the fall of Turkey to tyranny and outside coercion — seems near. The country's strongman, President Recip Tayyip Erdogan, and his ruling AK Party have dismantled the republic's free institutions in the run-up to the watershed Turkish referendum on April 16.

Turkey is far along in a dramatic transformation that has uncoupled it from its modern strategic and political moorings in the West. Since the failed July 15 military coup, President Erdogan has ruled under emergency law and shredded the remaining checks on his power. The judiciary, academia, independent media, the police and the military have all been purged and restocked with Mr. Erdogan loyalists. Dissent is being criminalized, with many either in

jail or fearing for their lives — or at least their livelihoods — if they cross the president. This month, Turks will decide on whether to cement Erdogan's imperial presidency in a new constitution.

For years, Western nations have soft-pedalled Erdogan's Islamist nationalism and thuggish behavior in the hopes that NATO's long-time ally will eventually come to its senses. Turkey, as it was in Truman's time, is in a hazardous strategic predicament. Iran and Russia, the 'Turks' centuries-old rivals, have exploited the ongoing wars and meltdown of the state-based order across the Greater Levant to enlarge their positions and influence. Having been rapidly encircled, Turkey, Western governments hoped, would reprise its Cold War role as a strategic bulwark.

But Mr. Erdogan has had other ideas. To maximize his power at home, he has been tearing up Turkey's relations with the West and courting with Iran, jihadist forces, even the Kremlin — a dangerous game. Instead of strengthening Turkey, he is making it weaker.

One of the most significant trends in Middle East politics has been the decomposition of large, religiously and ethnically variegated countries into smaller, more homogenous polities, as people demand more say in their own governance. Well-formed republics can decentralize and manage this peacefully. Authoritarian states like Turkey now must commit enormous sums to internal repression — or they violently crack up.

Erdogan's religious nationalism has exacerbated the country's many fault lines — between civil democrats and caliphate revivalists, among rival religious brotherhoods, between Alevi and Sunni, and above all, between Turks and Kurds.

After abandoning an earlier conciliatory policy toward the Kurds that had shown some promise, the president, again for personal political gain, plunged

his country into a militarily unwinnable war with Kurdish militants that has worsened. The army's heavy-handed tactics have decimated Kurdish cities and towns, displacing hundreds of thousands from their homes. Radical Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) factions have recruited thousands of supporters as a result, while Mr. Erdogan has jailed the very Kurdish civilian leaders (HDP) needed to make peace. Islamic State is trying to exploit these divides. Russia and Iran could, too. Mr. Erdogan has hardwired Turkey for debilitating conflict and, potentially, jeopardized its national integrity.

With Turkey's security and economy in a downward spiral, Erdogan's reach for an imperial presidency may yet be derailed. But don't count on it.

Given the real political entropy in Turkey in which people are fearing for their lives and livelihoods, the short-term advantage will go to the dominant AKP faction, whose patronage networks are flush with money — thanks to its Arab Gulf patrons. More domestic chaos in coming months may even give Erdogan's AKP a boost rather than hurt it. In any case, Mr. Erdogan will not permit himself to lose.

Regardless of what happens, the U.S.-Turkey alliance is becoming a fiction from a strategic point of view, and U.S. policymakers need to plan and act accordingly. Indulging Mr. Erdogan will only hasten Turkey's degradation.

Washington's task now is to build a new security architecture in the region — one that doesn't depend on Mr. Erdogan — to cope with the ongoing implosion of order. Assuming Europe is roused from its slumber, balancing Russian power and dealing with Turkish frailty is prudent and points toward building up NATO positions in Southeast Europe and the Mediterranean.

The United States also has alternative positions to reinforce in the Middle East, particularly among

the Kurds in Northeastern Iraq and in Eastern Syria, both stalwarts in the anti-ISIS fight. In this, Washington and Ankara are headed for a showdown in the lead-up to the battle over Raqqa, ISIS' capital in Syria. The United States should double down on its partnership with the Kurds in Eastern Syria. True, this may draw Erdogan's ire and obstructionism, but it underscores the need for independent U.S. access to Iraqi Kurdistan and Syrian Kurdistan via Iraq and Jordan.

All the same, the United States must not give up on Turkey. As it was in Truman's time, Turkey's political character and stability is vital to the pursuit of order in the Middle East. For this reason, the United States must be careful not to treat Kurds as merely mercenaries. The Kurds don't want to be a part of somebody else's empire, and strategically-wise Turks are fully aware the advance of enlightened Kurdish self-rule along Turkey's southern border is in their interest. In addition to bolstering them militarily, the United States needs a follow-through plan for building the Kurds' capacity for self-government. If America does not do this, Iran's empire-builders or Russia will, with profoundly detrimental implications for Turkish security.

Millions of Turks and Kurds want the security and freedom that only republican government can provide. As the United States adopts "tough love" toward President Erdogan's Turkey, it needs to align with these civil democratic forces and make clear the republic's revival is essential.

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NATO Members Defeat — Don't Launder — Terrorism



By Dr. Michael Rubin

On Jan. 19, 2014, Turkish police stopped several trucks near the Syrian border. Upon inspection, they found mortars, artillery shells, and tens of thousands of bullets, all apparently destined for the Nusra Front, an al Qaeda affiliate in Syria. The Turkish government might have used the opportunity to allay suspicions it was playing a double game, but instead of arresting the truck drivers, Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan imprisoned the policemen: The trucks belonged to Turkish intelligence.

NATO member or not, such actions have become the rule rather than the exception. Not long after, when journalists photographed delivery of Turkish arms to the Islamic State, Mr. Erdogan retaliated not against those aiding the ostensible enemy, but rather against their editors.

Turkey has a terrorism problem, but it has little to do with the followers of exiled theologian Fethullah Gülen, whose extradition Mr. Erdogan seeks. The sin of Gülen was independence, not terror. Alas, while Turkey's lobbyists and diplomats cite Turkey's decades-long partnership with the West, that Turkey is gone.

Consider the following:

In 2006, as the United States and the European Union sought to isolate Hamas until it agreed to abandon terrorism and recognize Israel, Mr. Erdogan not only reached out to the group, but also invited Khalid Mishal — its most militant leader — to be his personal guest. The problem was not just Mr. Erdogan, though. When the Turkish leader subsequently invited Hamas political leader Ismail Haniya to Ankara, the terrorist group leader received a standing ovation in parliament.

In subsequent years, the Turkish government's outreach to Hamas — no matter what terrorism it conducts — has grown only warmer.

Hamas is not the only problem. In 2007, a train derailed in Turkey carrying hundreds of rockets apparently destined for Hezbollah; the train's manifest said it was carrying building material. Turkish authorities swept the incident under the rug, but it foreshadowed Mr. Erdogan's willingness to support anti-Western terror for ideology or profit, all the while assuring Western diplomats that he still sought a European future.

Nor are Turkish fingerprints only limited to terrorism in the Middle East. As French forces entered Mali to help that country defeat an al Qaeda affiliate's takeover of more than 150,000 square miles

Erdogan Has Command Responsibility for Aiding Terrorism



By Dr. Ahmet S. Yayla

The infamy of the crimes against humanity carried out by Islamic State is legendary, but the still untold story is how Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan deliberately turned a blind eye to the Islamic State's use of his nation as a staging ground for attacks, and how he and his family profited from illicit oil trading with the terrorists in Syria and Iraq. The president knows well that the evidence of his culpability is mounting, which likely explains his frenetic effort to win a referendum on April 16 that will grant him immunity from prosecution.

If Mr. Erdogan had not allowed the Islamic State operatives inside Turkey to transport weapons and explosives to Syria and Iraq openly, there would be no Islamic State as we know it today, and thousands of people likely would have evaded their brutality.

The president's missteps began in 2011, when he apparently surmised that the Syrian uprising was an opportunity for his regional and political interests. Initially, he aimed for a prompt regime change in Syria with this support. Eventually, as the Islamic State started to target the Kurds in the region, he considered the Islamic State as a tool that would help him conquer the Kurdistan Worker's Party and deal with PKK's Kurdish allies in Northern Syria. The Turkish State, under the direction of Mr. Erdogan, committed the following crimes against humanity:

--Mr. Erdogan allowed more than 25,000 Islamic State foreign fighters to cross from Turkey to Syria and Iraq to join the terrorist organization, according to a recent report of the Combatting Terrorism Center at the U.S. Military Academy. The Turkish intelligence and law enforcement forces were strictly ordered not to intervene with the movement of foreign fighters until 2016. In fact, in some cases, foreign fighters were accompanied by the Turkish intelligence officers.

--Various Salafist Jihadist terrorist groups, including the al Qaeda affiliates and the Islamic State, were either provided arms and explosives by some elements of the Turkish State or were openly allowed to carry out their armament and logistical support operations inside and through Turkey. For example, on Jan. 19, 2014, three trucks operated by the Turkish National Intelligence (MIT) loaded with hidden military grade weapons underneath medicine boxes were stopped on Adana highway, revealing the ongoing transfer of arms and explosives to terrorists in Syria.

--Turkey had been the main supplier of arms and explosive materials for the Islamic State, according to the December 2016 report of Conflict Armament Research (CAR), a research organization funded by the European Union to identify and track the conventional weapons supply chain to the Islamic State. "CAR's findings continuously reinforce evidence that the Islamic State operates a major acquisition network in Turkey and has a direct line of supply from Turkey, through Syria, to the Mosul area," CAR reported.

--As the former chief of counterterrorism police in Turkey in 2013, I personally witnessed that hospitals across southeastern Turkey opened their doors to any wounded Islamic State fighter and treated him free of charge, often under the protection of Turkish police. While I was the chief, I was ordered to provide security to the wounded fighters — and there were so many, I was not able to find enough officers to assign. I was personally assigning the security details by orders of the governor. In fact, following

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in that country's north, Ahmet Kavas, a Turkish ambassador and close associate of Mr. Erdogan, tweeted that "Al-Qaeda is very different from terror," and speculated that the French troops were the real terrorists.

Then in 2014, shortly before Boko Haram terrorists kidnapped almost 300 girls from a school in northeastern Nigeria, a leaked recording revealed the private secretary of Turkish Airlines telling an aide to Mr. Erdogan about his unease at the airline transporting weaponry for Islamist militants.

Late last year, a Wikileaks dump of more than 50,000 emails belonging to Berat Albayrak, Mr. Erdogan's son-in-law and Turkey's oil minister, suggested that Mr. Erdogan's family profited directly from Islamic State oil. Mr. Erdogan's son, meanwhile, was photographed meeting with a man, who at the time was a U.S. Treasury-designated al Qaeda financier.

While Turkey coasts on its reputation from decades past — and dozens of U.S. congressmen and diplomats still pay lip service to Turkey's role in NATO or its ties to Europe — Mr. Erdogan has fundamentally changed the country. He has shed any presence of political pragmatism and supports

an air strike, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's right-hand man and six other fighters were treated in August 2014 in a private hospital in Sanliurfa. The Turkish government paid the hospital bills, according to hospital doctors who spoke to me.

The world learned through the hacked emails of Berat Albayrak, Turkey's Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and the son-in-law of Mr. Erdogan, that he continuously purchased Islamic State oil through Powertrans, his front company for illicit oil transfers. His purchases provided the terrorist organization a steady income of \$3 million a day at the height of Islamic State's oil production — thereby offering the terror network hundreds of millions of dollars to fund its operations.

Mr. Erdogan released into the custody of Islamic State on two separate occasions more than 200 hard-core terrorists in order to gain concessions from ISIS. In all, 201 Islamic State fighters who were residing in Turkey were arrested by Turkish police for the chief purpose of bartering them for Turkish officials held hostage by ISIS in Iraq, or to gain the release of Turkish soldiers stranded and encircled by ISIS fighters in Syria.

In order to get the release of approximately 49 Turkish consular officials kidnapped by ISIS after the seizure of the Turkish Consulate in June 11, 2014, the Turkish police rounded up more than 100 ISIS members sheltering on Turkish soil and offered them to ISIS as a prisoner exchange on Sept. 20,

counterterrorism operations against the Islamic State, the al Qaeda and its affiliates. In 2104 and 2015, Turkish police neglected to carry out any planned counterterrorism operations in Turkey targeting those terrorist organizations. It appeared that the police realized that Islamic State and other jihadist groups were untouchable. The whole nation was put on notice on Jan. 15, 2014, when police chiefs and prosecutors from Van, a city in the east of Turkey, attempted to interdict arms smuggling from Turkey to Syria — but were instead promptly fired and arrested themselves.

Whereas 10 years ago, all Turkish parties took a hard line against radical, political Islamism, Mr. Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) in recent years began to praise the mujahidin as freedom fighters, which justified their presence on Turkish soil. A 2015 Pew Research Center survey confirmed this tendency by reporting that approximately 7 million of Turks had a favorable approach towards the Islamic State.

Journalists and scholars point to the president's Islamist rhetoric and the AKP's lapdog media platforms for radicalizing many Turks, a tendency illustrated by the horrendous assassination of the Russian ambassador to Ankara on camera by a police officer on Dec. 19, 2016.

Islamic State in today's Turkey enjoys mind-boggling privileges: It has opened four schools in the middle of Ankara, maintained training centers

tortured, raped and forced to move because of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Mr. Erdogan has the blood of innocent people on his hands — in fact, more so than many ISIS foot soldiers, because atrocities were enabled on his watch while he paid no attention.

By any legal standard, Mr. Erdogan has earned the label of "terrorist" himself. He has committed crimes against humanity, which is defined as "a deliberate act, typically as part of a systematic campaign, that causes human suffering or death on a large scale." The Rome Statute provides for the International Criminal Court in The Hague (Netherlands) to have jurisdiction over crimes against humanity. Mr. Erdogan should be tried at the International Criminal Court for his crimes. It follows there should be an immediate flight ban for Mr. Erdogan and his co-conspirators, limiting their international movements. Sanctions against his government should be put in place, and Mr. Erdogan's assets should be frozen promptly.

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ISIS training camp in Syria. Similar training schools were discovered by Turkish authorities in Istanbul after the 2016 New Year's Eve terror attack. Image provided by Dr. Ahmet Yayla.

2014. (See translation of Ministry of Interior document below that orders governors to hold foreign fighters in their detention centers.)

The second exchange happened during the Suleyman Shah tomb operation on Feb. 22, 2015, in the town of Sarrin in Aleppo Province. In that operation, Turkey handed 98 ISIS members to the terrorist organization, so that the tomb could be moved. The disturbing part of these exchanges is the fact that the State of Turkey handed over several well-known and experienced foreign fighters to the Islamic State, including some who had "red notices," that is, arrest warrants from Interpol. For example, Ahmed Diini, a Dutch citizen of Somali origin who was wanted by American authorities on terrorism charges, was handed to the Islamic State on Sept. 20, 2014, even though the U.S. government had requested that Turkey extradite him back to the U.S. for trial. Similarly, Islamic State senior leader Mohamed Mahmoud, known as Abu Usama al-Gharib, an Austrian citizen, was among the terrorists who were handed over to the Islamic State. Mahmoud went on to command large units of ISIS terrorists in Syria and reportedly murdered hundreds of people.

The Islamic State freely operated in Turkey for years without facing any counterterrorism operations. After sensational corruption scandals surfaced in 2013 that appeared to implicate Erdogan's son, Bilal, the president called a halt to all ongoing

and camps in Istanbul, and operated hundreds of safe havens and terrorist cells across the country.

Mr. Erdogan and his government systematically, willingly, and in most cases openly supported Salafist terrorist organizations, as documented by Turkish independent media (before the government closed them) and European news organizations.

The grim result of this support is that Islamic State became a monstrous killing machine in a very short time, killing thousands of men, women and including children. Even worse, atrocities unseen since World War II were committed: Men and women were beheaded or killed, or burned,

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Signing for the Minister
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To the Prime Minister's office (Undersecretariat of MIT)

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This translation of an order from the Turkish Ministry of Interior directs authorities to retain ISIS foreign fighters in their cells. All of 200 were returned to ISIS in prisoner exchanges. Image courtesy of Dr. Ahmet Yayla.

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