

ERDOĞAN'S POLICIES:

A THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE & SECURITY



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JOURNALISTS AND WRITERS FOUNDATION

The Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) is an international civil society organization dedicated to the culture of peace, human rights, and sustainable development. The JWF promotes diversity and inclusion by creating forums for intellectual and social engagement; generates and shares knowledge with stakeholders, builds partnerships worldwide and develops policy recommendations for positive social change.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi [Justice and Development Party]
ATIB	Union of Turkish-Islamic cultural organizations in Austria
CNN	Cable News Network
DİTİB	Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (Germany)
Diyanet	Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
EU	European Union
FETO	Fethullah Terrorist Organization
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GASAM	Güney Asya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi (South Asia Strategic Research Center)
HSYK	Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JWF	The Journalists and Writers Foundation
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender
MP(s)	Member(s) of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBA	National Basketball Association
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPR	National Public Radio
NRW	North Rhine-Westphalia
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PKK	Kurdistan Worker's Party
SCF	Stockholm Center for Freedom
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
TİKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
TPIC	Turkish Petroleum International Cooperation
TSK	Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri [Turkish Armed Forces]
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
YARSAV	Yargıçlar ve Savcılar Birliği (Independent Association of Judges and Prosecutors)
YPG	People's Protection Units
YTB	Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, Turkey has experienced a dramatic shift in its social, economic, and political dimensions, fundamentally transforming what was once a relatively stable country in an otherwise very volatile region.

Following the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, as well as constant internal instability, President Erdoğan's administration has increasingly centralized power, often at the expense of democratic values, human rights, peace and stability. Regional and international developments including the emergence of the refugee crisis from the Syrian civil war, the rise of the extreme right, erosion of democratic values in Western countries, and an embodiment of autocratic regimes such as Iran and Russia – have all exacerbated the grip of President Erdoğan's power across Turkey.

In departing from the values shared by both, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), Turkey continues to part away with the Euro-Atlantic family of nations, in particular in areas such as the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms.

In July 2019, the United States and other NATO partners decided to suspend and initiate the process to formally remove Turkey from the F-35 aircraft program, prompting experts to conclude that "Turkey has, for all intents and purposes, abandoned the West," and Western nations should "prepare to move on without President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan."¹ In a dramatic step for the Turkish long-stalled EU bid, the European Parliament has repeatedly called, since 2016, for an official freeze of the membership process. The country's leadership as a response has intensified its anti-Western narrative, mostly against the United States and, to a lesser extent, against the European Union and its member states.

This report will entertain the question of the extent to which President Erdoğan and his policies are a threat to regional and global peace and security. The review will be examining various social, economic, and political dynamics and elements involving President Erdoğan and his administration at the nationwide, regional, and international scale. Ultimately, the purpose of this report is to convey the current political and social situation in Turkey from a non-governmental perspective to relevant global and regional organizations including the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe (CoE) and other relevant stakeholders. Additionally, this report seeks to raise discussions amongst civil society and policymaking circles concerning Turkey's status quo, aiming at enabling necessary institutional revisions and necessary progress.

¹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-07-18/turkey-under-erdogan-has-abandoned-the-west>

Part I – INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Since 2002, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has offered Turks and the world a vision of stability and economic growth, while vowing to restore the glory of the Ottoman Empire, the Caliphate ultimately ruled by him. As authoritarianism began increasingly characterizing his administration, several dramatic events since 2013 culminated with the attempted 2016 coup.

Four key events have fundamentally shaped Turkey in recent years; the Gezi Park protests in 2013, the corruption scandal of December 2013, the collapse of peace negotiations in July 2015 and finally, the July 2016 attempted coup. All these events have contributed to the erosion of democratic values and rule of law and have led to grave human rights violations, encouraged also by the intensification of hostilities in south-east and the crackdown on political and other dissent. They have culminated with the assertion of President Erdoğan's autocratic grip across the country, through Constitutional amendments that vested extraordinary powers with the President, following the April 16, 2017 referendum transforming the country from a parliamentary democracy into a presidential system.

In 2018 the economy wobbled and the lira plunged soon after President Erdoğan won re-election with even greater powers. Turks are now leaving the country in droves and taking talent and capital with them in a way that indicates a broad and alarming loss of confidence in Mr. Erdoğan's vision, according to government statistics and analysts. In the last two to three years, not only have students and academics fled the country, but also entrepreneurs, businesspeople, and thousands of wealthy individuals who are selling everything and moving their families and their money abroad.²

2013 May Gezi Park Protests

Mass protests erupted in Istanbul, following the government's intervention to demolish Gezi Park in Taksim (Istanbul), to build a shopping mall.³ These protests were deeply rooted in the criticism of the increased autocracy of then-Prime Minister Erdoğan's administration in the recent years. The use of excessive force by police, including tear gas and water cannon, were widely criticized internationally, while then-Prime Minister Erdoğan and his government tried to justify the disproportionate force used with national security. Police brutality against the protesters often resulted in injuries, permanent blindness, disability, disfigurement, and death.

2013 December Corruption Scandal

A few months later, one of the major "landmark" corruption scandals unfolded, on December 17, 2013, when police officers raided several homes and confiscated around \$17.5 million in cash, money allegedly used for bribery. All of the 52 individuals detained on December 17, 2013 in Turkey were connected in various ways with then-Prime Minister Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP). Accusations and charges included bribery, corruption, fraud, money laundering, and gold smuggling. The whistleblowers who tipped off the police claimed that the son of then-Prime Minister Erdoğan was next in line.

Anti-corruption operations resulted in the arrest of 52 people who were affiliated with the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in connection with the evasion of international sanctions against Iran.⁴ These mass arrests involved the closest allies of then-Prime Minister Erdoğan, who accused members of the Hizmet Movement holding influential positions in the judiciary of plotting a coup against his government. In the aftermath of the corruption scandals, the cases were dropped, numerous prosecutors and

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/02/world/europe/turkey-emigration-erdogan.html>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/31/istanbul-protesters-violent-clashes-police>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25437624>

police officers were arrested, and nonpartisan media coverage was curtailed. The crackdown paved the way for then-Prime Minister Erdoğan to further strengthen his autocratic regime.

Following widespread public indignation about the scandal, four cabinet ministers were forced to resign, while then-Prime Minister Erdoğan dismissed the whole graft investigation as a judicial coup attempt targeting his government. He then proceeded to dismiss thousands of police officers, prosecutors, and judges, tightening its grip on the media and the judiciary.

All opposition media were practically silenced by being shut down, seized, or forced to change the managers and technical staff. Many were transformed into government mouthpieces that served government narrative and propaganda. Journalists and media members who did not serve this purpose have been arrested or forced to retire or/and to leave the country into exile. More than 300 journalists are currently behind bars⁵.

2015 Kurdish Party Peace Negotiations Collapse

The peace process between the Turkish government and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) collapsed when the PKK declared that the ceasefire has lost its meaning given Turkey's aerial bombardments.⁶ Likewise, President Erdoğan stated on this occasion that it was impossible to continue with the process amid PKK's attacks. The Turkish government continues its attacks in Eastern Turkey targeting civilians on a daily basis through the use of military and police forces.

2016 Attempted Coup and Aftermath

In the late hours of 15 July 2016⁷, a small faction of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) that called themselves the "Peace at Home Council" attempted to overthrow the Government of Turkey by seizing control of several key places in Ankara, Istanbul and other locations. As crowds of people took to the streets with Erdoğan's call for resistance, dozens of pro-coup soldiers abandoned their tanks and other military vehicles. Forces loyal to the government were able to defeat the coup plotters and the attempted coup was thwarted within approximately 12 hours. According to latest official sources 251 people were killed and more than 2,000 were injured during the attempt.

Following the attempted coup d'état, the government declared a state of emergency, announced derogation under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, and adopted a series of decrees which, it averred, were meant to address the security threats that gave rise to the coup attempt.⁸ The declaration instead paved the way to jail thousands of soldiers and embark on a widespread and unprecedented purge of public officials, law enforcement personnel, teachers, judges, prosecutors and other professionals. This eventually led to the systematic targeting of journalists who were either vocally opponent, critical or simply perceived critical of the government. In the wake of the attempted coup, President Erdoğan accused Mr. Fethullah Gülen, an Islamic preacher of using his influence in the police, judiciary, and some sections of the media for "mounting a malevolent public campaign and judicial investigations to destabilize the government."⁹

Ultimately, what has since emerged from this series of events is a tighter grip from President Erdoğan's administration across the country. Freedom of expression and press have been increasingly curtailed. Prolonged detention and solitary confinement across Turkish prisons are now the new normal and there have been numerous incidents of documented deaths in custody. Individuals opposing the

⁵ Please see OHCHR, "Report on the impact of the state of emergency on human rights in Turkey, including an update on the South-East (January – December 2017), March 2018, Para 11. The report is available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22853&LangID=E>

⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/07/turkey-kurdish-peace-process-150729074358423.html>

⁷ The events related to the attempted coup began at 7:29 p.m. in the evening of 15 July 2016

⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/turkey>

⁹ <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/censorship-in-the-park/media-and-the-corruption-scandal>

oppression are declared members of terrorist organizations and a threat to the state. As a result, Turkey has been transformed into an almost entirely autocratic state with a state-perpetrated cult of personality surrounding President Erdoğan.

B. Scope of the report

This report seeks to reveal the extent and magnitude to which President Erdoğan's administration and policies pose a threat to national, regional and global peace and security.

In recent years and in particular after the attempted coup of July 2016, there is increasing alarm of the major shifts to Turkey's policies at the regional and global levels. In January 2019, based on its mandate to globally advance peace, human rights and sustainable development the Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) was tasked to assess the long-term implications of current policies of the Turkish government and its ramifications on the choices it will make in the future on where it will belong, not only politically. In order to discharge its mandate, the Journalists and Writers Foundation endeavored to fulfill two key tasks:

- Assess the threat Erdoğan's policies represent at the national, regional and global levels.
- Recommend necessary steps aimed at assisting the international community in making sound judgments to address the current issues in the country and abroad.

While the Journalists and Writers Foundation considered all events relevant to the current situation and its origins, it focused in particular on the events that have occurred in the aftermath of the July 2016 attempted coup.

This report is drafted by the Journalists and Writers Foundation based on extensive review of a variety of sources. Sources include policy reviews from international organizations including the United Nations and European Union, news articles from outlets including the New York Times and The Guardian, reports compiled by non-governmental organizations, think tanks and watchdogs. The report sought to utilize sources as holistically as possible to ensure accurate analysis of the current situation and provide concrete recommendations.

The scope of this report covers various elements of President Erdoğan's administration, including national, regional and global policies, the motivations behind such policies, and their economic, social and political implications.

The report's intended readership includes experts and analysts on Turkish historic and current developments, international organizations including but not limited to the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and various non-governmental organizations.

The purpose of the report is to also help inform the international community of the ongoing situation both within and outside of Turkey, assist in developing nuanced understanding and opinions towards the topic, and ultimately provide relevant recommendations to the international community on how to address the risks to peace and security.

Ultimately, the report seeks to cover a highly comprehensive and holistic overview of the current political, social and economic situation (and implications), both within and outside of Turkey. Specifically, the scope of the report is to examine in detail the various ways in which President Erdoğan's administration and his policies serve to disrupt global peace and security. Through an in-depth analysis of circumstances within Turkey, regionally as well as its relations with the international community, the report hopes to provide its readership with a clearer and more nuanced understanding of the ongoing developments.

Through a wide range of sources including media outlets, reports from policy groups, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, watchdogs, and international organizations, the report seeks to provide an accurate portrait of Turkey under President Erdoğan's rule. Through the recommendations, the report intends to assist the international community in making sound judgments and provide practical solutions in addressing the issues in the country and beyond.

Finally, the Journalists and Writers Foundation would like to extend its gratitude and appreciation to its fellow partners in assisting with the drafting, publication and distribution of the report.

C. Structure of the report

The report is organized into six parts and consists of an array of aspects concerning President Erdoğan's administration and its threat to global peace and security.

Part 1 mostly provides readers with background information concerning the protests, the events between 2013 to 2016 and how these tectonic events transformed the landscape of Turkey into what it is today.

Part 2 outlines and analyzes the threats that President Erdoğan's administration poses to national security within Turkey and will cover aspects including the transformation towards a more centralized government and the erosion of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

Part 3 outlines and analyzes the threats that President Erdoğan's administration poses to regional neighbors and includes aspects such as the expansion of religious-political ideologies, increasing ties with radical extremists and terrorist organizations, and involvement in illegal oil trade.

Part 4 outlines and analyzes the threats that President Erdoğan's administration poses to the international community and how they serve to disrupt peace and security. This section discusses topics including rising tensions with various countries and international organizations, opportunistic pivots towards authoritarian states and the abuse of international security systems.

Part 5 details a comprehensive list of recommendations that the Journalists and Writers Foundation hopes will serve as a guide to the international community to address the ongoing issues in Turkey and ultimately ensure peace and stability across the region and beyond.

Part 6 includes a multi-continental survey of the specific threats and examples of disruptions of peace and security President Erdoğan's administration poses to different countries. Regions covered include the Middle East, South Asia, Eastern Europe, South America, and Africa.

Part II - THREATS TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Transformation from Parliamentary to Presidential System

Under President Erdoğan, Turkey is now witnessing a dramatic transition from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's secular state model to a political Islamic state. As part of the transition, an increasing political discourse of the radical Islamic state such as the Iranian model is taking place. President Erdoğan appears to be seeking the establishment of what is known as the New Ottomanism, as well as a caliphate, while increasingly projecting himself as the leader of the Islamic world. As a result, there has been increased erosion of democratic values, including the necessary checks and balances, and standards of elections.

Even though the AKP defines itself as a “conservative democratic” party, over the years, it has proved to be increasingly Islamist, especially as President Erdoğan seeks to crack down on any and all opposition groups while asserting his own power and an Islamist agenda.¹⁰ Part of these efforts have resulted in the transformation from the Turkish parliamentary system to an exclusively presidential system.

Erosion of the rule of law

The three crucial components of what constitutes a fair trial, namely the defense, the prosecution and the courts, have all collapsed in Turkey in recent years, turning the judicial system into merely an extension of the political authority that thwarts an effective defense and employs partisan and loyalist prosecutors and judges.

On 11 April 2014, Turkey's Constitutional Court overturned various laws under the guise that they violated the Constitution's notion of separation of powers. As such, Turkey's Justice Minister had various powers stripped, including but not limited to the following¹¹:

- Appointment of presidents to rule over Turkey's Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK)
- Appointment of members to Board's inspection committee
- Ability to launch investigations into misconduct by legal officials including prosecutors and judges as well as order disciplinary actions

Following the removal of such powers from the Justice Minister, several administrative staff from the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors were also stripped of their positions. Those included the secretary general and his staff, as well as the chief of inspection committee and his staff.¹²

Upon commenting on this transformation, President Erdoğan stated, “If someone wants to be involved in politics, then he should get out his chair, take off his judge's robe and start doing politics.” He further accused the Supreme Court for being influenced by a “parallel structure,”¹³ in this case citing and attributing blame to the Hizmet Movement.

In July 2014, a new category of Criminal Courts of Peace was created for criminal investigations. The Courts of Peace increasingly came under government control. Finally, by October 2014, following elections to the High Council Judges and Public Prosecutors, the government asserted greater control of the judiciary.

¹⁰ https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG726.pdf

¹¹ <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/separation-powers-turkey/>

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ *Ibid*

On 16 July 2016, a day after the failed coup, the High Council for Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) suspended a first round of 2,745 judges and prosecutors, whose names were published in a list, on the grounds that they were suspected of being members of what the Turkish authorities refer to as Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Group/Parallel state structure or FETÖ/PYD.

On 19 July 2016, the 2,740 judges and prosecutors, almost everyone suspended, were detained. By the end of July 2016, the Minister of Interior announced that 1,684 judges and prosecutors had been placed in pre-trial detention. On 23 July 2017, the independent association of judges and prosecutors (YARSAV) was dissolved and its assets were frozen without any judicial proceedings. On 12 December 2016, the Minister of Justice announced that 3,820 judges and prosecutors were being investigated and that 2,430 of them were still detained. To date 4,463 have been dismissed and most, if not all of them are either detained or arrested.

Since July 2016, at least 4,463 judges and prosecutors have been dismissed and most of them are either detained or arrested. Over 590 lawyers have been arrested, while 1,546 lawyers are under investigation and have been subjected to prosecution. 182 lawyers have been already sentenced on coup related charges.¹⁴ Lawyers are reluctant to defend those accused of terrorism offenses, and in many cases, lawyers have been arrested themselves.¹⁵ In parallel with the arrests, the recruitment of new judges and prosecutors has been speedy and recruitment processes have not been scrupulously followed. Qualification requirements for the written examination have been lowered, and a crucial qualification for preferential treatment of candidates are their connections to the ruling party.

Finally, under the Constitutional amendments approved with the 16 April 2017 referendum, the High Council for Judges and Prosecutors was reduced from 22 to 13 regular members and the President directly appoints four of them. The Minister of Justice and his/her Undersecretary, who are members of the High Council for Judges and Prosecutors, are also appointed by the President. The remaining seven members of the Council are appointed by the Grand National Assembly. Prior to the amendments, the President was responsible for appointing 3 out of 22 regular members of the High Council for Judges and Prosecutors, with the majority of the members of the Council appointed by their peers.

Erosion of Democratic Values

President Erdoğan and his ruling party have been in power now for more than 17 years. He has previously described democracy and its necessity as a “streetcar,” stating that, “Democracy is like a tram. You ride it until you arrive at your destination, then you step off.”¹⁶

Over the years, President Erdoğan and his administration have increasingly curtailed democratic structures as part of their efforts to assert total control. An example of such efforts includes President Erdoğan’s re-election success mid-2018. Following the 2017 referendum Turkey was transformed from a parliamentary to a presidential system, altering the Turkish Constitution to grant the Head of State almost unlimited powers. Subsequent President Erdoğan’s re-election cemented his executive control across Turkey. Essentially, this move means that he has currently full capacity to issue decrees, appoint legislative and judicial officials based on his choosing, and administer full-scale investigations into any and all civil workers.¹⁷

These election processes were neither fair nor free. According to the Council of Europe’s International Election Observation Mission, President Erdoğan’s control over media outlets resulted in hundreds of hours of coverage surrounding him and only a few minutes of coverage that was allocated to other can-

¹⁴ Based on sources from the submitting organizations, corroborated also from other relevant stakeholders.

¹⁵ Freedom House 2018 Freedom in the World report, available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>.

¹⁶ <https://www.turkeyinstitute.org.uk/commentary/democracy-like-tram/>

¹⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/25/world/europe/erdogan-turkey-election.html>

didates.¹⁸ It is also important to note that the elections occurred during a state of emergency (imposed by President Erdoğan), which resulted in highly restricted opportunities for opposition candidates to organize rallies and public campaigns.¹⁹

Wholesale Attack on Human Rights

In addition to the erosion of democratic values and checks and balance, President Erdoğan's policies have also resulted in scores of individuals detained and arrested as part of the government crackdown since 2016. Despite the government's stated zero tolerance for torture policy, individuals detained and arrested as part of the government crackdown on the Hizmet Movement have been systematically subjected to torture and ill-treatment, using methods firmly prohibited under international law.²⁰ Brutal interrogation techniques²¹ have been documented, inside and outside police stations and other facilities, aimed at mainly extracting forced confessions or coercing detainees to incriminate others, including:

- Blunt force trauma and severe beatings
- Falaka²²
- Sexual torture, including anal penetration with foreign objects, electrocution and pressure on sexual organs
- Starvation, denial of water and medical treatment
- Positional torture/suspension and stress positions for up to 48-hours
- Sleep deprivation
- Verbal abuses and threats, including mock execution
- Palestinian hanging
- Electric shock
- Nail extraction
- Cold/high pressure water hosing
- Asphyxiation / suffocation
- Air-conditioning torture (hot air conditioning during the day and cold at night)
- Exposure to icy water
- Dripping molten plastic on the extremities
- Sharp force trauma

Allegations on the use of torture and ill-treatment have reportedly come out from almost all regions, taking place in both, legal and illegal places of detention, prisons, police stations, gymnasiums, sport centers, warehouses, stables, abandoned buildings, gym salons, and other places where individuals were deprived of their liberty.

Since the attempted coup, more than 160,000 individuals have been dismissed from their jobs, around 217,971 were taken into custody (detained) and around 82,842 arrested – sometimes simply because they were followed on Twitter by a whistleblower. According to official data, from July 2016 to December 2017 alone, the Turkish authorities revoked 234,419 passports.²³

¹⁸ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/385671?download=true>

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/TUR/INT_CAT_NGS_TUR_25838_E.pdf.

²¹ More details and statistics are available at the report by the JWF report, "Post-Coup Turkey: State of Emergency, Torture and Impunity," October 2016. Available at <http://jwf.org/jwf/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Torture-Report-in-Turkey-2017.pdf>

²² Falaka or bastinado is a method of corporal punishment which consists of whipping the soles of a person's bare feet

²³ <https://turkeypurge.com/turkish-interior-minister-55665-jailed-234419-passports-revoked-since-coup-attempt>

Attack on the Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule since 2002, Turkey has increasingly witnessed violent attacks on the freedom of speech and expression through raids, shut-downs, strict monitoring of journalism work and news outlets, as well as mass imprisonment of journalists, media professionals and political commentators. According to the European Parliament on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey,²⁴ there were over 160 closures of media outlets, over 114,000 websites blocked, including Wikipedia, as well as a startling high number of arrests of journalists and consequentially “unsubstantiated and disproportionate sentences” that were delivered.”

Commenting on the arrests and media outlets, President Erdoğan was quoted stating that, “Journalists are not above the law.”²⁵ The crackdown on the media and media professionals alike has drawn widespread condemnation, including from the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, through its representative on Media Freedom. In particular they describe the sentencing of scores of journalists as an “unparalleled level of suppression of dissenting voices in Turkey” and an “unprecedented assault on free speech.”²⁶

Attacks on Minority Groups

President Erdoğan’s administration has also launched mass crackdowns on various minority groups and working professionals, including teachers, doctors, lawyers, amongst others. According to the Human Rights Violations of LGBT Individuals in Turkey report (submitted to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review in 2014), between 2010 and 2014, there were at least 41 reported murders that stemmed from hate crimes against LGBT individuals.²⁷ Additionally, because “codes do not define or set criteria for what constitutes an “unjust act,”” sentencing orders against LGBT communities are entirely subjected to the sentencing judge, which in turn paves way to unjust and highly skewed sentences.

Kurdish Minority

The Kurdish minority is considered to be the largest ethnic and linguistic minority in Turkey. The estimated numbers claimed by various sources range from 10 to 23 percent of the population. Although official figures do not exist, more than 15 million citizens were estimated to be of Kurdish origin and to speak Kurdish dialects.²⁸

The US Congressional Research Service provided background information on Kurds in Turkey in a report released on 26 August 2016. According to the report, “ethnic Kurds reportedly constitute approximately 18 percent of Turkey’s population, though claims regarding their numbers vary. Kurds are largely concentrated in the relatively impoverished southeast, though populations are found in urban centers across the country. Kurdish reluctance to recognize Turkish state authority in various parts of the southeast - a dynamic that also exists between Kurds and national governments in Iraq, Iran, and Syria - and harsh Turkish measures to quell Kurdish identity. Rights-based claims and demands have fed tensions that have periodically worsened since the foundation of the Republic in 1923. Since 1984, the Turkish military has waged an on-and-off struggle to put down a separatist insurgency and urban terrorism campaign by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK). The initially secessionist demands of the PKK have since ostensibly evolved

²⁴ European Parliament on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey (2018/2150(INI)), available at [https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2018/2150\(INI\)](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2018/2150(INI))

²⁵ <https://www.voanews.com/a/turkey-issues-detention-warrants-for-media-employees/3979901.html>

²⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/turkey-life-sentences-journalists-are-unprecedented-assault-free-speech-say-un-and>

²⁷ <https://ilga.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Shadow-report-16.pdf>

²⁸ U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015: Turkey, 13 April 2016 (last updated: 14 June 2016), Section 6., National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities.

toward the less ambitious goal of greater cultural and political autonomy.”²⁹

The conflict between the Turkish military and the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê)³⁰ has been going on since 1984, with devastating effects. Over 40,000 people are estimated to have lost their lives, including civilians, military personnel, PKK members and “youth with unknown affiliation.”³¹ Millions of people, predominantly of Kurdish origin have been internally displaced or forced to leave the country.

Although PKK and other insurgent Kurdish groups have carried out armed attacks across Turkey, military operations have been generally contained in the Turkish southeast. The conflict has affected the Turkish tourism industry³² in particular, costing in addition the Turkish economy an estimated 350 to 450 billion US dollars, mainly in military expenses and extensive damage to the infrastructure.

Since 1984 there have been some successful and many unsuccessful attempts to bring an end to the conflict. In the early years of its rule beginning in 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) was overall successful in its approach to adopt a more welcoming stance towards the Kurdish issue. AKP adopted a more tolerant view towards the rights of the Kurdish population mainly due to the EU’s required reforms; a stance then supported by most of the Turkish political spectrum and also the Hizmet Movement.

Most recently, the Turkey’s peace process with the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) materialized in 2013,³³ after a rough start of negotiations between the PKK and the government marred by violence. The overall objective of the 2013 peace process was the disarmament of the PKK in return for better political and cultural rights for the Kurds, as well as involvement of the third party to oversee the peace process.

Several amendments were introduced as part of the peace process to improve the rights of the Kurdish population, including private school education in Kurdish language, Kurdish geographical names, use of Kurdish language in political campaigns, removal of criminal sanctions for the use of the letters Q, X and W,³⁴ as well as establishment of public state TV channel in Kurdish. Throughout the peace negotiations there was however lack of trust between both the PKK and the government officials, which made the process highly fragile. Finally, in mid-2015 internal and external factors, both played a role in the collapse of the process.

Internally, the Turkish government’s security discourse towards the PKK increased towards the holding of elections in June 2015, largely seen as a referendum on President’s Erdoğan earlier call for an executive presidency. For the first time from 2002 the AKP did not gain the full majority in the Parliament,³⁵ which could have enabled it to change the Constitution. This was “caused”, *inter alia*, by the success experienced by the pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party (HDP) - running for the first time, passing the electoral threshold and gaining 13.12 % of the votes.

Human Rights Watch and Freedom House in their annual reports covering 2015 reported “hundreds of attacks” on HDP offices surrounding the 2015 election. In a 2 November 2015 alternative report³⁶ submitted for consideration during the 88th session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Association for Monitoring Equal Rights (AMER) and

²⁹ U.S. Congressional Research Service, Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations, August 26, 2016, The Kurdish Issue, p. 14.

³⁰ PKK is considered a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States, the EU and NATO.

³¹ The difficulty of distinguishing between civilians and militants led Crisis Group to create the category of “Youth of unknown affiliation”, which includes male and female casualties aged 16-35 who were not claimed by the PKK’s military wing (People’s Defense Forces, or HPG) or its urban youth wing (Civil Protection Units, or YPS).

³² <https://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/studies4.htm>.

³³ The Kurdish-Turkish peace process was known as the “Solution process”, (Turkish: Çözüm süreci).

³⁴ Used in Kurdish language.

³⁵ During the June 2015 elections AKP received 40.87% of the votes.

³⁶ AMER and Istanbul-GöçDer November 2, 2015, Annex 3, 5-8, http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents-TUR/INT_CERD_NGO_TUR_22236_E.pdf.

Migrants' Association for Social Cooperation and Culture (İstanbul-GöçDer) recorded 12 attacks against HDP stands and HDP offices between May and September 2015. The attacks occurred in Istanbul, Çanakkale, Antalya, Mersin, Adana, Kocaeli, Alanya, Tekirdağ, and Ankara. The attacks included bombings, assaults, mob attacks, vandalism, a lynching attempt, and arson. In the majority of cases, there were no records of anyone being indicted for the violence.³⁷

On 20 July 2015, thirty-two left-wing student activists died in a bomb blast in Suruç on their way to Kobanî/Ayn al-Arab (Syria). PKK activists, convinced of a secret alliance between the Turkish ruling AKP and ISIL,³⁸ blamed the government for the deaths and began to retaliate by killing police and army personnel. What followed was government retaliation through airstrikes against PKK targets in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq, triggering widespread civil disorder and further killings across the mainly Kurdish southeast of the country.

The ceasefire officially collapsed in July 2015 and ever since the violence in Turkey's Southeast has escalated to an unprecedented level not seen since the 1990s.

Alleged Atrocity Crimes

Scores of allegations brought to the attention of the Journalists and Writers Foundation in the aftermath of the attempted coup of 15 July 2016 in Turkey have constantly indicated that thousands of individuals, including civilians, have allegedly been victims of targeted atrocity crimes.³⁹

With the view of assessing the risk of atrocity crimes in Turkey, in 2017 the Journalists and Writers Foundation drafted an analysis, relaying on the guidance provided for by the *UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes*.⁴⁰ While not all risk factors were analyzed; the great number of relevant indicators, clearly pointed out that the government of Turkey is setting the ground for genocidal action against real or perceived members/sympathizers of the Hizmet Movement – routinely labeled among other as terrorists, criminals and traitors.

The analysis concluded that practices employed by the current political establishment in Turkey against the Kurdish minority, the Hizmet Movement - and increasingly on political and other dissent systematically labeled as sympathizers of the Movement, constitute atrocity crimes. Many of the actions of the Turkish government, including hate speech, are conducive to an atmosphere of a pre-genocidal situation, which the government actively promotes and makes no efforts to conceal. These practices include, *inter alia*, humiliation in the media and through other means, vilification of individuals labeled as sympathizers of Hizmet Movement, killings, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, ill-treatment and other gross human rights violations, expropriation and destruction of property, exclusionary policies, denial/deprivation of nationality and restrictions of the freedom of movement and the deliberate denial/deprivation of resources needed for physical survival.

Alleged atrocity crimes by the Government of Turkey have not been confined to Turkey. In early August 2014, ISIS attacked Yazidi centuries-old homeland surrounding the city of Sinjar (Shingal) in Northern Iraq. Thousands were slaughtered, many more were captured, and thousands had nowhere to go but to the top of Mount Sinjar where many died of starvation and dehydration. In December 2015, the German television station, ARD (Consortium of Public Broadcasters in Germany), produced footage⁴¹ documenting the slave trade being conducted by the Islamic State (ISIS) through a liaison office in the province of Gaziantep (previously and informally known as Antep) in Turkey, near the border with Syria. In response to these reports, the Gaziantep Bar Association filed a criminal complaint against Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MİT) and law-enforcement officers that have committed neglect of

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ The AKP has denied these allegations.

³⁹ "Atrocity crimes" refers to three legally defined international crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Atrocity crimes are considered to be the most serious crimes against humankind. Their status as international crimes is based on the belief that the acts associated with them affect the core dignity of human beings, in particular the persons that should be most protected by States, both in times of peace and in times of war.

⁴⁰ https://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/framework%20of%20analysis%20for%20atrocity%20crimes_en.pdf

⁴¹ <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7078/turkey-isis-slaves>

duty and misconduct by not taking required measures, and not carrying out preventive and required intelligence activities before the media covered the said incidents.” The bar association also demanded that the prosecutors start prosecuting and punishing perpetrators engaged in crimes of “human trafficking, prostitution, genocide, deprivation of liberty, crimes against humanity, and migrant smuggling,” according to the Turkish Criminal Code.

Mahmut Togrul, an MP of the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), in a motion to Efkan Ala, Turkey’s Interior Minister, asked about the alleged office where ISIS members engage in slavery and the sex trade. His questions included: *“How many liaison offices affiliated with ISIS terror organization are there in Gaziantep? If there are, do those liaison offices have any legal basis? Under what names do these offices operate? Are those offices affiliated with any institution?”* No answers were given to the questions.

In the early hours of Tuesday morning [25 April 2017], many of those genocide survivors -- living in squalid ripped tents with little aid, electricity or medical care -- again fled for their lives, this time running down the mountain as Turkish warplanes struck in and around the mountain top for almost an hour. “The Yazidis of Mountain Shingal are terrified. They feel threatened and unsafe. They thought ISIS days were almost done and they can return to their villages and towns, but now they face a bigger problem,” Yakhi Hamza, country director of the 1st New Allied Expeditionary Force, a humanitarian nonprofit delivering medical help to the most vulnerable Yazidis, told Fox News after inspecting the damage. “Turkey is a more dangerous threat than ISIS and attacking Yazidis from above.”⁴²

Even though Turkey allowed Kurdish Peshmerga⁴³ forces from northern Iraq across its territory to defend Kurds in the besieged Syrian border town of Kobanî in 2014, the government of Turkey also allegedly supported and facilitated the Kobanî Massacre, a combination of suicide missions and attacks on Kurdish civilians by ISIL on the Kurdish-held city of Kobanî beginning on Thursday, 25 June, and culminating on Friday, 26 June 2015. The attacks continued into June 28 [2015], with the last remaining ISIL militant being killed on the following day. The attacks resulted in 223–233 civilians dead, as well as 35–37 Kurdish militiamen and at least 79 ISIL terrorists. It was the second-largest massacre committed by ISIL since it declared a caliphate in June 2014.

Kurdish forces and the Syrian government claimed the vehicles had entered the city from across the Turkish side of the border, an action denied by Turkey. An estimated force of 80–100 ISIL militants carried out the attack. ISIL fighters in five vehicles entered Kobanî under cover of darkness in the early hours of Thursday, 25 June, reportedly disguised themselves as Kurdish security forces, before infiltrating the city and shooting civilians with assault rifles and RPGs. ISIL also committed a massacre in the village of Barkh Butan, about 20 kilometers south of Kobanî, executing at least 23 Syrian Kurds, among them women and children. The battle in Kobanî continued to rage for another 3 days, during which most of the ISIL attackers were killed, with one militant captured by the YPG, and only 7 escaping to Turkey.

The administration and police have not spared mourning relatives of political prisoners, including aging mothers. Known as Saturday Mothers in Turkey, these women are known to rally every week for many years to seek justice and answers regarding their family members’ arrest and detentions. Over the years, the police have been cracking down on such staged mourning, at times being threatened by a bull-horn⁴⁴. According to the government, they believe that the Saturday Mothers are being solely exploited by “terrorists,” which in this case the government refers to as Kurdish militants, in order to advance the minority group’s own causes.⁴⁵

Attacks on Intellectuals

President Erdoğan’s policies have also targeted Turkish professionals from all walks of life, including academics, all as part of his redefinition of anti-terror laws and state of emergency decrees that have

⁴² <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2017/04/27/turkeys-bombing-yazidis-wrecks-groups-only-medical-clinic.html>

⁴³ The Peshmerga, or “those who face death” are the military forces of the autonomous region of Kurdistan Region of Iraq

⁴⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/29/world/europe/turkey-erdogan-saturday-mothers.html>

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

become all-encompassing of civil society. Approximately 500 academics who signed the Academics for Peace petition⁴⁶ in January 2016 (condemning the government's attack against the Kurdish minority) have lost their positions, while many have been subject to travel bans, passport revocation and detention/imprisonment.

In addition to academics, the crackdown has also included lawyers and judges, with the European Parliament 2018 Turkey Commission report citing that "more than 152,000 civil servants including teachers, doctors, (peace) academics, lawyers, judges, and prosecutors have been dismissed."⁴⁷ The report also denounced the arrest of approximately 570 lawyers as an "obstacle to the right of defense and amounts to a breach of the right to a fair trial."⁴⁸

Assault on (Primary to Higher) Education and Imposition of Religious Curriculums

President Erdoğan's policies have intentionally targeted the education system in the country, including schools, universities, and curriculums of private and public schools. As part of the wide scale anti-Hizmet Movement crackdown that followed after the 2013 events, President Erdoğan's government introduced a bill to close preparatory schools. This was in part to shut down what was widely perceived to be a "major source of revenue for the Hizmet Movement," and to simultaneously increase AKP influence in the education system.⁴⁹

President Erdoğan's justifications for the mass shutdown include the following⁵⁰:

- Preparatory schools have created their own educational space that works against traditional schools
 - Students deprive themselves of extracurricular activities by attending middle and high schools on weekdays and preparatory schools on weekends
 - Preparatory schools exploit the weaknesses of traditional schools and turn them into their profit
- Preparatory schools turn students into "test machines" rather than truly educating them.

The wholesale attack of the Turkish government against the right to education and the education system in the country and abroad following the attempted coup has been simply unprecedented. With Decree-Laws 667, 668, 669, 674, 676, 678, 784, 687, 690, 694 and 696 in the context of the state of emergency, the government introduced core amendments in the field of education which have fundamentally changed the education sector and affected the right to education.

The first wave in a series of unlawful actions by the government was recorded on 19 July 2016 through a notice by Turkey's National Education Ministry dismissing 15,200 teachers and other personnel. The second wave materialized on 23 July 2016 through Decree-Law 667, which revoked teaching licenses of 22,474 teachers and closed 947 private schools (pre-schools, primary and secondary schools). The third wave of dismissals was carried out pursuant to Decree-Law 672 of 1 September 2016, revoking teaching licenses of 28,080 teachers. On 29 October 2016 the dismissal waves continued pursuant to Decree-law 675 with 2,239 teachers losing their teaching licenses. 119 teachers were dismissed from the Ministry of National Education based on Decree-Law 677 of 22 November 2016.⁵¹

From July 2016 to February 2018, the government canceled teaching licenses of 20,932 teachers and closed down the private schools they used to work, over their alleged links to the Hizmet Movement.⁵²

⁴⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/15/turkey-rounds-up-academics-who-signed-petition-denouncing-attacks-on-kurds>

⁴⁷ European Parliament on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey (2018/2150(INI))

⁴⁸ *Ibid*

⁴⁹ <http://jwf.org/jwf/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ASSAULT-ON-EDUCATION-In-Turkey-And-Abroad-Long-Version.pdf>

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁵¹ JWF report "Assault on Education in Turkey and Abroad," March 2017. Available at <http://jwf.org/jwf/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ASSAULT-ON-EDUCATION-In-Turkey-And-Abroad-Short-version.pdf>

⁵² <https://turkeypurge.com/education-ministry-cancels-licenses-1272-educators-terror-charges-report>

The Educators Union Egitim Sen estimated in July 2018 that the number of individuals removed from their jobs reached 41,705 in the education sector and 15,584 in the military,⁵³ concluding that education sector rather than the military was targeted following the attempted coup.

Ever since, tens of thousands of educators across the Turkish education system have been subject to arrest, detention, interrogation, forced resignation, suspension and termination of positions. They have been target of false accusations, including for allegedly spreading “terrorist propaganda,” “inciting people to hatred, violence and breaking the law,” and “insulting Turkish institutions and the Turkish Republic.” Finally, as of March 2017 - 1,284 schools, 15 universities, 823 dormitories and 738 preparatory schools were closed with the above decree-laws.⁵⁴

In regard to secondary schools, Turkey has witnessed a rise of Imam-Hatip schools, a secondary religious educational institution originally founded in lieu of a vocational school. They were originally intended to train government employed imams.⁵⁵ In the aftermath of the attempted coup, the confiscated land and thousands of buildings belonging to the Hizmet Movement inspired schools, dormitories and hospitals were considered as “war spoils” and shared among pro-government individuals and companies. Equally worrisome, many of the facilities were transformed into religious education facilities (Imam-Hatip schools) with the ongoing state of emergency contributing to the further radicalization of the Turkish society.⁵⁶

In regard to higher education, the emergency decree of 1 September 2016 provided for the dismissal of 2,346 academic personnel from 94 universities across Turkey, including 455 full professors, 472 associate professors, 658 assistant professors, 420 academic research staff, 243 lecturers, and 98 other academic staff in research and teaching positions. The decree announced the permanent removal from their positions of over 40,000 civil servants, including over 28,000 members of the Ministry of Education. The decree also canceled the passports of the purged personnel and their spouses. All of those affected by the decree were dismissed on charges of being members of a terrorist organization or undermining the national security of the state; however as in the previous cases academics were not provided any evidence to justify the dismissals and the serious charges.⁵⁷

Additionally, the decrees eliminated the system by which universities elect their own rectors and university administration, replacing it with a system whereby all rectors of public or private universities would be selected directly or indirectly by the President’s Office working in coordination with the Turkish Higher Education Council (YÖK).⁵⁸

By the end of January 2017, the unprecedented assault on education resulted in 6,986 academics purged from their positions. Tens of thousands of educators across the country have been detained and arrested on very serious charges, with no evidence of wrongdoing provided. The assault on the principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression have already dismantled much of the existing structure of Turkish education. Today, the Justice and Development (AKP) is finalizing its process of asserting total control over Turkey’s educational institutions.⁵⁹

The magnitude of the repression by the Turkish government on teachers and other education personnel, without providing a single proof on any wrongdoing by those affected suggests a systematic and widespread effort to suppress any perceived threat to the government - in clear infringement of the right to education and internationally recognized standards of academic freedom. Massive dismissals of teachers and academics, accused of links to Hizmet Movement have significantly affected the education sector and thereby the right to education.⁶⁰

⁵³ <http://egitimsen.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/E%C4%9Fitimde-ve-Y%C3%BCKsek%C3%B6%C4%9Fre-timde-OHAL-Raporu-19-Temmuz.pdf>

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ *Ibid*

⁵⁶ *Ibid*

⁵⁷ *Ibid*

⁵⁸ *Ibid*

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁰ See also OHCHR, “Report on the impact of the state of emergency on human rights in Turkey, including an update on the South-East (January – December 2017),” March 2018, para 8. The report is available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22853&LangID=E>

Part III - THREATS TO REGIONAL PEACE & SECURITY

Active Interaction with Extremist and Terrorist Groups

Turkey has over many years under the AKP rule formed close alliances with the region's extremist and terrorist groups due to its own geopolitical and strategic aims, including the so-called the "Islamic State." Since the group's emergence approximately six years ago, the Kurdish YPG (People's Protection Units) in Syria and the Peshmerga in Iraq have proved to be one of the US's most reliable partners in combating this extremist group. However, Turkey regards the YPG as synonymous to the PKK, also known as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (a group which has been designated as a terrorist organization by both Turkey and the United States). As a result, even though Turkey has pledged to join the global coalition against the Islamic State, it has never formally joined the fight.⁶¹

In fact, in late 2013 and early 2014, there were numerous Turkish border cities transformed into major logistical hubs for various foreign fighters looking to enter Syria and Iraq in order to join the Islamic State and other insurgencies.⁶² A report by the National Public Radio (NPR) on this issue revealed that approximately 30,000 militants crossed through Turkish soil on what became known as the "jihadi highway."⁶³ Additionally, even though President Erdoğan's administration has never explicitly admitted to actively supporting the Islamic State, its certain actions still suggest otherwise. For instance, Turkey has allowed for numerous Islamic State militants to be treated free of charge in various hospitals across the southeastern border of Turkey. There were also widespread reports surrounding various Turkish officials, including President Erdoğan's son-in-law, regarding the secret purchase of Islamic State oil via front companies.⁶⁴

Links to terror organizations

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other high-level officials have repeatedly denied any complicity with ISIS or other terror groups, pointing out to mainly ill-intentioned news by media organizations on Turkey's international reputation.

With the view of assessing the credibility of numerous allegations in the Turkish and international media, in 2017 the Columbia University's Program on Peace-building and Rights assigned a team of researchers in the United States, Europe, and Turkey.⁶⁵ The research paper "ISIS-Turkey Links" provides numerous credible reports from domestic and foreign sources indicating that (i) Turkey provided military equipment to ISIS; (ii) Turkey provided training to ISIS fighters; (iii) Turkey offered medical care to ISIS fighters; (iv) Turkey supported ISIS financially through purchase of oil; (v) Turkey supports ISIS financially through purchase of oil; (vi) Turkish forces were fighting alongside ISIS; and (vii) Turkey helped ISIS in the battle for Kobanî.

Most concerning of all, there were also allegations even from Turkish MPs (Eren Erdem) who claimed that materials to produce deadly sarin gas came from Turkey and arrived in ISIS camps in Syria.⁶⁶ More recently, in 2018 there were also allegations⁶⁷ that during the Afrin operation in Northern Syria in 2018,

⁶¹ <https://www.cfr.org/article/turkey-lying-about-fighting-isis>

⁶² <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/12/turkeys-double-isis-standard/>

⁶³ *Ibid*

⁶⁴ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/12/07/latest-wikileaks-dump-sheds-light-erdogan-turkey-berat-albayrak-redhack-hackers-oil/>

⁶⁵ <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA14/20170405/105842/HHRG-115-FA14-Wstate-PhillipsD-20170405-SD001.pdf>

⁶⁶ <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/sarin-gas-materials-sent-to-isis-from-turkey-claims-mp-eren-erdem-34286662.html>

⁶⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/turkey-denies-chemical-weapons-syria-afrin-180218082237109.html>

Kurdish civilians were exposed to a sarin gas attack by Turkish forces.

Reports by Member States, Turkish whistleblowers and captured ISIS members clearly indicate that the Turkish government has deliberately over years sponsored and supported the so-called Islamic State (ISIS), as a geopolitical tool to expand Turkey's regional influence and sideline his political opponents at home. Among other disturbing revelations reports⁶⁸ by many sources indicate that:

- Turkey's intelligence chief, Hakan Fidan is named as member of terror group linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS
- Turkish intelligence directly supplied military aid to ISIS for years
- Turkish government siphoned military supplies to ISIS through humanitarian relief agencies
- ISIS fighters, including al-Baghdadi's deputy, received free medical treatment in Turkey and "protection" from Turkish police
- The Head of ISIS in Turkey received "24/7 protection" under the personal order of the Turkish President
- Turkish police investigations into ISIS are being systematically quashed
- ISIS oil is sold with complicity of authorities in Turkey and Kurdish region of northern Iraq

The totality of the evidence, both in Turkey and in the battlefields, unmistakably points out to very close connections between the Turkish authorities and terror groups in both Syria and Iraq. It is improbable that these links would have established without the active support and encouragement from President Erdoğan.

Another report by the International Center for Violent Extremism, covers and features, inter alia, the self-proclaimed "ISIS ambassador to Turkey." Abu Mansour al Maghrebi of Moroccan descent describes his "duties", as featured in the report.⁶⁹

"My job was to direct operatives to receive the foreign fighters in Turkey," Abu Mansour explains, referring to the network of ISIS-paid people who facilitated foreign fighter travel from Istanbul to the Turkish border towns of Gaziantep, Antakya, Sanliurfa, etc. "Most of them were paid by Dawlah [ISIS]," Abu Mansour explains, but differentiates them from ISIS members, due to their non-ideological motivations. "Most of those working on the Turkish side, their goal is money," he said.

The benefit to Turkey, according to Abu Mansour, was that "we are in the border area and Turkey wants to control its borders – to control Northern Syria. Actually they had ambitions not only for controlling the Kurds. They wanted all the north, from Kessab (the most northern point of Syria) to Mosul (major city in Northern Iraq)."

"This is the Islamists' ideology of Erdoğan," Abu Mansour explains, adding, "They wanted all of the north of Syria. That is what the Turkish side said [they wanted], to control the north of Syria, because they have their real ambitions. Actually, we talked about what Erdoğan said in public [versus what he really desired.] This part of Syria is part of the Ottoman states. Before the agreement following the Second World War, Aleppo and Mosul were part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. The agreement Sykes Picot [in which they lost these regions] was signed for one hundred years. In our meetings, we talked about re-establishing the Ottoman Empire. This was the vision of Turkey."

The Turkish authorities do not seem to have either denied or confirmed the above claims.

Accusations on the Oil Trade

One of the most serious allegations regarding the involvement of Turkey in Syria and Iraq have been the accusations by the Russian Federation on the Turkish oil trade from installations controlled by ISIS in these countries. Russian military officials have also displayed satellite images to support their claim that columns of tanker trucks loaded with oil at Syria and Iraq regularly crossed the border into Turkey.

⁶⁸ <https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/former-turkish-counter-terror-chief-exposes-governments-support-for-isis-d12238698f52>

⁶⁹ <https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/terrorism-study/the-isis-ambassador-to-turkey/>

The official Russian accusations have indeed gone further indicating that not only “Turkey resells this oil,” but that “the appalling part about it is that the country’s top political leadership is involved in the illegal business - President Erdoğan and his family.”⁷⁰ The accusations by Russia also expand by pointing out that this is indeed a family business. This in the Russian view also explains the fact why “Turkish president’s son heads one of the biggest energy companies, or that his son has been appointed energy minister.”⁷¹

Exploitation of Regional Refugee Crisis

With the rise in the number of refugees crossing from war-torn countries such as Syria and Iraq, Turkey has effectively become a transit hub -- as well as buffer zone to Europe -- for millions of refugees. President Erdoğan’s administration has, as The Guardian cites, been exploiting the crisis for its own political gain, partly due to its aims at leveraging the European Union into granting Turkey membership. After all, during the peak of the refugee crisis in 2015 and 2016, the European Union was conveniently offering €3 billion, as well as a visa-free-travel promise to Turkish citizens and has also hinted at the resumption of Turkey’s membership talks.⁷² Nevertheless, given the tremendous burden the crisis has placed on Turkey’s shoulders over the years, President Erdoğan has threatened European officials with sending mass amounts of refugees “so that “the EU will be confronted with more than a dead boy on the shores of Turkey. There will be 10,000 or 15,000.” Then he rhetorically asked: “How will you deal with that?””⁷³

In an op-ed piece for Politico by Anthony Skinner, director at political risk advisory firm Verisk Maplecroft, he believes that President Erdoğan’s administration is conveniently using incoming refugees to build his own public support base. Skinner writes: “Hundreds of thousands of newly naturalized constituents indebted to Turkish hospitality could help offset Erdoğan’s weak spot: the possibility that support among Turkey’s indigenous workforce will erode as the economy weakens... So as much as Erdoğan might like their votes, he’s more likely to shelve, downplay or limit plans to naturalize Syrian migrants until he has bagged Turkish nationalist votes to secure a new constitution that arms him with full, formal — rather than just de facto — executive powers.”⁷⁴

Regardless of the exact intentions of President Erdoğan concerning the incoming wave of refugees entering Turkey, it cannot be denied that Turkey is strategically positioned to leverage the crisis against the region – and beyond, the international community – in order to achieve its own domestic and foreign social, economic, and political gains.

The Refugee and Migrant Crisis

Turkey experienced a mass refugee influx from Syria and Iraq after the Syrian civil war began in 2011. The Turkish government adopted an open-door-policy towards Syrian refugees and built refugee camps in its south-eastern provinces. In addition to the refugee camps, the Turkish government provided refugees with health and education services as well as food aid facilities.⁷⁵ Turkey became the country with the highest share of refugees in the world by hosting more than 2.7 million Syrian refugees.⁷⁶ In 2015, the influx of refugees and migrants to Europe reached new levels and made the headlines and political debates in Europe. In 2015, what was known to be the main Mediterranean route for many years shifted from Libya and Italy, to what later proved to be an even deadlier crossing from Turkey to Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. Continuous tragedies along the new route propelled the debate right at the center of the European Union agenda, threatening seriously its cohesion, and even its future.

⁷⁰ See for example: <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/russia-accuses-turkeys-erdogan-involvement-isis-oil-trade-n472596>

⁷¹ *Ibid*

⁷² <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/feb/15/refugees-turkey-government-eu-crisis-europe>

⁷³ *Ibid*

⁷⁴ <https://www.politico.eu/article/for-recep-tayyip-erdogan-refugee-crisis-an-opportunity/>

⁷⁵ <http://turkishpolicy.com/article/837/the-syrian-conflict-and-turkeys-humanitarian-response>

⁷⁶ UNHCR, “UNHCR country operations profile-Turkey: Overview,” (2015), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e0fa7f.html>

Seemingly under pressure from their own constituencies, at a time of increasing populism, the 28 EU heads of state concluded in March 2016 a deal with Turkey to address the overwhelming flow of migrants and asylum seekers crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands. The agreement aimed at allowing Greece to return to Turkey all new irregular migrants arriving after March 20, 2016, in exchange of increased resettlement of Syrian refugees in EU Member States, visa liberalization for Turkish nationals on condition of fulfilling the so-called Copenhagen criteria, and more financial support for Turkey's refugee population. The height of the refugee crisis and the desperate need to implement the EU - Turkey migrant deal overshadowed most of the other critically pressing issues in Turkey, in particular the latter's rapid descent into authoritarian rule and increasingly deteriorating human rights record.⁷⁷

Three years on from the deal, the number of daily arrivals on Greek islands has dropped 97%.⁷⁸ Constant summary expulsions, or "push-backs"⁷⁹ to Turkey, without any individual conditions considered have also been instrumental in deterring other individuals at risk to exercise their right to leave. Only between 23 April and 6 May 2019, eighty-two (82) asylum seekers including children were pushed back by Greek border units across Evros River, with adults being taken into custody in Turkey. Collective expulsions are explicitly prohibited under international law and also run contrary to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Schengen Borders Code, EU asylum procedures and return directives.

Alliance with Autocratic Regimes

The expansion of NATO and the European Union in Eastern Europe ended the ideological confrontation that characterized the Cold War during the 20th century. Economic development and never seen before freedom of movement across the continent have strengthened Euro-Atlantic integration, allowing free flow of ideas, people and capital.

These developments inside the Euro-Atlantic space have been met and challenged recently by new divisions, fueled by anti-immigrant sentiments, economic hardships and increasingly the rise of authoritarianism and nationalism. Another major challenge to the overall project of shaping regional security based on Euro-Atlantic values and ideas comes from outside, in particular the Russian Federation, attempting to undermine the cohesion within Euro-Atlantic space and offer at the same time a Eurasian alternative.

Even though Turkey has long sought membership in the European Union and has had longstanding trade relations with the region, President Erdoğan's increasingly autocratic rule has become a major point of contention for numerous European countries. As a result, Erdoğan has resorted to several major autocratic regimes such as Iran, Russia, China, and Venezuela for bilateral relations. For instance, Turkey has been engaged in various weapons deals concerning S-400s with the Russian Federation, raising in turn tensions in its relationship with NATO⁸⁰.

More recently, Turkey has announced the construction of its first nuclear plant, Akkuyu, in partnership with Russia.⁸¹ Moreover, TurkStream, Turkey's natural gas pipeline with an offshore section, has been described by President Erdoğan as a "project of historic proportions for our bilateral relations and for the energy geopolitics in our region, on which we have exerted great efforts with our Russian friends."⁸² Similarly, President Putin has praised both the nuclear plant and the pipelines as "symbols

⁷⁷ See for more, *Escaping the Witch Hunt from Turkey and Around the World*, p. 11. Available at: <http://jwf.org/jwf/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Escaping-the-Witch-Hunt-from-Turkey-and-Around-the-World-JWF-Report-April-2018.pdf>

⁷⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20190318_eu-turkey-three-years-on_en.pdf

⁷⁹ Push-backs happen when people are forcibly returned back to the country they are trying to leave shortly after they enter a country's territory or jurisdiction, without an opportunity to challenge their forced return

⁸⁰ <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/unlikely-convergence-russia-iran-and-turkey-44617>

⁸¹ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/dangers-turkeys-deepening-relations-russia>

⁸² *Ibid*

of the progressive development of the Russian-Turkish diverse partnership and a pledge of friendship between our nations.”⁸³

Given Russia’s contentious relationship with numerous Western countries and international organizations such as the United Nations and NATO, as well as the unpredictable nature surrounding its foreign policies, President Erdoğan’s administration’s growing bilateral relations with Russia has the possibility to reduce Turkey’s relationships with other nations and may damage impressions of its foreign policies.⁸⁴

Finally, regarding Turkey’s push eastward, it is important to note that it is not only a result of strained relationships with the West. As President Erdoğan’s administration seeks to establish Turkey as the Islamic center of the world, a push east towards the Middle East and Central Asia conveniently serves its purpose. The following sub-section will further highlight this tendency.

Propagation of Political Islam

Another effort exerted by the President Erdoğan administration is the deliberate expansion of Islamic institutions and schools — and the consequential shutdown of other secular-style schools, both within the country and abroad. President Erdoğan has on this matter stated, “Don’t you expect that a party with a conservative, democratic identity would raise an atheist youth?”⁸⁵ His position towards Islam is revealed through the numerous establishments of Imam-Hatip schools — schools that although offer the national curriculum, are heavily steeped in religious courses.

Not only has President Erdoğan expanded these schools across Turkey (replacing the principals of roughly 2,000 public schools in Ankara Imam-Hatip educated staff members⁸⁶); he has also been expanding these schools abroad. The organization responsible for such expansion, the Maarif Foundation, has claimed to have “made contact with officials from 83 countries so far and appointed directors in 39 countries...recently [opening] 32 new schools in 11 countries — including Afghanistan, Bosnia Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Sierra Leone, and the US.”⁸⁷ Ever since the Maarif network has expanded into other countries through takeovers, acquisitions or establishment of new schools and universities, including in Albania and Kosovo.

⁸³ *Ibid*

⁸⁴ *Ibid*

⁸⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/world/europe/erdogan-turkey-election-religious-schools.html>

⁸⁶ *Ibid*

⁸⁷ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/turkish-foundation-takes-over-108-feto-schools-abroad/112659>

Part IV - THREATS TO GLOBAL PEACE & SECURITY

Expansion of Turkey's Soft Power in the World

The term “soft power” emerged in the late 1980s to describe the ability of a country to persuade other states to act in a certain way without using force or coercion, as well as the ability to shape their long-term attitudes and preferences. The projection of Turkey’s “soft power” in the world has been widely invoked in its foreign policy in the last decades.

Hizmet-affiliated schools and other quality institutions around the world have been instrumental and extraordinarily important in Turkey’s projection of soft power in the world. Owing to enormous and constant efforts the Hizmet-affiliated schools and other entities in many countries served as cultural and economic bridge between Turkey and the host country, long before any honorary, diplomatic, or other official presence of Turkish government institutions were present. Turkey as a nation took great pride on the many achievements and services provided by Turkish teachers abroad and rightly so. Turkish governments on the other hand (until 2013) regularly praised and appreciated the significant role the schools played in contributing to the national wealth, along with more importantly the image of the country and the Turkish citizens abroad. Most importantly, the schools and other institutions represented a core soft power element of Turkey abroad, something widely considered unique in today’s reality of foreign relations.

With the increasingly autocratic regime of President Erdoğan trying to project political Islam around the world, it was no surprise why Turkey’s government was no more “interested” on the soft power offered by thousands of hard-working educators of Hizmet-affiliated institutions. Interests and objectives of Turkey’s government no more aligned with the values shared by the Hizmet Movement and the free world. In essence, the Hizmet Movement represented the contrary of what Turkey’s government wished to achieve. The Hizmet Movement presented one of the strongest and most influential advocates of democracy, rule of law and fundamental human rights in the country. Abroad, the Movement was appreciated and known for its efforts towards peace, tolerance, and dialogue in every possible way, especially in education and culture. It is no surprise therefore for the Hizmet was stigmatized and labeled a terrorist organization in Turkey, through political denigration and government propaganda.

Since President Erdoğan assumed leadership, his administration has increasingly been attempting to recreate an Ottoman Empire in which Turkey is at the center, serving as a social, political, and even religious keystone to the region. Turkey has specifically been carrying forth an ambitious Eurasia expansion, often by signing hefty trade deals in exchange for permission to build religious institutions across the region.

There are probably hundreds of organizations and other entities funded by the government of Turkey, which actively promote and further Erdoğan’s policies abroad. Among the most important are the Maarif Foundation, Turkey’s Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA).

Maarif Foundation Background

In the end of May 2016 (approximately two months before the attempted coup), the Turkish government presented a draft-law to the Parliament aiming to establish a foundation (Maarif⁸⁸ Foundation), which would operate under the Ministry of National Education of Turkey. Defending the bill on the Maarif Foundation in Parliament on 16 June 2016, the Minister of Education (İsmet Yılmaz) emphasized that the foundation was owned by the state and described the initiative as proof of the Turkish state’s ambition to project greater power in the world. He said the foundation would operate in places from “the Bal-

⁸⁸ Ottoman Turkish word for education, which comes from the Arabic word for knowledge or wisdom

kans to Eastern Turkistan [China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region] and from Somalia to Canada." The proposal was adopted by the Turkish Parliament on 17 June 2016 and entered into force as Law No. 6721 on "Turkish Maarif Foundation."

Legally, the purpose and scope of the Law No. 6721 on "Turkish Maarif Foundation" was to establish the Maarif Foundation as a subsidiary of the Turkish Ministry of Education, with an initial budget of 1 million Turkish liras,⁸⁹ with the objective of providing education services in foreign countries at elementary, middle and higher levels, as well as private courses, culture centers, libraries, laboratories, arts and sports centers, in addition to dormitories for students and instructors.⁹⁰ In reality the Maarif Foundation was specifically established and tasked by the Turkish government to incite foreign governments seize educational foundations operating in other countries, targeting enterprises run by individuals close to the Hizmet Movement. In the event seizures were successful, through mainly illegal administrative and practical actions, the Maarif Foundation would be offered as an alternative foundation with the authority to purchase, take over and rent properties.

According to the founding act,⁹¹ the Foundation would be overseen by a 12-member Board of Trustees, including four members from the Presidency of Turkey, three from the cabinet of ministers, two from the Education Ministry, and one member from each - the Foreign Ministry, the Finance Ministry and Turkey's Higher Education Board (YÖK). The executive organ of the Maarif Foundation is the Board of Directors consisting of one chairman and six members, with the authority to represent the Foundation. The Supervisory Board consists of five principal and five alternate members overseeing the activities and accounts of the Turkish Education Foundation on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

The budget of the Foundation, with its headquarters in Istanbul, will be provided by the Ministry of National Education of Turkey and the budget may be used to purchase, take over, rent, or sign partnerships with other foreign education institutions.

Main concerns related to the Maarif Foundation

i. Property Issues

The right to property is a human right enshrined in *all modern constitutions and Article 17 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.⁹² The immense pressure on foreign governments by the Turkish government to transfer real property to Maarif (essentially to the Turkish government), results in arbitrary deprivation of the rightful owners (mainly non-Turkish nationals) of their property. Arbitrary deprivation of property from nationals of the country or foreign nationals, may have a major effect on future foreign investments in receiving countries.

ii. Quality of Education

The Turkish government is highly unsuccessful in Turkey with its educational policies. In the aftermath of the attempted coup the situation in the education in the country further deteriorated, with the right to education fundamentally affected. In its report of March 2018, the OHCHR noted that "Massive dismissals of teachers and academics, accused of links to Gülen movement have significantly affected the education sector and thereby the right to education."⁹³

The high level of education provided by the existing schools, the academic success, the satisfaction of parents, the English-language education are not likely to be sustained if the schools are handed over to the Maarif Foundation. The unqualified teachers from Turkey will eventually only "export" Turkey's own chronic education problems of education to other countries.

⁸⁹ Around 285,294.52 US Dollars according to the December 2016 average exchange rate

⁹⁰ Law No. 6721 on "Turkish Maarif Foundation"

⁹¹ <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/06/20160628-17.htm>

⁹² "Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property"

⁹³ OHCHR, *Report on the impact of the state of emergency on human rights in Turkey, including an update on the South-East* (January – December 2017), March 2018, para 8

iii. Sexual Harassment and Violence

The ruling party and the government of Turkey have failed to prevent sexual harassment against children, including through the existing foundations (e.g. Ensar Foundation). Several of the executives chosen by the Maarif Foundation, e.g. the Principal of the Batumi school (Georgia) was the former Director of the Adıyaman Gerger Imam Hatip High School (M.K), serving in that post as the sexual abuses scandal unfolded (involving as many as 75 victims among students)⁹⁴ in Turkey. It is therefore very risky for students of any schools handed over to Maarif Foundation to attend, as they will probably not be able to properly address children's health, safety, and character education.

iv. Radical Interpretation of Islam

Maybe the most serious problem with Maarif, a subsidiary of the Turkish government, is the clear political Islam agenda of this oppressive government. Acting on the instructions of the Turkish government, the Maarif Foundation is already contributing to further youth radicalization and extremism in several countries. In particular in Africa, the activities of Maarif Foundation may have a devastating effect in breaking the fragile balances related to the ethnic, religious and/or cultural sensitivities.

In the case of the Maarif Foundation, the risk of radicalization of youth will be greater, since the radical interpretation of Islam by the current Turkish government will be hidden by the widely known tolerance of Turkish Islam. This radicalization through political Islam may further exacerbate and fuel tensions between different religions and may result in long-term devastating effects on local communities.

v. Risks to the Inter-religious and Intercultural Dialogue

Unlike the Hizmet Movement, which promotes inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, President Erdoğan has also openly declared that "there can be no dialogue between Muslims and Christians." The Maarif Foundation, part of the Turkish government and acting under direct orders of President Erdoğan will, without any doubt, develop educational and pedagogic plans along the same lines.

vi. Espionage

The current government in Turkey has already a disturbing track-record in gathering intelligence through the Turkish Religious Affairs Directorate (Diyanet), amid reports that the Diyanet has asked imams to spy and inform on people of Turkish origin suspected of being active in the Gülen Movement.⁹⁵ The Diyanet itself has openly admitted it had gathered intelligence and prepared reports on sympathizers of the Gülen Movement in at least 38 (thirty eight) countries and regions,⁹⁶ by the end of 2016.

Foreign intelligence services and the media have constantly exposed their activities as information-gathering agents in the countries they work, resulting in the expulsion of scores of Turkish imams, or rejections of their permits and visas. Fully dependent from the Turkish government the Maarif schools will not only advance the government's narrative and objectives, but undoubtedly also act as "foreign agent" gathering intelligence and sensitive information.

⁹⁴ <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/gerger-deki-skandalin-sorumlusuna-yeni-gorev-mudure-odul-gibi-atama-135586.html>

⁹⁵ A circular of September 20, 2016 by Turkey's Diyanet instructed Turkish missions and religious representatives abroad to profile Gülen movement expatriates living in their respective foreign countries

⁹⁶ Abkhazia (Georgia), Germany, Albania, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Japan, Montenegro, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, Lithuania, Macedonia, Mongolia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Turkmenistan and Ukraine

vii. Misuse of Maarif Foundation for Political Ambitions

The Turkish government and its organizations and instrumentalities have been projecting leadership of the Islamic world, through Erdoğan's image as the 'Caliph of Islam,' through the children of the political elites attending the schools.

viii. The Future of Maarif Schools

Without a real basis for providing quality education, through proper sound and balanced business judgments, should a future government of Turkey withdraw its unlimited diplomatic, financial and other support to the Foundation, the schools *Maarif* may administer will also fail.

The establishment of the Maarif Foundation and its stated goals has not gone unnoticed by the international community. The report by the co-rapporteurs Godsken and Mikko of the Council of Europe's Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) published in May 2017 raised its concern *"by the move made by the Turkish authorities, with the assistance of the newly established Maarif Foundation, to incite foreign countries to close down Gülen linked schools and institutions, and by reported cases of religious authorities allegedly spying on the Turkish community living abroad or inciting Turks to denounce alleged members of the Gülen movement."*⁹⁷

The vast network of Diyanet abroad has been turned into a sophisticated intelligence-gathering agency. A confidential document of September 20, 2016 from Diyanet instructed Turkish missions and religious representatives abroad to profile Hizmet Movement expatriates in their respective countries.⁹⁸ Those perceived as Hizmet sympathizers in many countries have been subject to violence by mosque members and others not been allowed to pray in Diyanet funded mosques. Many of the Turkish imams abroad have openly admitted being involved in intelligence gathering activities. Hundreds of imams have been under investigation in several European countries. Many of them have been recalled and returned to Turkey. Increasingly imams of Diyanet funded mosques also incite worshippers to spy on followers of the Hizmet Movement and affiliated institutions, including schools.

On 7 December 2016 Hurriyet Daily News reported that "Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) has gathered intelligence via imams from 38 countries on the activities of suspected followers of the U.S.-based Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen [...] The Diyanet briefed a parliamentary commission formed to investigate the thwarted coup and revealed its intelligence activities regarding the Gülen Movement in Europe and Asia. The Diyanet said it gathered intelligence and prepared reports on Gülenists in, Abkhazia, Germany (three reports from Dusseldorf, Cologne and Munich), Albania, Australia (two reports from Melbourne and Sydney), Austria (two reports from Salzburg and Vienna), Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria (two reports from Plovdiv and Sofia), Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Japan, Montenegro, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, Lithuania, Macedonia, Mongolia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Turkmenistan and Ukraine. Photos of individuals allegedly linked to the Gülen Movement were also included in some of the Diyanet's files. Gülen-linked schools, businesses, foundations, associations and media outlets were also included in the 50 reports prepared from the intelligence gathered from mosque officials, religious coordinators and religious services counselors."⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Council of Europe, Committee on the Honoring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee), *The functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey*, 5 April 2017, 3.2.1. *Extent of the measures taken, lack of proportionality*, para. 39, pages. 16/17

⁹⁸ The document was quoted as stating: "We request that you send a detailed report about all FETÖ/PDY networks, activities, educational institutions [kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, faculties, dormitories, etc.] NGOs, aid organizations, human resources, associations that host cultural activities, etc., to disiliskiler@diyanet.com.tr by September 27, 2016"

⁹⁹ Hurriyet Daily News, December 7, 2016, available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/diyanet-gathers-intelligence-on-suspect->

Documents obtained by Deutsche Welle in February 2017 reportedly reveal “a larger effort by Diyanet in Germany and Europe to report back to Ankara on the Hizmet/Gülen Movement. Among the reports are ones written by religious attachés at Turkish diplomatic missions in Munich, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and Belgium. In all, the reports identify dozens of individuals, associations, businesses and schools with supposed affiliations to the global network of the Gülen, who denounced the coup attempt and denied any involvement. In other parts, the memos describe activities organized by the Movement. One section from the Salzburg, Austria, memo describes how a Gülen-affiliated group ‘successfully infiltrated (the Turkish community) in the name of cultural integration’ by organizing swimming classes for women. Austrian authorities in 2015 awarded the organization an ‘Integration Award’ for its efforts in the field. It is unclear how the religious attachés gathered the information, or what exact role Turkish imams played. The documents from Vienna and Salzburg show Diyanet officials have worked with ATIB, a similar organization to DITIB in Austria, to monitor and counter the activities of the Gülen Movement”.¹⁰⁰

Deutsche Welle reported in January 2017 that “Imams in Germany have informed Turkish authorities of alleged supporters of cleric Fethullah Gülen, according to reports” in particular “imams at one of Germany’s largest Islamic organizations have gathered intelligence at the behest of Turkey’s official religious authorities”.¹⁰¹ According to documents obtained by Deutsche Welle “13 imams and a ‘deputy coordinator’ in the two states provided information to the Turkish religious attaché at the consulate in Cologne on at least 14 Gülen affiliated institutions and 45 people with alleged ties to the Gülen Movement. NRW’s ministry of education has identified five people on the list as state-employed teachers”.¹⁰²

In February 2017, German police raided apartments of four men, “said to be clerics”, suspected of carrying out espionage on behalf of the Turkish government on alleged Gülen supporters.¹⁰³ In April 2017 Deutsche Welle reported that “the German Interior Ministry said [...] it is questioning 20 individuals for allegedly spying on followers of an exiled preacher accused of being responsible for the attempted coup in Turkey in 2016”.

In its report “Regulating foreign funding of Islam in Europe in order to prevent radicalization and Islamophobia,”¹⁰⁴ released in October 2018, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) warns in particular on the role and activities of Turkey’s Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) in Europe, inter alia, in the context of state instrumentalization of religion.

According to the report, “The second criticism of foreign funding one frequently hears today is the use of religion by States for political purposes, as a means of exerting influence in a foreign country. Very clearly, the States criticized are those such as Turkey, primarily with regard to the Diyanet, [...] acting either directly as States, which is rare, or through mixed organizations or foundations of various types.”¹⁰⁵ The report continues by noting that “In this list [states using religion for political purposes], Turkey occupies a special place. The Diyanet sees Islam as one of the features of the identity of Turkish citizens living abroad or European citizens of Turkish origin and, as such, part of a political strategy based on a mixture of religious beliefs and national pride, which some observers have called Islamo-nationalism.

ed-gulenists-via-imams-in-38-countries-107028

¹⁰⁰ Deutsche Welle, *Turkish imam spy affair in Germany extends across Europe*, <http://www.dw.com/en/turkish-imam-spy-affair-in-germany-extends-across-europe/a-37590672>

¹⁰¹ Deutsche Welle, *Turkish imams spied on teachers at German state schools*, 25 January 2017, available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/turkish-imams-spied-on-teachers-at-german-state-schools/a-37261502>

¹⁰² Deutsche Welle, *Turkish imam spy affair in Germany extends across Europe*, 16 February 2017, available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/turkish-imam-spy-affair-in-germany-extends-across-europe/a-37590672>

¹⁰³ Deutsche Welle, *Germany investigates possible anti-Gülen spies*, 15 February 2017, available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-investigates-possible-anti-gulen-spies/a-37557872>

¹⁰⁴ The report is available at: <http://semantic-pace.net/tools/pdf.aspx?doc=aHR0cDovL2Fzc2VtYmx5LmNvZS5pbnQvbncveG1sL1hSZWYyWDJlURXLWV4dHIuYXNwP2ZpbGVpZD0yNTA0MCZsYW5nPUVO&xsl=aHR0cDovL3NlbWFudGljcGFjZS5uZXQvWHNSdC9QZGYvWFJlZi1XRC1BVC1YTUwyUERGLnhzbA==&xsltparams=ZmlsZWlkPTI1MDQw>

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, paras 57 and 58

Thus, even if the Diyanet trains, sends and pays the salaries of imams in mosques controlled by its local branches, like the ATIB in Austria or the DITIB In Germany, their goal is by no means messianic.”

Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB)¹⁰⁶

The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities is yet another institution serving as a facilitator for Erdoğan’s long arm abroad. Initially touted as a long-delayed project for the Turkish government to improve the well-being of Turks residing overseas, the agency was quickly transformed into a partisan tool in 2011 to advance clandestine projects of President Erdoğan and his associates. It has now become a cover for Erdoğan operatives including the notorious National Intelligence Organization (MİT) to promote the Erdoğan brand in foreign countries.¹⁰⁷

According to the leaked emails of Berat Albayrak, Erdoğan’s son-in-law, the YTB was overwhelmingly staffed by Islamists. An email sent to Albayrak on Nov. 29, 2013 by the general manager of the state-owned Turkish Petroleum International Company (TPIC), Mithat Cansız, Albayrak’s friend, revealed that 70 percent of staff members of the YTB came from a political Islamist background and had some connection in the past with the Islamist Felicity Party. That was before a massive purge in the Turkish government that resulted in the dismissal of over 130,000 employees. Perhaps the unlawful purge on fabricated charges left the YTB completely in the hands of Islamists.¹⁰⁸ The YTB is pursuing projects to make segments of Turkish and Muslim diaspora groups more susceptible to the radicalizing efforts of the Erdoğan regime. In sharp contrast to its stated goals, the agency’s engagement is discouraging the integration of diaspora groups in their host countries, building a separate identity for them and developing troublesome outreach activities, all of which can very well carry the risk of jeopardizing national and international security and stability.¹⁰⁹

Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA)

According to official statistics, Turkey’s emergency and humanitarian aid fund was around \$3.2 billion in 2015, \$6.4 billion in 2016 and had surpassed \$8 billion in 2017, corresponding to 0.85 percent of the country’s national dividend. In 2019 TİKA was granted a \$100 million budget, only a fraction of the foreign Turkish aid expected to be delivered by public institutions, which stands at around \$8.2 billion.¹¹⁰

The role of TİKA in promoting the Turkey’s government goals abroad through projects related to culture, maternal and infant health, water sanitation, agriculture, animal husbandry, education, tourism, forestry, informatics, vocational education, restoration and protection of cultural heritage should not be underestimated. Its remarkable expansion, in particular in the Balkans, Africa (with 22 offices) and South America have already turned the agency into a central agency in promoting Erdoğan’s interests all over the world, which are expected to have long-lasting consequences, in particular as regards education.

Projecting its soft power around the world, according to official data, TİKA has realized approximately 4,250 projects in the field of education over five continents, including in Afghanistan, North Macedonia, Albania, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Palestine, Iraq and Colombia. The aid however comes with a “price”, including support for Turkey’s government objectives, primarily as regards the closure and transfer of Hizmet-affiliated institutions and illegal transfer of Turkish dissidents.

In Moldova for example, the Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TİKA) is one of the most active. They work on permanent bases with local politicians, NGO’s and media, marking a general

¹⁰⁶ In Turkish Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı (YTB)

¹⁰⁷ See Turkish Minute, *Turkey’s diaspora agency is building Erdoğan’s proxies abroad*, by Abdullah Bozkurt, October 31, 2018. Available at <https://www.turkishminute.com/2018/10/31/opinion-turkeys-diaspora-agency-is-building-erdogans-proxies-abroad/>

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*

¹¹⁰ See for more <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2018/12/10/tika-president-serdar-cam-turkey-keeps-breaking-records-in-humanitarian-aid-and-development-assistance>

growing presence of private Turkish businesses – supportive to the geopolitical interests of current Turkish leadership. TİKA became so one of the main international donors in the region, enabling current Moldovan and Gagauzian political leaders to multiple international support to continue their way of ruling.¹¹¹

In the early hours of September 6, 2018, seven Turkish nationals¹¹² legally residing in Moldova were arbitrarily arrested and thereafter illegally transferred to Turkey. The media widely speculated that Turkish teachers were sent as a “gift to Ankara,” which financed the renovation of the Presidential Palace in Kishinev. Valentin Dediş, the former president of the intelligence agency (SIS), stated that this was a ‘concession on behalf of Moldova’ for its expeditionary operation against the victims. Other media stated that “Moldova sold the asylum seekers to Erdoğan’s regime,” emphasizing that this was an extreme case of serious human rights violations. More specifically, it is believed that Turkey spent at least 7 (seven) million Euros for the reconstruction and furniture of the Presidential Palace, inaugurated in October 2018 by both presidents.

Amir Zukic, the Sarajevo bureau chief of Turkish state news agency, Anadolu, notes on this matter that, “Turkish leaders are working at a new Ottoman empire, a gentle one...Turkey, a former regional power, is trying to come back in a big way.”¹¹³ Two of President Erdoğan’s administration’s major culturally-influencing bodies are the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) and Turkey’s Ministry of Culture and the Presidency of Religious Affairs. According to Turkey expert, Dr. David Phillips, in the Huffington Post, these two groups are “vehicles through which Turkey advances its ideological agenda...TİKA operates like a social welfare agency...[supporting]...projects in the fields of agriculture, health, and education.”¹¹⁴ For instance, in Kosovo, TİKA supports over 400 projects in the listed fields, in addition to numerous Turkish-run hospitals and clinics.¹¹⁵

Additionally, TİKA also funds the restoration of various Ottoman monuments and builds mosques across Kosovo. In fact, it has restored more than 30 religious structures from the Ottoman period and President Erdoğan has “personally pledged funds to build the country’s biggest mosque in Pristina.”¹¹⁶ Additionally, TİKA has also sponsored numerous schools across Kosovo in cities including Pristina, Prizren, Gjakova, and Peja¹¹⁷. Many of TİKA-funded schools teach Islamic courses and the Turkish language. However, Dr. Phillips notes that not all TİKA-funded schools remain within the formal education sector; certain schools function “function like madrassas, offering Islamic education, thereby contributing to the radicalization of Kosovar youth” (it is worthy to note that the Kosovo government has acknowledged over 300 Kosovar youth who have joined the Islamic State)¹¹⁸ Moreover, what is interesting to note, as pointed out by Dr. Phillips, is that “the Central Bank of Kosovo has logged only 2.7 million Euros transferred by TİKA to its Kosovo account between 2009 and 2014. TİKA transfers most funds in cash with no official record. It does not want to draw attention to its activities.”¹¹⁹

¹¹¹ <https://www.vocaleurope.eu/departing-further-from-european-values/>

¹¹² Mr. Sertif Ayri – Professor of Turkish language

Mr. Hüseyin Bayraktar – Professor of Turkish language at Ciocana Branch

Mr. Rıza Doğan - Director of the Durleşti branch of the Orizont school network

Mr. Feridun Tüfekci - Director of the Ceadâr-Lunga branch of Orizont schools

Mr. Sedat Hasan Karacaoğlu – Deputy General-Director, Durleşti branch, Orizont schools

Mr. Yasin Özdiş - Public relations officer, Durleşti branch, Orizont school network

Mr. Müjdat Çelebi - Finance Director of Orizont school network

¹¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/apr/02/bosnia-turkey-ottoman-influence-balkans-sarajevo>

¹¹⁴ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-l-phillips/turkeys-islamist-agenda-i_b_8891634.html

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*

Increased Tensions with the West and International Organizations

Over the years, President Erdoğan's administration has also transformed Turkey into a threat to numerous international organizations and has increased tensions with various Western countries. As President Erdoğan's administration becomes increasingly autocratic, there have been numerous countries that called out and criticized such developments.¹²⁰

Nevertheless, President Erdoğan has remained steadfast in denial and has been quoted saying, "Continued disrespect will require us to start looking for new friends and allies," a thinly veiled critique of institutions such as the EU and NATO (of which Turkey is part of) and a subtle hint at Turkey's growing ties with Russia and China.¹²¹ According to Michael Rubin, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, Turkey's close ties with Russia – especially the recent military agreements and deals surrounding S-400s – "might compromise NATO air-defense secrets to Russian engineers...[and is thus] all the more reason to second guess Turkey's role in collective defense"¹²²

At this point, it is important to note that as President Erdoğan's administration becomes more autocratic, more and more countries have regarded Turkey, its foreign policy, and collective security abilities with wariness. According to The Spectator Index, the following are statistics of a few countries that say they have confidence in President Erdoğan's leadership:¹²³

- Russia: 30%
- South Africa: 29%
- Germany: 23%
- France: 19%
- Canada: 15%
- Australia: 13%
- India: 12%
- US: 11%
- UAE: 8%
- Saudi Arabia: 5%

Turkey has also been facing increased tensions with the European Union as values surrounding governance, society, and politics continue to diverge. Writing for the European Council on Foreign Relations, Unal Cevikoz, the former deputy undersecretary of the Turkish Foreign Ministry and former Turkish Ambassador to Iraq and Britain, explains the growing divides between the two:

"Turkey has to convince its western partners that it is committed to internalizing and implementing the ideals, principles and standards of the EU. If the perception in Europe fails to be positive about Turkey and if Turkey does not show any effort to correct that image, the current state of affairs will not change.

*Finally, Turkey should also grasp the philosophy of the essence of European Union. Decisions are taken on the basis of consensus and individual member countries all have equal votes when it comes to the issue of membership of a candidate country. Therefore, focusing merely on the relations with European Commission and the European Council does not help. The path to Brussels passes through Berlin, Paris and all the other capitals of EU member states. Maintaining friendly relations with individual members will play an important role in Turkey's further integration or otherwise with the European Union.*¹²⁴

Opportunistic Pivot towards Asia and Africa

In recent years, President Erdoğan's administration has been increasingly pivoting towards Asian giants

¹²⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-turkey/eu-leaders-host-turkish-president-erdogan-for-uneasy-summit-idUSKBN1H111S>

¹²¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2018/08/16/its-time-for-turkey-and-nato-to-go-their-separate-ways/?utm_term=.ed8ac451cb4f

¹²² *Ibid*

¹²³ <https://twitter.com/spectatorindex/status/1111217967528706049>

¹²⁴ https://www.ecfr.eu/article/essay_eu_turkey_relations_the_beginning_of_the_end_7226

such as China. One particular organization it seeks to join is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a Eurasian political, economic and security alliance. Turkey, although a dialogue partner of the organization since 2012, does not yet have full membership and has expressed interest in obtaining observer and possibly even membership status. In November 2016, President Erdoğan was quoted that Turkey “did not need to join the European Union “at all costs”,” and further said, “Why shouldn’t Turkey be in the Shanghai Five?”¹²⁵

Several points can be drawn from this. Turkey’s moves towards Asian countries for partnership not only alarms the West and other international organizations it is part of such as NATO, but also certain Asian countries as well. Writing for the German Marshall Fund, Jan Gapers, states, “Turkey’s timing for seeking closer ties with the SCO could hardly be better, as the organization has just embarked on an expansionary course. India and Pakistan joined at the SCO Astana Summit on June 9, 2017. The SCO has started more intense discussions on expanding into the Middle East as well.”¹²⁶ Turkey’s willingness to join the SCO comes at the conveniently timed discussion regarding expansion in the Middle East, once more reiterating President Erdoğan’s desires to expand socially, religiously, and politically across the regions.

As such, many Chinese experts and officials remain skeptical towards Turkey’s ambitions and commitments to the SCO. Gapers notes that, “*They refute the notion that Ankara’s interest in the SCO means that Turkey will switch from the Western to the Eastern camp. From Beijing’s perspective, Erdoğan’s SCO rhetoric mainly serves as a bargaining chip in talks with NATO, the United States, and the EU. Chinese experts also tend to see Turkey’s flirtation with the SCO as driven mainly by Ankara’s rapprochement with Russia. Overall, Chinese analysts suggest that Turkey’s new balanced diplomacy does not amount to a complete reorientation of foreign policy but rather to an attempt to expand Ankara’s strategic choices and autonomy.*”¹²⁷

Turkey has also been pivoting towards Africa, especially in some of the most financially and political vulnerable states. According to NPR, President Erdoğan has “made more than 20 visits to the continent since coming to power” and has even said, “We want to walk with Africa while a new world order is being established.”¹²⁸ Over the past 15 years, Turkey’s trade with African countries has “grown six fold to \$17.5 billion,” according to state news agency, Anadolu.¹²⁹ There remains questions concerning Turkey’s moves towards Africa. For instance, as President Erdoğan seeks to post Turkey’s relations with Sudan and former President Omar Al Bashir, he has been criticized for cozying up to a leader who is accused by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and war crimes.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, Sudan has granted Turkey a long-term lease to rebuild Ottoman-period buildings on its island, Suakin Island, once again serving as a nod towards Turkey’s caliphate-like expansion ambitions.¹³¹

Similarly, Turkey’s economic and social involvements in Somalia have been called into question by the international community, especially by international nongovernmental organizations and pro-transparency groups. Turkey has recently opened a military base in Somalia, its first-ever branch in Africa and the largest of its foreign bases.¹³² However, Turkey’s involvement has been criticized as the aforementioned groups note that “Turkey’s involvement was facilitated by noncompetitive Somali contracts awarded by a state notorious for its corruption”¹³³

It is overall evident that as President Erdoğan’s administration seeks to establish greater regional and global dominance, it is simultaneously causing other countries to feel cautious about Turkey’s political

¹²⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-europe-erdogan-idUSKBN13F0CY>

¹²⁶ <http://www.gmfus.org/blog/2017/07/14/turkeys-sco-ambitions-challenge-eu-and-united-states>

¹²⁷ *Ibid*

¹²⁸ <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/03/08/590934127/turkey-is-quietly-building-its-presence-in-africa>

¹²⁹ *Ibid*

¹³⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/oct/21/omar-bashir-travels-world-despite-war-crime-arrest-warrant>

¹³¹ *Ibid*

¹³² *Ibid*

¹³³ *Ibid*

aims. Many can argue that most of President Erdoğan's global policies remain self-serving and opportunistic, rather than actively and constructively contributing to the international arena.

Abuse of INTERPOL Systems

President Erdoğan's administration has increasingly abused INTERPOL systems to crack down on domestic dissidents and opposition figures. Since July 2016, the Turkish government has misused its membership of Interpol, by issuing thousands of arrest warrants against dissidents abroad. Red Notices are "only for people accused of serious crimes, and Interpol's constitution calls on countries not to use the system for political ends and to act within the spirit of international human rights standards."¹³⁴

The crackdown on Turkish dissent abroad through Interpol was so serious that in August 2017, German Chancellor Angela Merkel herself criticized Turkey's misuse of Interpol to detain in Spain Mr. Dogan Akhanli, a German author detained on a Turkish warrant.¹³⁵ Back in October 2017, the extensive abuse of INTERPOL red notices by Turkey for prompted the European Union to call on INTERPOL to prevent abuse of Red Notices.¹³⁶

The exact numbers of the victims with abused Red Notice of Interpol based on the request from Turkey are not known, but experts agree that it is definitively one of the biggest challenges for Interpol itself to prove if the CCF [Commission for the Control of Interpol's Files] is able to prevent or stop such scale of abuses. On 5 July 2017, pro-government Turkish media reported that Interpol removed Turkey from its database after Ankara uploaded a list of 60,000 suspected followers of Fethullah Gülen. The decision to suspend Turkey's access to the database of wanted individuals came after the July 2016 coup attempt. Access to the database had been allegedly reported to be blocked for almost a year, despite protests from Ankara.¹³⁷ If true, this would have been the single largest scale abuse of the system ever, given that the overall number of warrants in 2016 was 12,787 Red Notices from all countries.

Since the 2016 coup, Turkey has exploited and exhausted its INTERPOL powers so extensively that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in April 2017 called on INTERPOL "to continue improving its Red Notice procedure in order to prevent and redress abuses more effectively."¹³⁸ According to Johann Bühr, head of Reporters Without Borders' Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk, "The reforms begun by INTERPOL must now be completed as a matter of urgency so that it is better able to guard against abusive requests from Turkey and other repressive states."¹³⁹

Individuals who have become the target of Turkey via INTERPOL include Enes Kanter, an NBA player of Turkish origin, who was placed by Turkey on Red Notice list under charges of "terrorism," Can Dündar, former editor of Cumhuriyet newspaper and İlhan Tanir, editor of Ahval News, all of whom, as Dündar described were being pursued "for [their] activities as a journalist"¹⁴⁰

Abductions, Arbitrary Detentions, Clandestine and Illegal Transfers

As part of its post-attempted coup crackdown on dissent abroad since July 2016, the government of Turkey has been actively involved in an increasingly broader, widespread and systematic practice of 'clandestine and illegal transfers' of Turkish nationals from abroad. Turkey is in reality not unique in pursuing government's opponents abroad, nor is it the first time doing so. Experts however agree that

¹³⁴ *Ibid*

¹³⁵ <http://www.dw.com/en/spain-releases-dogan-akhanli-german-author-detained-on-turkish-warrant/a-40163753>

¹³⁶ European Union calls on INTERPOL to prevent abuse of Red Notices, available at: <https://www.fairtrials.org/european-union-calls-on-interpol-to-prevent-abuse-of-red-notices/>

¹³⁷ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/interpol-denies-reports-of-turkeys-removal-from-database-after-listing-60000-wanted-gulenist-names-115135>

¹³⁸ *Ibid*

¹³⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*

“this ‘global purge,’ which mirrors the effort after the coup attempt to rid Turkey’s domestic institutions of anyone associated with Gülen, is remarkable in its speed, scale, and aggression.”¹⁴¹

Since the attempted coup of 15 July 2016, high Turkish officials, including President Erdoğan, the former Prime Minister and cabinet members, pro-government journalists and other individuals acting as agents of the government of Turkey – have publicly threatened sympathizers of Hizmet Movement abroad with abductions and death.

The threats in essence provide for two elements. First, the “self-asserted right” of the government to pursue and physically eliminate individuals who have fled the oppression, before or after the attempted coup of 15 July 2016, and second, the “responsibility” of the government to actively and resolutely engage in fulfilling this objective. Citing the president and other high-level officials: “Those from FETÖ¹⁴² who have betrayed and ran abroad should be exterminated and that is the responsibility of the Republic of Turkey”.

The definition of “extraordinary rendition” varies depending upon the source. In general, it refers to the practice of secret detention and illegal transfer of detainees across international boundaries, as in the case of Turkey. Abductions followed by extraordinary renditions materialized first in Malaysia in mid-October 2016, but intensified since June 2017, when Turkey’s National Intelligence Organization (MİT) established an “Office for Human Abduction and Executions” – In Turkish “İnsan Kaçırma ve İnfaz Bürosu”. The Office was tasked with abducting or physically eliminating Hizmet sympathizers abroad and was allocated an initial five (5) million US dollars budget. According to the 2018 U.S. State Department report on human rights practices, “the government [of Turkey] engaged in a worldwide effort to apprehend suspected members of “FETO”, a term the government applied to the followers of Fethullah Gülen also known as members of the Hizmet Movement.

The government of Turkey and President Erdoğan have not only proudly acknowledged direct responsibility in perpetrating or co-perpetrating crimes punishable under international law but have also pledged more illegal operations by the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MİT) in the future. On 21 September 2018, Turkey’s Presidential Spokesperson İbrahim Kalın stated during a press conference that the government of Turkey will continue perpetrating crimes in foreign jurisdictions, adding that the operations could also take place in the United States. Kalın stated that “our relevant units” will continue its operations against the Hizmet Movement, similar to the one in Kosovo (March 29, 2018), whether it be the United States or any other country. The official transcript of his statement can be found in the official website of the President of Turkey.¹⁴³

In July [2018] Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu confirmed that the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) had facilitated the return of more than 100 alleged “FETO” members from 18 countries. In some cases, cooperative governments deported wanted individuals without due process.” In November 2018 the Turkish Foreign Minister briefed the Turkish parliament that “Turkey has sent files of sent extradition requests to 83 countries for 452 individuals [Turkish dissidents in exile] on accusation of being affiliated to the Fetullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ).”¹⁴⁴

The stories of the individuals abducted or detained for illegal transfer are lurid in their details, starting with hooded abductees being spirited away in the dead of night, disappeared, tortured and sent in chartered or commercial aircrafts to Turkey, only to be subjected to more torture, maltreatment and unfair trials.

Even more troubling, not only there are no clear legal procedures used regarding the person’s seizure and detention, but there is generally little or no opportunity to challenge either the legality of the detention and rendition, or the substance of the charges against the detainee in a

¹⁴¹ See for example: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2018-01-29/remarkable-scale-turkeys-global-purge>

¹⁴² An acronym for the so-called “Gülenist Terror Organization”, frequently used by Erdoğan and pro-Erdoğan media networks to refer to the Hizmet movement.

¹⁴³ <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/spokesperson/1696/98669/statement-by-presidential-spokesperson-ibrahim-kalin->. The statement in Turkish with English subtitles is published here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbr0nqY8khs>

¹⁴⁴ See e.g. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-asks-extradition-of-452-people-in-83-countries-for-feto-cases-138866>

subsequent judicial proceeding. Many, if not all, are held for long periods without trial in solitary confinement.

On these practices, the UN Special Rapporteur for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism applies the “legitimate aim” and “proportionality in the strict sense” tests in order to evaluate whether counter-terrorist measures comply with human rights obligations.¹⁴⁵

Although the government of Turkey attempts in its replies to different human rights organs, to justify the practice of extraordinary rendition by arguing maybe that the purpose is to achieve greater security and prevent attacks and is therefore legitimate, under the principle of proportionality *stricto sensu*, the practice of abductions and illegal transfers across international boundaries certainly jeopardizes important international human rights obligations.

This type of irresponsible behavior in foreign jurisdictions comes into conflict with important legal principles established in international rules on extradition and international refugee law, especially the right to asylum and the principle of *non-refoulement* in cases of human rights violations. The campaign of renditions by the government of Turkey worldwide is endangering the principle of the inviolability of human dignity, which underlies every other fundamental right and cannot be subject to restrictions, even for the purposes of security, in particular in times of peace.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court clearly defines the “enforced disappearance of persons” as meaning the arrest, detention or abduction of persons by, or with the authorization, support, or acquiescence of a State or a political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons, with the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for a prolonged period of time.” No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, including internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification for enforced disappearance.

Finally, all these illegal actions in all continents, the abduction of citizens covertly and forcibly from the territory of another state constitutes a flagrant violation of the sovereignty of the concerned states. Nowhere else was this more obvious than in the case of the abduction and attempted illegal transfer of Mr. Veysel Akçay, on 27 July 2018 in Mongolia.

Mr. Veysel Akçay was abducted at 10:00 am in front of his residence. The perpetrators, believed to be agents acting on behalf of the governments of Turkey and Mongolia, tied his hands and legs, blindfolded him, and also covered his ears with cloth strips. They only left an opening in his nose, in order for Mr. Akçay to be able to breath. The perpetrators changed four (or maybe five) different vehicles as they traveled by car for about eight hours. Blindfolded and unable to hear anything, Mr. Akçay was not able to recognize any of the locations where he was taken. After he was driven back to his family home, the police accompanied Mr. Akçay to the police station and they released him after six or seven hours of interrogations about the incident. The plane (registration TT4010) belonging to the Turkish Armed Forces¹⁴⁶ was held at the Chinggis Khaan International Airport until the matter was allegedly “resolved” and later it was allowed to return to Turkey.

The Government of Mongolia did not stay silent (at least initially) to the attempt of abduction of Mr. Akçay on Mongolian soil. The same day (27 July 2018) it summoned Turkish officials from Turkey’s embassy and publicly condemned the flagrant attempts by Turkey to undermine Mongolia’s sovereignty and independence.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ “From a human rights standpoint, the crucial issue in this regard is whether such measures are necessary to achieve a legitimate aim, such as the investigation of a crime, and whether they are at the same time proportionate to the resulting interference with privacy and family.” Former-Human Rights Commission. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism*, para. 60

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2018/07/28/world/asia/28reuters-mongolia-kidnapping-turkey.html>

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.mfa.gov.mn/?p=45744&lang=en>

PART V - CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The Republic of Turkey was once a promising vibrant democracy, an example for deeply troubled countries across the world. Until recently Turkey's role was growing not only in politics, economy and governance, but also as a facilitator of a positive social change in the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa.

Years of large-scale corruption under President Erdoğan's administration and merciless campaign to silence perceived critics have now turned Turkey into one of the most fearful countries in the world. Turkey is now ranked 157th out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders 2019 index of press freedom, with 189 closed media outlets and 317 jailed journalists,¹⁴⁸ more than any other country in the world. Over half a million individuals have been under investigation for alleged terrorist ties and around 96,885 have been arrested,¹⁴⁹ including more than 10,000 innocent women and (as of June 2019), 864 babies. More than 150,000 state employees have been dismissed of their positions, along with 6,021 academics and 4,463 judges and prosecutors.¹⁵⁰ By June 2019, following the unprecedented crackdown the official rate of occupancy in prisons has risen to over 120 percent.¹⁵¹

More than 15,153 army officers including 150 generals have also been dismissed and detained/arrested, mostly pro-NATO staff. They have been replaced with scores of loyalists, radicals and other individuals openly expressing anti-NATO sentiments. This massive transformation of the alliance's second largest army, combined with Turkey's purchase of S-400 Russian long-range missile batteries (and closer ties with Russia and China), represents a fundamental threat to the security and integrity of NATO's member states and NATO partners.

An intense and systematic effort to permanently Islamize Turkey's education system is resolutely pursuing Erdoğan's vision to implementing his so-called "pious generation" project - or the devoutly religious generation. The estimated 15-fold increase under the AKP rule of the number of students attending İmam-Hatip schools is crucial in their role to further political Islam agenda. It has served as a breeding ground for radical elements, with Turkey's social fabric undergoing a very harmful change, with maybe an irreversible damage already inflicted to the traditional mainstream understanding of Islam in the country.

On a global scale, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is openly aiming to lead the Muslim world from the position of a "caliph" and achieve his own political goals in the world.

In countries from Latin America to sub-Saharan Africa, Turkey is building mosques, financing religious education, restoring Ottoman heritage - and advertising its unique brand of Islamic leadership along the way. One of the most visible means through which Turkey has broadcast its religious credentials has been by constructing mega mosques around the world.¹⁵²

In the process, for the last 17 years Turkey has served as a fertile environment for a myriad of violent Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS and Al-Qaeda. The promotion of political Islam outside Turkey, including through its radical subsidiaries - the Maarif Foundation, Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) - is expected to further contribute to youth radicalization and extremism, in particular in Africa and in the Balkans, where their activities may have a

¹⁴⁸ See for more: <https://turkeypurge.com/journalism-in-jail>

¹⁴⁹ <https://turkeypurge.com/>

¹⁵⁰ See for more: <https://turkeypurge.com/>

¹⁵¹ See for more latest statistics on the number of individuals in detention and prisons, available at: <https://www.milligazete.com.tr/haber/2956885/en-istikrarli-kurum-cezaevleri>

¹⁵² <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2019-01-10/turkeys-bid-religious-leadership>

devastating effect for the existing fragile balances of ethnic, religious, or cultural sensitivities.

President Erdoğan's expanding dictatorship is steering Turkey toward a dead end.¹⁵³ As an important country with its geopolitical position between East and West, the current government of Turkey has the potential to greatly influence not only individuals through Turkey's sponsored schools and other institutions, but also domestic and external policies of countries with fragile institutions, lacking democratic institutions and the rule of law – in particular countries in Africa, the Balkans and Central Asia.

Recommendations

The Journalists and Writers Foundation makes the following recommendations to the United Nations member and observer states, and intergovernmental organizations.

Directly address the deteriorating human rights situation in Turkey, through relevant and appropriate United Nations, Council of Europe and other international and regional mechanisms, as well as through bilateral diplomatic engagement.

Call for an independent international body to investigate the coup attempt of 15 July 2016 and uncover the untold story that the Erdoğan-led government has failed to explain so far.

Strongly urge the Turkish government to end its interaction with terrorist organizations, in particular in Syria and Iraq, and enforce its commitment to combat radicalization and terrorism.

Strongly urge the Turkish government to ensure that national counter-terrorism legislation is limited to countering of terrorism as properly and precisely defined on the basis of the provisions reflected in the international counter-terrorism instruments, with strict adherence to the principle of legality.

Closely monitor the activities of Turkish government's funded organizations abroad to prevent Turkey's government instrumentalization of religion, radicalization, Islamophobia, Christianophobia and anti-Semitism.

Strongly condemn extraterritorial actions by agents acting on behalf of the government of Turkey, which undermine the independence and sovereignty of states, and further, condemn any collaboration by other states with the Erdoğan's government contrary to the important principles to protect those fleeing persecution.

¹⁵³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/erdogans-expanding-dictatorship-is-steering-turkey-toward-a-dead-end/2019/05/13/3248eaf0-75bc-11e9-b3f5-5673edf2d127_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.cef4a1dda778

PART VI - ANNEXES

THREATS TO GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY

NATIONAL LEVEL

- ▶ Transformation from Parliamentary to Presidential System
- ▶ Establishment of Neo Ottomanism and the Caliphate
- ▶ Erosion of the Rule of Law
- ▶ Erosion of Democratic Values
- ▶ Wholesale Attack on Human Rights
- ▶ Attack on Freedom of Speech and Expression
- ▶ Attack on Minority Groups and Intellectuals
- ▶ Assault on (Primary to Higher) Education and Imposition of Religious Curriculums
- ▶ Increase of Power Grip and Autocracy
- ▶ Misuse of Executive Power: Bribery, Corruption, Fraud, Money Laundering, and Gold Smuggling
- ▶ Abuse of the State of Emergency, Anti-terror Laws, and Derogation of International Conventions
- ▶ Alleged Atrocity Crimes: Hate Speech, Crimes against Humanity, Genocidal Acts

REGIONAL LEVEL

- ▶ Relations with Extremist and Terrorist Groups: ISIS, Al Shabab, Boko Haram
- ▶ Accusations on the Oil Trade
- ▶ Exploitation of Regional Refugee Crisis
- ▶ Alliance with Autocratic Regimes
- ▶ Propagation of Political Islam

GLOBAL LEVEL

- ▶ Expansion of Turkey's Soft Power in the World
- ▶ Instrumentalities of Erdoğan's Power Abroad
 - ◊ Maarif Foundation for the implementation of political Islamic agenda
 - ◊ Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) for espionage
 - ◊ Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) for mobilizing Turkish and Muslim communities abroad
 - ◊ Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Council (TİKA) for political pressure
 - ◊ Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World
 - ◊ Arbitrary Deprivation of property and Illegal Transfer of Hizmet-affiliated Schools to Maarif Foundation
 - ◊ Jeopardizing national and international security and stability worldwide
- ▶ Increased Tensions with Western States and International Organizations
- ▶ Anti-Western, Anti-American, Anti-European Union, Anti-Semitic Discourse
- ▶ Abuse of NATO and INTERPOL Systems
- ▶ Abuse of the United Nations System; i.e. ECOSOC NGO Committee, Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTED)
 - ◊ First Committee (Disarmament & International Security)
 - ◊ Second Committee (Economic & Financial)

- ◊ Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian & Cultural)
- ◊ Sixth Committee (Legal)
- ▶ Abuse of Counter-terrorism Laws, Humanitarian and Human Rights Laws
- ▶ Opportunistic Pivots towards Asia and Africa
- ▶ Abductions, arbitrary detention, clandestine and illegal transfers
- ▶ Violation of International Sanctions against Iran, Sudan, Venezuela

CASES FROM AFRICA

Country: Somalia

Region: The Horn of Africa

Threats: Relations with Extremist and Terrorist Groups (Al Shabab), Propagation of Political Islam, Opportunistic Pivots towards Africa, Building the largest Military Base in Africa, Expansion of Turkey's Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan's Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet, Abuse of Humanitarian Aid and Refugees, , Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World, Arbitrary Deprivation of property and Illegal Transfer of Hizmet-affiliated Schools to Maarif Foundation

Turkey's diplomacy in Somalia has become increasingly effective over the years, primarily through business ties and the building of educational institutions. During the particularly devastating famine of August 2011 in Somalia, President Erdoğan, alongside ministers, NGOs, journalists and celebrities visited a camp mostly filled with starving children in Mogadishu.¹⁵⁴ The trip, which took place during the holy month of Ramadan, sent a very clear message, according to Gonul Tol, writing for Foreign Affairs: "Turkey would not abandon its Muslim brothers and sisters."¹⁵⁵ Since 2011, President Erdoğan's administration has spent more than \$1 billion on humanitarian aid to Somalia.¹⁵⁶ Such expenses have come with a price. In exchange for humanitarian aid, Turkey has essentially taken over various operations across the country, including the Mogadishu airport which a Turkish company runs, as well as the fact that Turkish Airlines is the only international carrier permitted to fly into the area¹⁵⁷. Furthermore, the Turkish Diyanet Foundation, alongside other Islamic NGOs operate religious schools across Somalia, often through the Imam-Hatip curriculum, once again allow for President Erdoğan to continue expanding his vision of Islam across the region.¹⁵⁸ Also, it is important to note that Turkey has an overseas military base in Somalia, its largest one abroad.¹⁵⁹

Country: Kenya

Region: Eastern Africa

Threats: Relations with Extremist and Terrorist Groups (Al Shabab), Propagation of Political Islam, Opportunistic Pivots towards Africa, Expansion of Turkey's Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan's Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Abuse of Humanitarian Aid and Refugees, Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World

Turkey's relationship with Kenya has also proved to be contentious, not necessarily through formal channels of diplomacy but rather through what many regard as its financing of radical Islamic militants across the country, particularly the terrorist group, Al Shabab. In 2013, Al Shabab launched a fatally violent attack in Westgate Mall in Kenya and more recently in early 2019, has attacked a hotel complex in Nairobi with a death toll of more than 20 individuals¹⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2019-01-10/turkeys-bid-religious-leadership>

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/16/africa/kenya-hotel-complex-terror-attack/index.html>

A report from Abdullah Bozkurt, former Ankara bureau chief of Today's Zaman analyzing the funding of terrorist groups reveals that İbrahim Sen, subsequently arrested in Pakistan as an al Qaeda operative, was a liaison for Turkey's intelligence service to groups in Syria and, more importantly, transferred \$600,000 to al-Shabaab in 2012.¹⁶¹

The shady dealings between members of President Erdoğan's administration and militant groups across Africa have consequently allowed for such terrorist attacks to effectively take place. As a result, not only do terrorist groups get to advance their own ideologies through violence, but Turkey too is able to attain its own goals through opportunistic alliances which it deems fit.

Country: Nigeria

Region: West Africa

Threats: Relations with Extremist and Terrorist Groups (Boko Haram), Financing of Radical Islamic militants, Shipment of Weapons to Terrorist Groups, Propagation of Political Islam, Opportunistic Pivots towards Africa, Expansion of Turkey's Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan's Power Abroad, Abuse of Humanitarian Aid and Refugees, Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World

Similar to Turkey's dealings in Kenya, there has been criticism, against Turkey's relations with militant groups in Nigeria, specifically Boko Haram. The Islamist militant organization has been known to conduct bloody massacres against Christian communities and most notably, its kidnapping of the nearly 300 schoolgirls in April 2014. According to Michael Rubin, writing for Commentary Magazine, there has been leaked tapes of conversations between an advisor to President Erdoğan and the private secretary of the Turkish Airlines CEO.¹⁶² He states the following:

*"The Turkish Airlines official, according to the tape, said that he does not feel comfortable with the (secret) weapons shipments to Nigeria, and he asks whether those weapons "are to kill Muslims or Christians." The context of the conversation suggests he worries only after the former instead of the latter. The prime minister's advisor, however, tries to assure him and says he will check with Hakan Fidan, the director of Turkish intelligence and get back to Turkish Airlines with an answer. Turkish Airlines, for its part, denies that they have smuggled arms, but it is a state company and no other state company has been able to stand up to the prime minister, nor has there been any indication that any of the telephone calls, while illegally recorded, are inaccurate in content."*¹⁶³

Country: Sudan

Region: Northeastern Africa

Threats: Relations with Extremist and Terrorist Groups, Financing of Autocratic Leadership (Omar Al Bashir), Violating International Sanctions, Propagation of Political Islam, Opportunistic Pivots towards Africa, Building the Military Presence in Africa, Expansion of Turkey's Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan's Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Abuse of Humanitarian Aid and Refugees, Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World, Arbitrary Deprivation of property and Illegal Transfer of Hizmet-affiliated Schools to Maarif Foundation

In Sudan, President Erdoğan has been using the country to establish a stronghold in the Red Sea to continue with his efforts at re-establishing the Ottoman Empire and positioning Turkey as a major regional power once more. Similar to Turkey's actions in Somalia, Turkey has provided extensive economic relief during the period of sanctions from the US and as a result, numerous Turkish companies invested "hundreds of millions of dollars" in Sudan.¹⁶⁴

In 2017, along a massive delegation consisting of ministers and business owners President Erdoğan "signed no fewer than 12 economic cooperation agreements for a total of \$650 million. A high committee

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*

¹⁶² <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/terrorism/tape-suggests-turkey-supports-terror/>

¹⁶³ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Erdogan-is-deepening-his-involvement-in-Sudan-573906>

for strategic consultations was established. Another agreement dealt with security cooperation”¹⁶⁵ What is important to note is that Turkey’s relationship with Sudan does not come at a coincidence. Rather, because Sudan’s current governing body consists of Islamic parties with close affinity to the Muslim Brotherhood of which Turkey is a strong supporter, it works in Turkey’s favor to use this geostrategic country to build military presences, establish dominance through humanitarian aid and infrastructure. As such, Turkey is able to use this stronghold in Africa to further expand its own ideological and political expansionist aims.¹⁶⁶

CASES FROM THE BALKANS AND RUSSIA

Country: Serbia

Region: Southeastern Europe

Threats: Destabilizing the Balkans, Financing religious groups through TİKA and Diyanet, Propagating Political Islam Ideology, Opportunistic Pivots towards the Balkans, Expansion of Turkey’s Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan’s Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World

Even through Serbia and Turkey were once at opposite ends during the wars in the Balkans, the two countries have grown increasingly close to each other, despite other political differences including Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Turkey has become Serbia’s main Balkan trading partner, “with \$1 billion commerce”¹⁶⁷ Additionally, when Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić visited President Erdoğan recently, he proclaimed Turkey as “the biggest power, the strongest country in the Balkans.”¹⁶⁸ According to Politico Magazine, “Signs pointing out the nearest mosque tend to use the Turkish mescit rather than the Serbian word džamija.”¹⁶⁹ According to İstar Gözaydın, a professor of law and politics and founder of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly, ““They are using religion. They are using diplomacy. Institutions like TİKA and Diyanet have been working quite efficiently and hard in the region.”¹⁷⁰ Because Serbia has a largely ethnic Turkish population, President Erdoğan’s administration is able to effectively utilize these communities as ways of promoting Turkey’s own perspectives on religion and social awareness, once again reinforcing its expansionist efforts.

Country: Kosovo

Region: Southeastern Europe

Threats: Destabilizing the Balkans, Intervening and Bypassing Sovereign laws, Influencing Politics, Illegal Abductions and Operations, Financing religious groups through TİKA and Diyanet, Propagating Political Islam Ideology, Opportunistic Pivots towards the Balkans, Expansion of Turkey’s Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan’s Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World

In Kosovo, Turkey has demonstrated political capabilities that extend far beyond that of Kosovo leadership. In March 2018, Turkish intelligence officials brought six suspected Kosovo-based Gülen sympathizers to Turkey, allegedly without the knowledge of Kosovo’s prime minister, Ramush Haradinaj.¹⁷¹ He stated, “The operation...was conducted without informing me, or requesting my permission as prime

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶⁶ At the time of writing, Sudan faced months of civil unrest and as of 11 April 2019, President Omar Al Bashir has been forced out in a military coup

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.voanews.com/a/ankara-rising-balkan-influence-rattles-allies/4499838.html>

¹⁶⁸ <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-western-balkans-comeback-european-union-recep-tayyip-erdogan/>

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁷¹ <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/03/30/kosovo-intelligence-director-and-internal-minister-dismissed-over-turkish-arrested-men-03-30-2018/>

minister” and as a result fired the head of Kosovo’s intelligence unit, as well as the interior minister.¹⁷² The ordeal, which relatives of the individuals are calling a “kidnapping” demonstrates President Erdoğan’s far-reaching capabilities of tracking down any and all opposition figures, even if it means intervening in and bypassing sovereign laws on foreign territories.

Country: Albania

Region: Southeastern Europe

Threats: Destabilizing the Balkans, Influencing Politics, Financing religious groups through TİKA and Diyanet, Propagating Political Islam Ideology, Opportunistic Pivots towards the Balkans, Expansion of Turkey’s Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan’s Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World

Turkey has also been increasingly active in Albania, especially with its construction of religious monuments that closely resemble those from the Ottoman era. According to the Christian Science Monitor, Turkey’s latest project, Great Mosque of Tirana, is a “hulking new central mosque will be the biggest in the Balkans, with enough room for 5,000 worshipers. And it more closely resembles the great old mosques of Istanbul than any here in Albania, a country ruled by the Ottoman Empire for over four centuries.”¹⁷³ Costs surrounding the project remain staggering, reaching an estimated \$34 million.¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, there has been resentment across certain communities in the country. According to Albanian expert, Fatos Lubonja, not all Albanians are content with such massive project, including the many Muslims that make up 60% of the country’s population.¹⁷⁵ He says that the mosque has quickly become a symbol of the Muslims who regard themselves as a “discriminated majority” and “like pawns in Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s great game.”¹⁷⁶ Despite President Erdoğan’s expansionist goals, it is clear that even not all Muslims – including those in foreign countries -- are in agreement with his goals as many appear to feel religiously and politically imposed upon.

Country: North Macedonia

Region: Southeastern Europe

Threats: Destabilizing the Balkans, Abuse of NATO Membership for Political Gains, Intervening and Bypassing Sovereign laws, Influencing Politics, Financing religious groups through TİKA and Diyanet, Propagating Political Islam Ideology, Opportunistic Pivots towards the Balkans, Expansion of Turkey’s Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan’s Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World

Under President Erdoğan, Turkey has also been increasingly encroaching upon North Macedonia through soft power neo-Ottomanism efforts. In addition to religious expansionist efforts through the funding and building of TİKA-affiliated schools and madrasas, President Erdoğan has also firmly opposed Macedonia’s new name change. The country has changed its name from “Republic of Macedonia” to “Republic of North Macedonia,” which to many in the international community regard as a “significant diplomatic step in the Balkans since the end of the Bosnia war.”¹⁷⁷ CNN explains the significance stating, “The change is significant because Greece, a member of both NATO and the European Union, has been blocking Skopje’s membership to NATO and the beginning of accession talks with the EU until the name dispute is resolved. Under the deal, Greece will lift its objections paving the way for its neighbor’s integration.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² *Ibid*

¹⁷³ <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2018/0912/In-Albania-new-Turkish-mosque-stirs-old-resentments>

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/25/europe/macedonia-name-change-controversy-intl/index.html>

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*

Nevertheless, Turkey remains firmly opposed to such name change. Writing for Ekathimerini, Tom Ellis describes Turkey's steadfast objection, stating the following:

"The longer relations between Athens and Skopje remain on an uneasy footing, the more Turkey is able to increase its influence in the Balkans as part of a policy of that has clear geostrategic aims as well as a religious dimension. Erdoğan rarely misses an opportunity to express his support for FYROM's accession to NATO and has repeatedly accused Greece of acting unfairly in preventing this from happening until the name dispute is settled."

In a number of public speeches, the Turkish president has stated that Turkey and "Macedonia" share a bond of "brotherhood," that Ankara and Skopje have "no differences," that the Turks will never "forsake their Macedonian brothers" and that "Turkey is always by Macedonia's side." He has even claimed that Ankara will not allow a change in FYROM's name.¹⁷⁹

Ultimately, it becomes quite clear that such a move on Macedonia's part is deeply troubling to President Erdoğan's administration, especially as its foreign policies in the Balkan region remain based on a divide-and-conquer strategy.

Country: Russia

Region: Eastern Europe and North Asia

Threats: NATO Alliance, S-400 Air Defense System, TurkStream and the Nuclear Power Projects, Syrian Refugee Crisis, Opportunistic Pivots towards Asia, Expansion of Turkey's Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan's Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World

Over the years, Turkey and Russia have forged an increasingly close alliance based on security, trade, and more importantly, a drift away from the West. Such an alliance, according to Seth J. Frantzman writing for The Jerusalem Post, "will shape the Middle East in the years to come...[and] comes as Washington says Turkey's S-400 deal [with Russia] threatens relations with the US."¹⁸⁰ According to President Putin in 2018, trade between the two countries had reached nearly \$26 billion.¹⁸¹ Since the start of the Syrian crisis, both countries have had self-serving interests in the region, especially in regards to opposing US policy. As Russia demands for the US to retreat from Syria, Turkey is simultaneously outraged at the relationship between the US and the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Kurdish military fighting ISIS (both of which Turkey views as being linked to the Kurdistan Workers Party, aka PKK, which it regards as a terrorist group). Furthermore, in regards to Turkey's newly acquired S-400 air defense system from Russia, this demonstrates Turkey's drift away from global institutions like NATO, as well as Turkey and Russia's complex agreement and holds over Syria. Frantzman explains the significance of the S-400s in the following excerpt:

*"The S-400 deal must be understood in light of Turkey's operation in Afrin in northwest Syria. It began that operation in January 2018. It had first accused the US of training "terrorists" in eastern Syria. Wanting to isolate the US and SDF alliance, Turkey decided that it would strike at the People's Protection Units (YPG) in the Kurdish area of Afrin. The YPG is linked to the SDF and also the PKK, and Turkey wanted to show that while it couldn't strike at Manbij with US troops there, it could go into Afrin. It met with the Russians on the eve of the operation, and Russia used its influence with the Syrian regime to give Turkey approval. Russian air power in Syria would not stop Turkey from entering Syrian airspace. This was important, and the S-400 deal is part of the Russian-Turkish pact over Syria."*¹⁸²

The S-400 deal is now deeply entangled in the emerging Russia-Turkey alliance, and also a key part of linkage to the Idlib issue and Turkey's interests in eventually launching an operation against the SDF in Manbij and other areas – It will need Russian approval for that. If Turkey were to walk away from the S-400 deal due to US threats that the deal harms relations, it would mean Russia could close Syrian air space. Tur-

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.ekathimerini.com/225637/opinion/ekathimerini/comment/relations-with-fyrom-and-turkeys-influence>

¹⁸⁰ <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Russia-and-Turkey-are-now-deeply-entwined-on-trade-and-defense-586510>

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*

¹⁸² *Ibid*

key and Russia are now in such a deep bargain – from Idlib to the S-400 and TurkStream and the nuclear power plant – that they cannot go back. Russia understands this. Moscow understands the S-400 is a key leverage over Turkey. But Turkey also has leverage with its role in northern Syria. These two countries now need each other to such a degree they cannot end the embrace.”

This emerging tight alliance between Russia and Turkey results from each country’s opportunistic strategies and goals in the midst of larger regional conflicts and international tensions. As a result, such complexity makes it difficult for the larger conflicts to be resolved swiftly as there remains quite literally sets of conflicts of interests for both Turkey and Russia.

CASES FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

Country: Iran

Region: Middle East

Threats: Hegemonic Agenda in the Middle East, Violation of International Sanctions, Money Laundering, Illegal Oil Trade, Syrian Refugee Crisis, Opportunistic Pivots towards Asia, Expansion of Turkey’s Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan’s Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World

Turkey has also increasingly moved close to Iran. Even though both countries have hegemonic agendas in the region, a series of strategic interests have brought them closer together over the years. For instance, according to Mohammed Ayoob, senior fellow at the Center for Global Policy, both Turkey and Iran have growing territorial concerns surrounding the Kurdish secessionist movement, which is why “Iran didn’t oppose Turkish incursions into Syria to prevent the creation of a Kurdish enclave abutting its borders, even when the two countries supported opposite sides during the civil war.”¹⁸³

Additionally, both countries view Saudi Arabia’s growing reach in the region as worrisome. As a result, Turkey “finds Tehran a useful ally in tying down Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf, thus making it easier for Turkey to emerge as the preeminent Sunni power in the rest of the region.”¹⁸⁴

Country: Qatar

Region: West Asia and East Arabia

Threats: Dissatibilize the Middle East, Hegemonic Agendas in the Middle East, Supporting Terrorist Organizations, Expansion of Military Base in the region, Opportunistic Pivots towards the Middle East, Expansion of Turkey’s Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan’s Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World

Since the Gulf blockade in 2017, Turkey has grown increasingly close to Qatar as its regional neighbors have isolated it for supporting various terrorist organizations and being aligned with what Gulf countries deem as regional threats such as Iran. Both countries have strategic interests, some of which include religious ones. As Qatar remains a hub for the Muslim Brotherhood which Turkey is fond of, it is important to note that Qatar itself has invested billions of dollars in various Islamist groups across the region, just as Turkey has done in the Balkan region and Africa.¹⁸⁵ Also, according to Gulf expert, Giorgio Cafiero, “Turkey and Qatar signed an agreement in 2014, which Turkey’s parliament ratified the following year, to establish a joint military base in the Arab Gulf state.”¹⁸⁶ The military base which currently hosts 200 Turkish soldiers and has the “capacity to accommodate as many as 5000” contains strong symbolism.”¹⁸⁷ Cafiero describes the symbolism as follows:

¹⁸³ <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-regional-factors-bringing-turkey-and-iran-together/>

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁵ <https://the arabweekly.com/qatari-ties-iran-turkey-undermine-regional-security>

¹⁸⁶ <https://lobelog.com/will-qatars-crisis-become-turkeys-too/>

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*

“The deepening of Ankara-Doha relations is important to Turkey for several reasons. The emirate is interested in lucrative arms deals with Turkish defense firms, and Qatari investment stands to boost Turkey’s economy. Ankara seeks to expand its military presence across Arab and African soil, while the Turkish construction conglomerates that dominate Turkey’s economy are hoping to secure larger contracts in the Arab Gulf country. Finally, Qatar, which signed a deal with Ankara in late 2015 to supply liquefied natural gas, is important for Turkey’s energy requirements.”¹⁸⁸

President Erdoğan’s move towards Qatar comes at a convenient time as both Qatar and Turkey seek to challenge another regional power that is Saudi Arabia, as well as Turkey’s increasingly tense relations with Western countries. Hence, one must recognize that Turkey’s engagement with Qatar is not purely based on friendly bilateral relations but instead consist of deeper and more opportunistic goals that seek to advance either country’s dominance and strategic alliances across the region.

CASES FROM SOUTH ASIA

Country: Pakistan

Region: Southern Asia

Threats: Destabilizing the South Asia, Propagation of Political Islamic Ideology, Supporting Terrorist Organizations, Expansion of Military Relations in the region, Opportunistic Pivots towards Asia, Expansion of Turkey’s Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan’s Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World

Another country which President Erdoğan’s expansion of political Islamic ideology has reached is Pakistan. According to The New York Times back in 2008, the Hizmet-affiliated schools in Pakistan are offering a “gentler version” of Islam, compared to the radical fundamentalist version prevalent across the country.¹⁸⁹ Since November 2016, upon request by Turkey, the government of Pakistan stepped up its actions against the high quality Hizmet-affiliated schools, forcing most of Turkish teachers working for PakTurk International Schools and Colleges, school managements and their family members (approximately 450 individuals including women and children), to leave the country. The schools were thereafter illegally transferred to the Maarif Foundation, in contravention of the Constitution of Pakistan.

Country: India

Region: South-Central Asia

Threats: Destabilizing the South Asia, Propagation of Political Islamic Ideology, Polarizing and Radicalizing Indian Muslim Communities, Expansion of Military Relations in the region, Opportunistic Pivots towards Asia, Expansion of Turkey’s Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan’s Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World

President Erdoğan’s administration has been extending its reach into India, especially towards the Indian Muslim communities, another example of President Erdoğan’s goals to establish its caliphate. This comes at a highly opportunistic time, especially as India’s “Hindu nationalist footprints strengthens, [so] its Muslims may seek a powerful defender abroad.”¹⁹⁰

It is important to note that India is home to the third largest Muslim population in the world, so such investment is no coincidence. According to Abhinav Pandya writing for Haaretz, the South Asia Strategic Research Center (a think tank founded by Ali Sahin, a Turkish Islamist and deputy minister for European affairs in President Erdoğan’s administration) serves as a crafty vehicle to spread President Erdoğan’s

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/04/world/asia/04islam.html>

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/.premium-is-turkey-s-erdogan-quietly-courting-indian-muslims-to-crown-him-caliph-1.6786101>

vision of political Islam and his own reputation. Pandya writes, “GASAM organizes conferences to which it invites Muslim clerics, politicians and community leaders from South Asia, to export AKP’s Islamist ideology to Indian Muslims...”¹⁹¹ He also adds, “The links between Erdoğan’s Islamist coterie and Indian clerics are long-standing but also deepening: a number of controversial Turkish Islamist clerics are regular visitors to India; one of them, Sardar Demirel, who was educated in Pakistan, visited Kolkata in 2016 to participate in a protest march against PM Modi’s Uniform Civil Code.”¹⁹²

Additionally, just as Turkey has done so in the Balkan region and Africa, it funds NGOs for outreach across Indian Muslim communities, student exchange programs, as well as madrasas and mosques, all to “ensure an equation between Muslim leadership and the personality of Erdoğan”¹⁹³

Such influence may come with hefty costs, especially as India already is a highly politically and religiously polarized nation. President Erdoğan administration’s efforts in the country will likely further polarize the various religious communities with the possibility of radicalizing them against each other, all in efforts to cement Turkey’s own expansionist goals (as demonstrated in other countries).

Country: Afghanistan

Region: South Asia and Central Asia

Threats: Destabilizing the South Asia, Propagation of Political Islamic Ideology, Supporting Terrorist Organizations, Expansion of Military Relations in the region, Opportunistic Pivots towards Asia, Expansion of Turkey’s Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan’s Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World, Arbitrary Deprivation of property and Illegal Transfer of Hizmet-affiliated Schools to Maarif Foundation, Jeopardizing national and international security and stability worldwide, Abductions, arbitrary detention, clandestine and illegal transfers.

Over the years, Turkey has also taken advantage of Afghanistan, especially as it remains riddled in conflicts and societal dysfunction. Overall, the scale of Turkey’s involvement in Afghanistan once again harks back to its expansionist aims and fits conveniently into President Erdoğan’s efforts at establishing himself and Turkey as a regional superpower. Writing for the Middle East Institute, Vinay Kaura explains Turkey’s expanding role, stating the following:

*“Turkey keeps a close watch on Afghan political developments, establishing close relations with a number of influential political figures and groups. Turkey is a long-standing patron of Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, who is currently Afghanistan’s vice president. Estranged from Ghani due to a criminal trial at home, Dostum’s recent controversial ‘exile’ or ‘political asylum’ in Turkey was believed to be part of the bargain to dissolve Afghan schools affiliated with the exiled Turkish cleric, Fethullah Gülen.”*¹⁹⁴

Additionally, as Afghanistan remains engaged in various peace talks between its government, Taliban forces, and Pakistan, Turkey has made a significant effort to position itself as a chief mediator. Speaking to Deutsche Welle, Faiz Mohammad Zaland, a Kabul-based lecturer describes Turkey’s ambitions as follows:

*“NATO and the Middle Eastern Muslim countries have interest in Afghanistan’s future and President Erdoğan is aiming to use it in his favor. “According to the Kabul-based expert, Erdoğan believes that a Turkey-brokered peace deal in Afghanistan would elevate his position in NATO and also the Muslim world. “The Turkish president wants NATO members to acknowledge that there cannot be any success in Afghanistan without Ankara’s help,” underlined Zaland, adding that Turkey could gain political leverage over its European allies by using its influence in Afghanistan to achieve NATO’s goals in the war-torn country.”*¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*

¹⁹² *Ibid*

¹⁹³ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁴ <https://www.mei.edu/publications/turkey-sees-expanding-role-afghanistan>

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.dw.com/en/is-turkeys-erdogan-seeking-a-leading-role-in-afghanistan/a-39575830>

CASES FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA

Country: Malaysia

Region: Southeast Asia

Threats: Destabilizing the Southeast Asia, Supporting Autocratic Leaders, Corruption and Money Laundering, Intervening and Bypassing Sovereign laws, Influencing Politics, Illegal Abductions and Operations, Propagation of Political Islamic Ideology, Opportunistic Pivots towards Asia, Expansion of Turkey's Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan's Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World, Jeopardizing national and international security and stability worldwide, Abductions, arbitrary detention, clandestine and illegal transfers.

President Erdoğan administration's treatment of the public and particularly opposition groups after the 2016 coup appear to have influenced Malaysia's Prime Minister, Najib Razak's own handling of internal affairs surrounding minority and opposition groups when it comes to voting. According to Joshua Kulantzick writing for The Washington Post in a piece titled, "Is Malaysia about to follow the path of Erdoğan's Turkey," "even before the election, Najib also has started to build up his cult of personality, purring other powerful people in the ruling coalition and surrounding himself with sycophants."¹⁹⁶ Other parallels Kulantzick draws between Prime Minister Najib and President Erdoğan is the distribution of "large government handouts to civil servants and other pro-government groups, while increasingly portraying the budget decisions as personal gifts from Najib – a strategy already used by elected autocrats such as...Erdoğan to make budgets look like personal patronage."¹⁹⁷

The system President Erdoğan's administration has set up, both prior and after the coup, serves as a dangerous model for other autocrats around the world as they seek to centralize their own powers while silencing any and all opposition groups. At this point, it is interesting to note that Prime Minister Najib's administration has also increased persecution of President Erdoğan critics in Malaysia, according to the Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF). SCF writes the following:

"A fifth case of arbitrary detention of a Turkish national by Malaysian authorities as part of escalating witch-hunt persecution of critics abroad by Turkey's government has been exposed. İsmet Özçelik (58), a Turkish academic who has been in Malaysia and waiting for the resettlement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was detained by the police on May 4, 2017. His detention appears to have been instigated upon a request by Turkish government that has jailed almost 50,000 people in the last eight months alone on trumped-up charges to crack down on opponents and dissidents of Erdoğan's authoritarian regime.

Turkey's use of its security and intelligence agencies to conduct abductions and arrests in foreign jurisdictions may also be considered as a crime against humanity under the UN system...

*Actions in Malaysia may run contrary to legal principles such as non-interference and arbitrary arrest and detention, violating not only Turkish laws but the host nation's laws in the process as well. Even if the rights violation took place in Malaysia, Turkey may be liable for the ill-treatment of kidnapped Turkish nationals that were prohibited by the Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)."*¹⁹⁸

Ultimately, as President Erdoğan's leadership become increasingly autocratic, it becomes highly unsettling for the international community to witness similar ways of rule become adopted and modeled by other autocrats. Additionally, arrests of Turkish nationals on foreign soil once again demonstrates Turkey's far-reaching capabilities of silencing dissidents worldwide, even if it may require the avoidance of international and sovereign law at times.

¹⁹⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2018/05/05/is-malaysia-about-to-follow-the-path-of-erdogans-turkey/?utm_term=.e034ac243411

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁸ <https://stockholmcf.org/fifth-turkish-national-detained-in-malaysia-as-najib-razak-ramps-up-persecution-of-erdogan-critics/>

Country: Myanmar

Region: Southeast Asia

Threats: Destabilizing the Southeast Asia, Intervening and Bypassing Sovereign laws, Influencing Politics, Illegal Abductions and Operations, Propagation of Political Islamic Ideology, Misuse of Humanitarian Aid and Refugees, Opportunistic Pivots towards Asia, Expansion of Turkey's Soft Power, Instrumentalities of Erdoğan's Power Abroad (Maarif Foundation, TİKA, Diyanet), Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World, Jeopardizing national and international security and stability worldwide, Abductions, arbitrary detention, clandestine and illegal transfers.

Since the escalation in the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar, Turkey has effectively exploited the conflict via humanitarian efforts that in turn elevate its own ambitions as positioning itself as the Muslim caliphate in the region. Since the crisis, President Erdoğan has essentially appointed himself as the "international voice of the Rohingya Muslims," offering tons of humanitarian and medical aid and even having his wife, Emine Erdoğan, visit the refugee camps in Bangladesh.¹⁹⁹ Such efforts have been described by Bilkent University academics, Pinar Bilgen and Ali Bilgic as "civilizational geopolitics, an understanding of culture and civilization as preordained determinants of international behavior."²⁰⁰ As such, this new doctrine "aims at placing Turkey at the core of geopolitical issues between the West and the rest of Asia, justifying this global engagement by its political heritage – mainly based on its Central Asian and Ottoman history."²⁰¹

Given President Erdoğan's track record of ambitiously supporting and funding Muslim projects worldwide to exert his own visions of political Islam and dominance, it comes as no surprise that his highly vocal efforts of the Rohingya crisis remains "entirely self-serving," as The Conversation describes.²⁰² This is particularly the case as President Erdoğan seeks to expand his own Muslim support base back home as he champions himself as defender of Muslim rights worldwide. Nevertheless, these efforts raise questions, especially in the face of such horrific suffering of the Rohingya Muslims. To what extent and just for how long will President Erdoğan remain involved in the crisis and alleviate the suffering? Will such involvement and hefty spending on humanitarian aid ultimately distract the international community from the own sets of human rights violations occurring on Turkish soil, often at the orders of President Erdoğan's own officials? These questions remain to be answered but are worth considering, especially as Turkey faces increasing international criticism over its own erosion of rights and democracy back home.

CASES FROM SOUTH AMERICA

Country: Venezuela

Region: Southern America

Threats: Supporting Autocratic Leaders, Corruption and Money Laundering, Illegal Gold Trade, Violation of International Sanctions, Opportunistic Pivots towards Southern America, Expansion of Turkey's Soft Power, Jeopardizing national and international security and stability worldwide.

Turkey has also begun to develop an unusually close relationship with controversial Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. According to a Bloomberg report from February 2019, two months after the two presidents met, a "mysterious company called Sardes sprang into existence. The firm started business with a bang in January of 2018, when it imported about \$41 million worth of gold from Venezuela, the first such transaction between the two countries in records that go back 50 years. The next month its volume more than doubled, with Sardes transporting almost \$100 million worth to Turkey."²⁰³ Then,

¹⁹⁹ <https://theconversation.com/turkey-the-rohingya-crisis-and-erdogans-ambitions-to-be-a-global-muslim-leader-83854>

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*

²⁰¹ *Ibid*

²⁰² *Ibid*

²⁰³ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-08/mysterious-turkish-firm-helped-maduro-move-900-million-in-gold>

in November of the same year, when President Trump issued an executive order to sanction Venezuelan gold, “Sardes had shuttled \$900 million of the precious metal out of the country²⁰⁴” According to Bloomberg, it is not the first time that “Turkey has positioned itself as a work-around for countries facing U.S. sanctions, potentially undermining Washington’s efforts to isolate governments it considers hostile or corrupt.”²⁰⁵ This should come as no surprise, given that Turkey has been increasingly close to other authoritarian regimes such as Iran, China, and Russia, mostly for opportunistic purposes but also as part of its increasing drift away from the West.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*

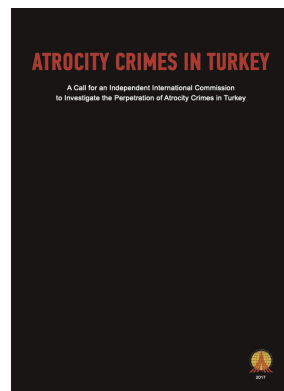
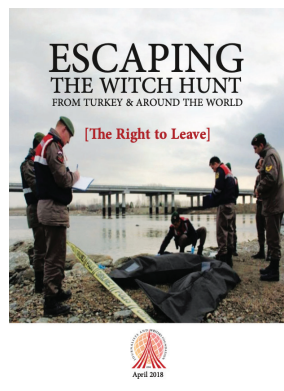
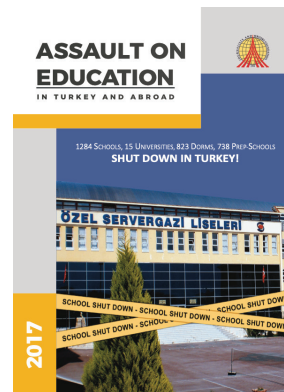
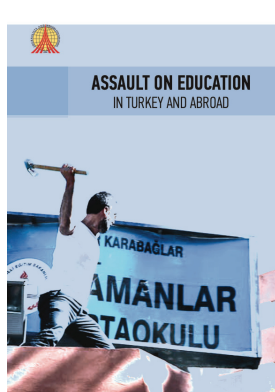
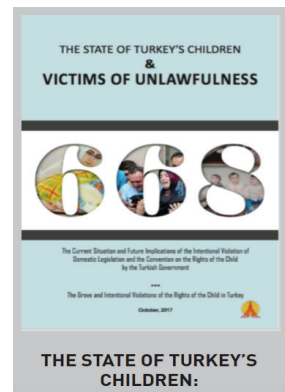
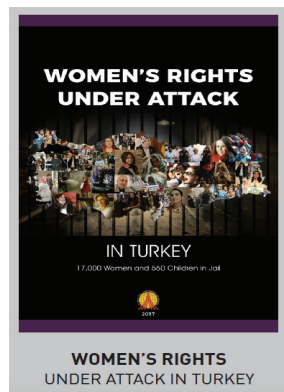
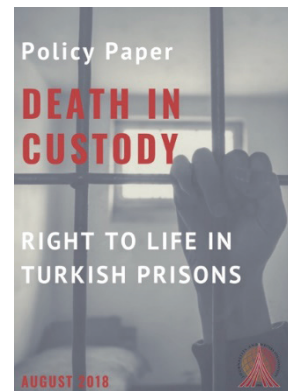
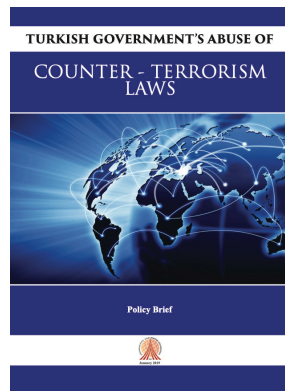
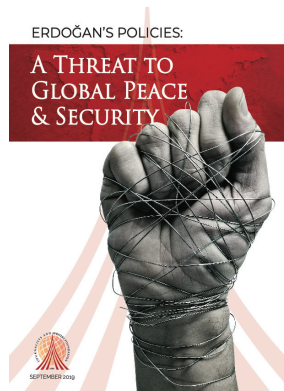
²⁰⁵ *Ibid*

THREATS TO GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY	AFRICA				
	<i>Turkey</i>	<i>Global</i>	<i>Somalia</i>	<i>Kenya</i>	<i>Nigeria</i>
Relations with Extremist and Terrorist Groups: ISIS, Al Shabab, Boko Haram, etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accusations on the Oil Trade	✓				
Exploitation of Regional Refugee Crisis	✓	✓	✓		
Alliance with Autocratic Regimes	✓	✓			
Propagation of Political Islam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Expansion of Turkey's Soft Power in the World	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Instrumentalities of Erdoğan's Power Abroad	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maarif Foundation for the implementation of political Islamic agenda	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) for espionage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB)	✓	✓	✓		
Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Council (TİKA) for political pressure	✓	✓			
Propagating Erdoğan as the Caliph of Islam and Leader of the Islamic World	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arbitrary Deprivation of property and Illegal Transfer of Hizmet-affiliated Schools to Maarif	✓	✓	✓		
Jeopardizing national and international security and stability worldwide	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increased Tensions with Western States and International Organizations	✓	✓			
Anti-Western, Anti-American, Anti-European Union, Anti-Semitic Discourse	✓	✓			
Abuse of NATO and INTERPOL Systems	✓	✓	✓		
Abuse of the United Nations System; i.e. ECOSOC, Committees	✓	✓			
Abuse of Counter-terrorism Laws, Humanitarian and Human Rights Laws	✓	✓			
Opportunistic Pivots towards Asia, Africa, Europe	✓	✓			
Abductions, arbitrary detention, clandestine and illegal transfers	✓	✓	✓		
Violation of International Sanctions against Iran, Sudan, Venezuela	✓	✓			

	BALKANS & RUSSIA					MIDDLE EAST		SOUTH ASIA			SOUTHEAST ASIA		AMERICA
<i>Sudan</i>	<i>Serbia</i>	<i>Kosovo</i>	<i>Albania</i>	<i>North Macedonia</i>	<i>Russia</i>	<i>Iran</i>	<i>Qatar</i>	<i>Pakistan</i>	<i>India</i>	<i>Afghanistan</i>	<i>Malaysia</i>	<i>Myanmar</i>	<i>Venezuela</i>
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