Introduction

Turkey’s strategic geopolitical positioning as a bridge between Europe, the Middle East, the Balkans, the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and South Caucasus – and its religious, cultural, and historical affiliations with countries in its immediate neighborhood – make it an indispensable actor in European and transatlantic security. In the early 1950s, Turkey was so eager to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) that it fought in the Korean War and incurred heavy casualties. Subsequently, it has traditionally been well embedded in Western security infrastructures. It has been a key and strategic NATO member since 1952 and a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) since 1973. Despite a few periods of unease, it was considered a fairly reliable Western ally for over half a century. Even in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, Turkey continued its alliance commitments. Turkey was among the first countries to condemn the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States and to deploy troops to Afghanistan.

Those days are long gone. Turkey has been increasingly adopting a number of proactive, independent, and anti-Western foreign policies since 2010. Scarcely a day passes without a report or a headline on the front page of leading newspapers questioning Turkey’s reliability as a Western ally. Turkey’s relations with Russia, China, and Iran are improving significantly through a foreign policy doctrine, dubbed “earning more friends than enemies” (Hürriyet Daily News May 25, 2016). In addition to the rekindling of its relations with Russia and Iran, Turkey’s relationship with the European Union (EU), NATO, and the USA especially came to a critical juncture in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016. The Turkish government frequently portrays the failed...
coup attempt as a conspiracy of Western (more particularly US) intervention in Turkish politics. Conspiratorial thinking concerning the motivations of the USA, the EU, and NATO seem to dominate the current Turkish public debate about the West, with seven out of ten Turks holding that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was behind the coup attempt (Cook 2018).

Since the failed coup attempt, Turkey rarely sends Turkish military officers to NATO allies for training purposes. In May 2017, a top advisor to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan threatened that Turkish rockets may target the US forces in northern Syria if their collaboration with the Kurdish fighters along the Turkish border continues (McLeary 2017). In response to a US commander in Syria’s remarks to the New York Times, he said, “[T]hose who say, ‘If you hit us, we’ll hit back hard,’ have never in their lives gotten an Ottoman slap” (quoted in Harvey 2018). Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu blatantly criticized the United States for supporting the People’s Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, YPG) in a New York Times op-ed by noting, “A NATO ally arming a terrorist organization that is attacking another NATO ally is a fundamental breach of everything that NATO stands for” (Çavuşoğlu 2018). In the summer of 2018, many Turkish TV programs were questioning whether Turkey should leave NATO. Exacerbating the situation, in the first quarter of 2019, Turkey was on its way to finalizing the purchase of S-400 missiles from the archenemy of the alliance, Russia, with the first delivery of the missiles scheduled for July 2019.

What had been completely inconceivable up until only a few years ago has indeed become perplexingly observable in Turkish foreign policy. Accordingly, the puzzle this book seeks to explain is: how did we get there, and why does Turkey increasingly go its own way within the Western alliance and grow further apart from its traditional Western allies? It seeks to assess the motives and dynamics behind the drastic shift in Turkish foreign policy behavior toward the West, particularly the EU, NATO, and the US, and explores the reasons behind Turkey’s strategic estrangement, especially from 2010 to the first half of 2019. It further asks why states select the tools they use within an alliance. Using the existing theories of intra-alliance opposition such as soft balancing as a springboard, this book develops an analytical framework of the politics of intra-alliance opposition and provides a comprehensive and nuanced account of how and why Turkish foreign policy has changed within the transatlantic alliance. It ends with an exploration of three alternative futures for Turkey’s relations with the West.
Introduction

The international system is experiencing geopolitical and economic power shifts, requiring international relations (IR) scholars and practitioners to acquire a better understanding of the foreign policy motivations of regional powers. Regional powers like Turkey are not likely to give up their claim to a role in global governance and hence they seek to prove that they are pivotal in their regions by opposing their regional rivals (Paul 2016). In the words of a former member of the Turkish Parliament from the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), Turkish President “Erdogan is not at peace with the way the world is governed” (Kınıkçıoğlu 2014). Indicative of Turkey’s global ambitions, Erdogan is quoted as saying, “If you have a claim to become a big state, you need to reach every corner of the world” (quoted in World Bulletin March 8, 2013). Turkish policymakers regard Turkey as a “natural and ascending regional power in the Balkans, Caucasus, and the Middle East” (Davutoğlu 2001) and see a “relative decline” of the West in the post–Cold War international system (Davutoğlu, quoted in Park 2015, p. 596). Ahmet Davutoğlu, the architect of Turkish foreign policy in the 2000s and the former prime minister of Turkey, frequently called for both “strategic pragmatism,” based on prioritizing Turkey’s national interests, and “the revival of the conventional balance of power politics,” strategically linking political and economic processes of negotiation and competition with the actors in the West (Davutoğlu 1994, p. 125).

The surge in interest in Turkey is palpable in both policymaking and academic circles. Increasingly, the study of Turkish foreign policy must confront the question of the nature of the relationship between Turkey and the West. Against the background of heightened urgency for better transatlantic security dialogue, Turkey’s increased self-confidence in its foreign policy, and its turbulent relations with the EU, NATO, and the United States, the need for scholarly analyses of Turkish foreign policy has become more evident. The harsh measures taken by the Turkish government against dissidents in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, increasingly hostile rhetoric Turkish authorities use against the West, Turkey’s rapprochement with Russia and Iran, the hostage crisis, the subsequent tariff wars in summer 2018, and the suspension of Turkey from the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Program in March 2019 further illustrate the timeliness and value of the current analysis, as Turkey’s future in the Western alliance increasingly becomes a topic of serious concern in Europe and the United States. The findings of this research have wide-ranging and significant policy implications for the transatlantic alliance and Middle Eastern and European security and contribute to the theoretical debate in IR circles about intra-alliance conflict/opposition.
This chapter places Turkey’s relations with the West in a historical perspective. Subsequently, it discusses the main research questions explored throughout the manuscript and then explains the research methodology used in addressing these questions. It concludes by discussing the outline of the book.

A TRANSITIONING TURKEY IN A CHANGING ALLIANCE: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Turkey is frequently characterized as a country in transition, both in its domestic politics and in its foreign policy (Albright et al. 2012, Lesser 2017, Cook 2018, Rubin 2018). The collapse of the Soviet Union (SU) and the end of the Cold War “removed the main rationale behind the US–Turkish security partnership and reduced Ankara’s dependence on Washington” (Larrabee 2011, p. 2). Many policymakers interviewed acknowledge that Turkey wants to shape developments in its neighborhood more proactively. Turkish leaders and society resent as a national humiliation the past decades of Western paternalism aimed at domestic transformation. The Turkish government has been using an increasingly belligerent language toward the West and adopting a confrontational posture and actions against the EU, NATO, and the United States, especially since the failed coup attempt. Consequently, many observers draw attention to Turkey’s strategic estrangement from the West and question whether its positions on key issues are in fact inimical to Western goals (Lesser 2017, Cook 2018, Rubin 2018). Nevertheless, Turkey’s relations with the West have not always been this tumultuous.

Turkey–EU Relations

Turkey has been aspiring to become a part of the European integration process for more than half a century. It applied for associate membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959 and signed the Ankara Agreement with the EEC in 1963, aiming to bring Turkey into the Customs Union. Turkey applied for full EEC membership in 1987 and signed the Customs Union Agreement in 1995. The Customs Union Agreement came into force in January 1996, providing further trade integration with the EU without full membership. In 1992, Turkey became an Associate Member of the Western European Union (WEU), an organization that has over time become the military wing of the EU.
Turkey did not become an official candidate for the EU until the Helsinki Summit in December 1999. On October 3, 2005, accession negotiations with the EU were opened. Turkey’s EU accession negotiations have reached a stalemate over the past few years. In the EU accession negotiations process, sixteen chapters (4 – Free Movement of Capital; 6 – Company Law; 7 – Intellectual Property Law; 10 – Information Society and Media; 12 – Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy; 16 – Taxation; 17 – Economic and Monetary Policy; 18 – Statistics; 20 – Enterprise and Industrial Policy; 21 – Trans-European Networks; 22 – Regional Policy; 25 – Science and Research; 27 – Environment; 28 – Consumer and Health Protection; 32 – Financial Control; 33 – Financial and Budgetary Provisions) have been opened to negotiations, and only one of them (Chapter 25 – Science and Research) has been provisionally closed since 2005 (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019a).

Despite its strong aspiration to become a full member, Turkey has had a bumpy relationship with the EU. It has always been considered an outsider, as many in the EU questioned Turkey’s credentials as a European country. Especially since 2007, the reform process experienced a significant stalemate. Besides its faltering track record on human rights and rule of law, one of the main reasons behind the stalemate in its accession negotiations process has been its failure to ratify and implement the 2004 Ankara Protocol (the Additional Protocol) and extend the Customs Union Agreement to the Republic of Cyprus.1 Turkey declares that unless the Republic of Cyprus opens the ports and airports in the north, allows direct trade with the north, and removes its economic isolation of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus,” Turkish airports and ports would remain inaccessible to vessels and planes from Cyprus.2 Because all EU member states are potential veto players on the issue of Turkish accession, Turkey finds the implementation of the Additional Protocol to be a risky move. This, in turn, caused the European Council to veto opening up of eight key accession negotiation chapters (1 – Free Movement of Goods; 3 – Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide...

1 Turkey signed the Protocol in July 2005 but underlined that the signature of the Protocol does not mean the diplomatic recognition of the Republic of Cyprus.
2 Interview with a European Union official in Nicosia, July 20, 2011; Interview with a Member of Turkish Parliament from AKP, Ankara, July 13, 2011; Interview with a Turkish diplomat in Ankara, July 18, 2011; Interview with an International NGO official, Istanbul, July 11, 2011; Interview with a former Minister of the Republic of Cyprus, in Nicosia, July 20, 2011; Interview with a Greek Cypriot diplomat, Nicosia, July 21, 2011.
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Services; 9 – Financial Services; 11 – Agriculture and Rural Development; 13 – Fisheries; 14 Transport Policy; 29 – Customs Union; 30 – External Relations) since December 2006. The European Council further declared that no chapter would be closed until Turkey applies the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement to the Republic of Cyprus. In 2007, five chapters (one of which intersects with the eight chapters blocked by the EU) were blocked by a French veto (Barysch 2010). The Republic of Cyprus also unilaterally vetoes six chapters.

The political difficulties Turkey encountered in its EU accession negotiations process confirmed the existence of European prejudice against Turkey in the minds of Turkish policymakers. Turkish authorities have frequently criticized the discriminatory political treatment of Turkey by the EU and expressed their frustration that the political obstacles “undermine the credibility of the EU” (Davutoğlu 2010, pp. 14–15). Since its EU accession was considered an open-ended rather than an automatic or guaranteed process, Turkey had approached its EU accession negotiations with skepticism (Üğur 2010). Amidst a rise in anti-Turkish rhetoric in Germany and France, whose leaders called for a privileged partnership with Turkey in 2009, the AKP government “lost interest in Europe, beginning instead to focus on consolidating its power” (Cornell et al. 2012, p. 21). As Nathalie Tocci (2010, p. 6) argues, due to EU “placing the bar [for Turkish accession] too high,” Turkey was “pushed away” from its European dream. Turks predominantly feel that the EU treats Turkey differently, leading to increasing anti-European sentiments (Cornell et al. 2012). Years of frustration with the EU accession process have caused Euroskepticism among Turkish security elites as well as the public (Yılmaz 2011). The Gezi Park protests in 2013 led to the adoption of an accusatory and hostile rhetoric against the EU, through which the Turkish government hoped to boost its domestic electoral support.

The EU–Turkey deal on refugees, i.e. the EU–Turkey Joint Action Plan, activated on November 29, 2015, and the EU–Turkey Statement, announced on March 18, 2016, brought a limited momentum to Turkey–EU relations. Turkish policymakers frequently voice their cynicism about the renewed recognition of Turkey’s significance by the European leaders following the refugee crisis (Bozkır 2016). However, the domestic developments in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, have drastically changed the nature of Turkey–EU

3 In February 2013, France declared the removal of its blockage of Chapter 22. As such, in 2019, technically seventeen chapters were off limits in Turkey–EU accession negotiations.
relations. The Turkey–EU relationship has taken a sharp turn for the worse. Turkish authorities regularly expressed their frustration with the lack of solidarity from the EU in response to the coup attempt. Bozkır (2016), the former Turkish minister of EU Affairs, characterized Turkey’s disappointment as “a broken heart story,” adding that Europe’s reaction to the failed coup broke the resilience of Turkey “to continue this relationship.”

On November 24, 2016, the European Parliament overwhelmingly voted to advise the EU to initiate a temporary freeze on the ongoing accession negotiations with Turkey and committed to reviewing its position once the state of emergency in Turkey was lifted (European Parliament 2019). In response, Turkish leaders have threatened to end the EU–Turkey refugee deal. Following the failed coup attempt in Turkey, there are serious concerns about the reintroduction of the death penalty. EU leaders consistently note that the reinstatement of the death penalty would be a “deal-breaker” for the EU accession process (Mogherini 2016).

To make things more complicated, the referendum campaign in 2017 for the proposed constitutional amendments started a feud or a war of words between Turkey and some members of the EU, such as the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. While the Dutch government banned public speeches by Turkish officials, Germany allowed local officials to ban such visits, and Denmark asked Turkish officials to delay their visits on the referendum campaign among the Turkish citizens living in Europe. Turkish officials have responded with rhetoric, posturing, and diplomatic arm wrestling. In the fallout of the crisis, Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmuş asserted that the “biggest damage” would be to Europe and not to Turkey (quoted in Peterson and Miller Llana 2017). Following the diplomatic clashes with the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany, Erdoğan renewed his threats in March 2017 that he would allow the Syrian refugees back into Europe.

During his victory speech in the aftermath of the constitutional referendum in April 2017, Erdoğan reiterated the threat that he might call for a popular referendum on Turkey’s EU candidacy and reinstate the death penalty. With the approval of the proposed constitutional changes in the April 2017 referendum, for all practical purposes the EU–Turkey accession negotiations came to an end due to the consolidation of presidential power under Turkey’s new political system. Many EU leaders called for the suspension of Turkey’s accession talks. The EU’s Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn indicated that “the current situation [of
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Turkey’s EU accession process] is not sustainable” and noted that he would seek a mandate from EU foreign ministers to explore new arrangements to replace the accession process (Beesley 2017). On March 13, 2017, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn concurred with a report published by the Venice Commission, an advisory body to the Council of Europe on constitutional law, that the transition from a parliamentary to a presidential system would further weaken the democratic checks and balances in Turkey, erode judicial independence and oversight of the executive, and give the new president too much power over the legislative branch (Council of Europe 2017). Mogherini and Hahn further announced that the fact that the referendum was held while Turkey was still under the emergency law (declared due to the failed coup on July 15, 2016) made it even more problematic (European Commission 2017c).

In July 2017, the European Parliament called on the EU to formally suspend the accession negotiations with Turkey without delay in case of the implementation of the constitutional reform package. On June 26, 2018, the European Council acknowledged that “Turkey has been moving further away from the European Union” and declared that “Turkey’s accession negotiations have therefore effectively come to a standstill and no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing and no further work towards the modernization of the EU-Turkey Customs Union is foreseen” (European Council 2018). On March 13, 2019, the European Parliament voted to recommend the European Commission and the Council of the EU to formally suspend the accession negotiations with Turkey (European Parliament 2019). The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs dismissed the European Parliament’s 2019 vote as “one-sided” and “baseless” (Deutsche Welle March 13, 2019).

Turkey has been disillusioned with the EU over the lack of progress in its EU accession negotiations, the visa liberalization talks, the Customs Union Agreement modernization talks, and the EU’s reaction to both the government’s post-coup purges of academics, bureaucrats, military officers, and Kurdish politicians and the outcome of the constitutional change referendum. Furthermore, with Brexit, Turkey is expected to lose one of the most fervent supporters of its EU membership. All in all, Turkey’s EU candidacy is now over in all but name.

Despite these fundamental problems, Turkey and the EU still exchange ideas on important issue areas, such as counterterrorism, bilateral trade, and diplomatic relations. To illustrate, following a four-year break, the 54th Turkey–EU Association Council Meeting was held on March 15,
The two sides confirmed the strategic importance of Turkey for the EU on important issues, such as migration, counterterrorism, energy, transport, the economy, and trade (European Council 2019). Following this historical overview of Turkey’s relations with the EU is a synopsis of the history of its relations with NATO and the United States.

**Turkey–USA–NATO Relations**

Turkey’s official diplomatic relations with the United States go all the way back to 1927. The relationship first gained momentum through the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement in July 1947, which implemented the Truman Doctrine (US Department of State 2017). Turkey participated in the Korean War with three brigades between 1950 and 1953. Five years after the Truman Doctrine, Turkey joined NATO, and it has played a significant role against Soviet expansionism throughout the Cold War. During this time period, Turkish and US interests in the Middle East generally converged (Altunışık 2013). However, challenging the “nostalgically imagined” nature of Turkey–USA relations during the Cold War, Burwell (2008, p. 4) notes:

That relationship was based primarily on narrow geopolitical considerations, specifically, Turkey’s value as a strategically located piece of real estate that offered an opportunity for the United States and its allies to position themselves close to Russia’s southern flank. The US–Turkish discussion was often about the use of airbases or stationing of military forces, while the relationship was largely managed by the Turkish defense forces and the US Department of Defense.

Former Turkish Ambassador to the United States Faruk Loğoğlu (2008, p. 31) reminds us that, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, “the Turks were never consulted about the deal” that dismantled the US missiles on Turkish soil and that in 1964, in response to Turkey’s threats to intervene in Cyprus to help Turkish Cypriots, US President Johnson sent the infamous Johnson Letter, warning the Turkish prime minister that “if the Soviet Union attacked Turkey to protect the Greek Cypriots, the United States and NATO allies might not – contrary to their obligations under the NATO Treaty – come to Turkey’s defense.” The then Turkish Prime Minister İsmet İnönü made it public that the cancellation of the planned landing was due to opposition from the United States.

This marked a low point in Turkey’s relations with the USA and NATO. Subsequently, Turkish leaders reevaluated the country’s foreign
policy and determined that Turkey’s pro-Western alignment caused isolation in a rapidly changing international system (Bölükbaşı 1988, Sakkas and Zhukova 2013). Turkey accordingly developed a close relationship with the SU, in order to force the USA to reconsider its stance on the Cyprus issue and to win Soviet support for its position on Cyprus. By the end of the 1960s, Turkey became a top recipient of Soviet economic assistance among the Third World countries (Bölükbaşı 1988). This, in turn, led to suspicions about Turkey’s loyalties.

In the summer of 1974, Turkey militarily intervened in Cyprus. While the then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, President Ford, and the US military were reluctant to antagonize Turkey, the US Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey. This, according to many accounts, contributed to the “loss of mutual confidence” between Turkey and the United States (Loğoğlu 2008, p. 31). The Carter Administration determined that the embargo took a serious toll on Turkey’s defense posture and had serious ramifications for NATO’s viability. As such, the administration successfully lobbied for the US Congress to overturn it in the summer of 1978 (Zierler 2014).

During the 1980s, relations between the USA and Turkey gradually improved. The two signed the Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement on March 29, 1980, which restored the level of activity that the USA had prior to the arms embargo (US General Accounting Office 1982). The military coup in September 1980 helped with the recovery of bilateral relations (Çağaptay 2015). The two countries continued their cooperation to contain communism. The policies of Prime Minister Turgut Özal further contributed to the creation of a stronger strategic partnership. Accordingly, from 1987 to 1992, the USA provided historically unprecedented amounts of military assistance to Turkey (Zanotti 2011).

Following the end of the Cold War, Turkey’s strategic importance for the USA and NATO diminished somewhat, at least initially. The Gulf War presented the first challenge to USA–Turkey relations in the 1990s (Kramer 2000, Larrabee and Lesser 2003, Hale 2013, Altunışık 2013). Turkey was concerned about the US policy of promoting Kurdish control of northern Iraq, causing anti-American sentiments and mistrust toward the USA (Altunışık 2013). Nevertheless, Turkey was the first country to support the imposition of UN economic sanctions against Iraq.

The September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States underscored the significance of Turkey in combating terrorism. With the Greater