

# **PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE U.S.-TURKEY RELATIONSHIP**

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## **HEARING**

BEFORE THE

### **COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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## **PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE U.S.-TURKEY RELATIONSHIP**

**SEPTEMBER 6, 2017**

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:30 a.m. in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Corker [presiding], Risch, Gardner, Young, Cardin, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, Markey, and Merkley.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE**

The CHAIRMAN. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

We thank our witnesses for being here.

Since serving beside the United States in the Korean War and then joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1952, Turkey has proven itself to be a strong ally and important partner to the United States.

We continue to see positive day-to-day cooperation on security issues in and around the Republic of Turkey.

Yet, our relationship has not always been as productive as we in the United States might like. For example, in 2003, the Turkish Government refused to allow the United States military to operate from a NATO base in Incirlik, Turkey.

In the last year, many of us in America have grown increasingly concerned about our partnership with Turkey. After the failed coup, the Turkish Government arrested tens of thousands of people, instituted a state of emergency that keeps dissidents in legal limbo, and otherwise cracked down on the free press.

Innocent Americans also have been caught up in these repressive acts, including Andrew Brunson, a well-regarded American pastor who has been imprisoned in Turkey for 334 days. His continued mistreatment speaks volumes and raises serious questions about whether or not it is safe to live in or even visit Turkey.

I have repeatedly raised Mr. Brunson's case with top officials in both the Obama and Trump administrations and joined Ranking Member Cardin on February 15 in making a direct request to President Erdogan that Mr. Brunson be released and allowed to return to the United States.

Erdogan has not only domestically acted against journalists, opposition leaders, and innocent Americans, he has rebuffed his allies

internationally. Last month, Turkey agreed to give Russia \$2.5 billion in return for surface-to-air missiles that are incompatible with NATO's systems.

These developments require that the United States work to preserve our important relationship with Turkey while reassessing ways to address differences that threaten close ties between our countries.

In that spirit, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the challenges we face with Turkey and how we can improve this important relationship.

I want to thank you again for being here. And I want to thank our ranking member for the way that he works with me on this committee, for his service, and I hope he had a good recess. We look forward to your comments.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Chairman, I missed you during the last 5 weeks. So it is good to be back. It is good to see you. You were telling me about the Rotary Club speech you gave.

The CHAIRMAN. I actually was not telling you about it. You were asking me about it. And I think it is time to move on to our witnesses. [Laughter.]

Senator CARDIN. But it is good to be back. I was just going to comment that it has been an active period in regards to world events that impact our committee. We know today we will get an all-members classified briefing on North Korea and Afghanistan, and they are going to be very important issues that we have to take up during the fall, particularly the current situation in North Korea.

We understand the limit of a military option, and I think the President's comments have made it even more challenging for us to use diplomacy in the manner that could bring about a change in behavior in North Korea.

And then, just yesterday, I was reading the comments of Ambassador Haley as it relates to Iran, which may very well require this committee to get more engaged in Iran.

We have a very busy agenda. And I want to thank you for holding this hearing on Turkey because I agree with you. Turkey is a critically important partner of the United States. It is a country that we look upon to help us in our counterterrorism activities. It is a NATO partner. We have an important relationship with Turkey in regards to our efforts of defeating ISIS to ending the war in Syria, dealing with refugee outflows from the Middle East, pushing back on Iran, strengthening NATO, addressing Russia's activities in Europe, not to mention our economic partnerships between the United States and Turkey. So we need Turkey working with us not against us.

There have been some very troubling developments. I first mention Turkey's leader's repressive activities and human rights abuses. There has been a state of emergency since last year, the failed coup. And the United States strongly opposes the coup. We believe democratic countries do change in governments through the ballot not through military activities. But since that failed coup, we

have seen the leadership of Turkey take actions that are very troubling: seizure of private assets, the dismissal of thousands of civil servants, the detaining of tens of thousands in pretrial detention. Mr. Chairman, you mentioned the ongoing detention of Pastor Andrew Brunson and two Amnesty International staff. That is outrageous. I would ask consent that the statement from Amnesty International be made part of our record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

[The material submitted by Amnesty International is located at the end of this hearing transcript.]

Senator CARDIN. Turkey is a democracy, and yet when you look at how they have recently conducted their constitutional referendum, it does not meet the standards of a democratic country. It was not a free and fair referendum.

We have concerns. The people of Turkey deserve leaders who will protect their democratic institutions.

Another troubling development is reports of the Turkish Government considering the purchase of the S-400 missile interceptor batteries from Russia. If that goes forward, it seems like that is a possible violation of section 231 of the Russian-Iran-North Korea sanctions bill.

There are a lot of issues that I think we need to take up, and I appreciate very much that we have two very, very distinguished witnesses, and we welcome both of you to the committee. I do point out it is unfortunate that we cannot have a government panel, an administration panel, here because, quite frankly, the people who would normally be sitting at this dais from the administration have not yet been nominated or confirmed by the United States Senate.

Ambassador Bass, our distinguished ambassador, is now heading to Afghanistan or at least he has been nominated to Afghanistan. We need a confirmed ambassador in Turkey as part of our strategy for the issues that we are going to be talking about today.

So, Mr. Chairman, I am very happy we have two very distinguished witnesses, but I am disappointed we do not have the people in the administration who can appear before this committee.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you, and I appreciate you working with me and other committee members, when we do get nominations, to move them out as quickly as possible. And I was glad that we were able to get a large number of them confirmed before this last recess.

Our first witness today is Dr. Steven A. Cook, the Eni Enrico Mattei Senior Fellow for Middle East and Africa Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. Our second witness is Dr. Amanda Sloat, Fellow at the Democracy in Hard Places Initiative at Harvard University. We want to thank you both for being here in spite of the fact that you might not be here if we had administration witnesses. We look forward to your expert testimony. We appreciate your service in this way.

And if each of you would take about 5 minutes to summarize, we would appreciate it, and then, as you know, we will be asking questions. But if you would begin in the order introduced, I would appreciate it.

**STATEMENT OF DR. STEVEN A. COOK, ENI ENRICO MATTEI  
SENIOR FELLOW FOR MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA STUDIES,  
COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, WASHINGTON, DC**

Dr. COOK. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Cardin for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss priorities and challenges in the U.S.-Turkey relationship.

Changes in Turkey, the United States, and global politics since the end of the Cold War require a reevaluation of the U.S.-Turkey relationship. As the President of the Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haass, recently asserted, "Turkey may be an ally, but it is not a partner."

In the 15 years since the ruling Justice and Development Party, known by its acronym AKP, came to power, it has provided stability of a single-party government, and with that, Turks have benefited from new economic opportunities, infrastructure development, and improved access to health care.

There has been considerable political regression, though. A little more than a decade since Turkey began membership negotiations to join the European Union, it looks less like a European democracy and more like an elected autocracy. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's opponents have been routinely subjected to coercion, intimidation, and violence. Since the failed coup in July 2016, more than 200,000 people have been detained, arrested, or fired from their jobs. Approximately 130 news outlets have been shuttered. Foreign journalists and international and Turkish human rights professionals have also been arrested. The ripple effect of this crackdown goes well beyond those directly caught up in the purge, affecting entire families and ruining the future prospects of many more.

The deepening of authoritarianism in Turkey has had grave consequences for ideals that Americans hold dear, including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and respect for human rights. It also has costs to the bilateral relationship between the United States and Turkey. President Erdogan's populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism often manifests in hostility towards the United States and results in policy choices that are at odds with American interests and goals.

The list of American concerns is extensive, including the potential Turkish purchase of Russia's S-400 air defense system, government threats to rescind American access to Incirlik Air Base, promises of military operations against the PKK, a terrorist organization but in Iraq challenging Iraqi sovereignty, potentially weakening Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, warming of relations between Ankara and Tehran, Turkey's determination throughout much of the spring and early summer to complicate American efforts to destroy the self-styled Islamic State in Syria and its serious stronghold Raqqa because of the American alliance with the People's Protection Units, known as the YPG.

Now, the Turks do have a legitimate argument about the YPG and its ties to terrorism, but Ankara played an important role pushing the United States towards cooperation with this group when the Turks refused to cooperate with the United States in the fight against the Islamic State.



Washington's military ties with the YPG are also propelling Turkey's relations with Tehran and Moscow.

The final source of tension is the venomous anti-American discourse that Turkish officials and media outlets have employed since the summer of 2016, as well as the treatment of Americans both inside and outside of Turkey. The Government and government-friendly media have placed blame for the coup on, among others, U.S. Central Command's General Joseph Votel, the CIA, American officers serving at Incirlik, a professor at Lehigh University named Henri J. Barkey, and your colleague, Senator Charles Schumer. All of them have been accused of working with Fethullah Gulen, the Pennsylvania-based cleric who the Turkish Government accuses of being behind the coup.

There are also at least 15 U.S. citizens who have been jailed in Turkey. Most of them are being held in pretrial detention. Of those, American consular officials in Turkey have been denied access to five of them. The abuse of Americans in Turkey, which has compelled experts like myself to avoid visiting the country, has taken place alongside violence or threats of violence against Americans in the United States.

What can the United States do about this?

American officials have relied too much on private diplomacy and more honey than vinegar in public to encourage the Turkish Government to support our goals and adhere to their own principles. It has not worked. There is no guarantee that the application of public pressure on Turkey will alter its behavior for the better. The opposite may well occur, but it is a superior policy option than sanctioning Turkish actions through silence.

Toward that end, there is an opportunity for the United States, especially the Congress, to make Turkey aware of Washington's displeasure with its democratic backsliding, its treatment of Americans, and a foreign policy that is at variance with the interests and goals of the United States.

It can do this by, first, instructing the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study of the value of the U.S.-Turkey relationship and make the results of that study public; request that the Department of Defense study the costs and modalities of leaving Incirlik Air Base or shifting some of its operations to facilities in the area and making results of that study public; third, require that the State Department review its travel advisory to Turkey; fourth, restrict Turkey's participation in big-ticket, high-tech weapons development and procurement; and finally, publicly demand that Turkish officials refrain from their ongoing efforts to politicize the American judicial process in demanding the extradition of Fethullah Gulen and the end of the coming trial against Iranian Turkish businessman, Reza Zarrab.

There is a chance that none of these demands will work, but it will at least put Turkish officials on notice that the United States will not sit idly by as Turkey undermines its policies and threatens its officials and citizens.

Thank you very much.

[Dr. Cook's prepared statement follows:]

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. STEVEN A. COOK

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you and the Ranking Member for the invitation to appear before you to discuss the priorities and challenges in the U.S.-Turkey relationship.

Since the 1950s, successive American presidents have recognized Turkey as a critical ally. Even before the country became a member of the North Atlantic Alliance in 1952, Ankara dispatched forces to fight alongside Americans during the Korean War. Throughout the Cold War, close American-Turkish security cooperation played an important role containing of the Soviet Union. There were difficulties throughout the decades of partnership, including the 1964 Johnson Letter, Turkey's invasion of Cyprus in 1974, the American arms embargo in response, and regular diplomatic and political skirmishes over recognition of the Armenian Genocide. The overarching threat that the Soviet Union posed to both countries, however, ensured that these crises, problems, and irritants never disrupted the strategic relationship. It is this history that continues to frame the way in which Turkey is understood in policy debates, but it is outdated. Changes in Turkey, the United States, and global politics since the end of the Cold War require a re-evaluation of the U.S.-Turkey relationship. American policymakers are hard-pressed to make the case that bilateral ties reflect

The Council on Foreign Relations takes no institutional positions on policy issues and has no affiliation with the U.S. Government. All statements of fact and expressions of opinion contained herein are the sole responsibility of the author. "strategic relations" or a "model partnership." As the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haass, recently asserted, "Turkey may be an ally, but it is not a partner."

After 1991 and the end of the Cold War, American and Turkish policymakers maintained close strategic ties as they searched for a new rationale for the relationship. For some analysts, there was reason to believe that Turkey could be as important an ally in the post-Cold War world as it had been during the showdown with the Soviet Union. In the following decades, Turkey was alternately held out among foreign policy analysts as a guide for the newly independent Turkic states of Central Asia whose citizens share cultural and linguistic affinities with Turks, a driver of security and peace in the Middle East, and, recently, a "model" for Arab countries seeking to build more prosperous and democratic societies. None of these projects proved successful because they overestimated Turkey's capacities, underestimated the historical legacies of the Ottoman domination of the Middle East, and misread Turkish domestic politics and the worldview of the country's current leadership.

This November it will be fifteen years since the ruling Justice and Development Party (known by its Turkish acronym, AKP) came to power, launching a period of political stability, economic growth, and supposedly—as some, myself included, believed—liberal democratic reform. The AKP's electoral successes have produced the stability of single-party government, and with that Turks have benefitted from new economic opportunities, infrastructure development, and improved access to healthcare. There has been considerable political regression, though. A little more than a decade since Turkey began membership negotiations to join the European Union (EU), it looks less like a European democracy than an elected autocracy. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has overseen a process in which the country's political institutions have been greatly weakened or re-engineered in the service of his parochial political interests and a transformative national agenda.

The deepening of authoritarianism in Turkey and the development of a cult of personality around Erdogan has had grave consequences for ideals that Americans hold dear, including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and respect for human rights. Even so, it is important to note that Erdogan is hardly a tin-pot dictator. He is an extraordinarily adept politician who, for his core constituency, has ushered in a more open, inclusive, and democratic politics.

This moment of empowerment stands in stark contrast to the experiences of Erdogan's opponents. They have been routinely subjected to coercion, intimidation, and violence. Since the failed coup d'état of July 2016, more than 200,000 people have been detained, arrested, or fired from their jobs. Approximately 130 news outlets have been shuttered. Included among those arrested have been foreign journalists as well as international and Turkish human rights professionals. Academics who called upon Turkish security forces to avoid civilian casualties in the conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)—a terrorist organization—were summarily dismissed from their posts or arrested. Many of those in legal trouble have little recourse because they are accused of being members of "FETO," the Fethullahist Terror Organization, which the Government alleges was behind the failed coup. Defense lawyers have been reluctant to take on these cases out of fear

they themselves will be accused of the same. The ripple effects of this crackdown go well beyond those directly caught up in the purge, affecting entire families and ruining their future prospects. The widespread detentions, arrests, and sackings since July 2016 are not actually a new development, they are merely an acceleration of a purge that has been underway since 2014.

The troubling situation in Turkey is not just a matter of domestic politics, however. It has costs for the bilateral relationship between the United States and Turkey. Erdogan's populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism often manifests itself in hostility toward the United States and results in policy choices that are at odds with American interests and goals. There is little reason to believe that this situation will change. As noted above, the bilateral relationship encountered turbulence in the past, but the United States and Turkey overcame these differences because of the dangers the Soviet Union posed to the security of both. There is no longer a common threat or big project that both countries share. At an abstract level, Washington and Ankara share an interest in fighting terrorism, but they each accuse the other of working with terrorists in Syria.

The list of American concerns about Turkish policies and behavior is rather extensive. They include the potential purchase of the Russian S-400 air defense system; threats to rescind American access to Incirlik airbase, from which the United States conducts operation against the self-declared Islamic State and where it stores ninety nuclear weapons as a symbol of the American commitment to Turkish security; and promises of military operations against the PKK in Iraq, challenging Iraqi sovereignty and potentially weakening Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. In August, the chief of staff of Iran's armed forces traveled to Ankara for security talks in the first such visit of its kind since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Turkey and Iran have overlapping and conflicting interests in a variety of areas in Syria and Iraq as well as on border security and Kurdish separatism. It thus makes sense for them to seek dialogue, but Turkey's current outreach follows a pattern in which Turkish officials have sought to use their ties with Tehran as a way of alleviating pressure when they have run into trouble with Washington. Turkey's thaw with Iran sows mistrust between Ankara and countries in the Persian Gulf. This only weakens the Trump administration's efforts to build a unified front against Tehran.

Then there is Turkey's determination to, at least, complicate American efforts to destroy the Islamic State in its Syrian stronghold, Raqqa. The Turks are deeply opposed to the U.S. alliance with the People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria against the Islamic State. Ankara rightly considers this group to be inextricably linked to the PKK. More than any other issue, the U.S. relationship with the YPG through the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) has driven tension in American-Turkish ties. The Turks do have a legitimate argument about the YPG and its ties to terrorism, but Ankara played an important role pushing the United States and this Syrian Kurdish group together when, in the summer of 2014, the Turkish Government rejected American entreaties to fight the Islamic State together. Secretary of Defense James Mattis has sought to reassure the Turkish Government that weaponry provided to the SDF will be strictly controlled and that the United States will not allow the YPG and its political wing, the Democratic Union Party, from establishing an autonomous or independent entity along a strip of territory that the Kurds call "Rojava," adjacent to Turkey's southern border. There is no indication that Turkey's leaders believe these assurances.

Washington's military ties to the YPG are also propelling Turkey's relations with Tehran and Moscow. Turkey and Iran—both with large Kurdish populations—have a common interest in suppressing Kurdish nationalism and separatism. When it comes to Russia, much has been made of Erdogan's alleged admiration of Russian President Vladimir Putin and the rise of so-called "Eurasianists" within Turkey's officer corps who are anti-American and anti-Western. Those factors may very well be part of the explanation, but Russia's place as the powerbroker in Syria and Erdogan's concerns over Kurdish gains there have compelled him to go to Moscow in an effort to secure Turkish interests in the Syrian conflict.

The final sources of tension are the venomous anti-American discourse that Turkish officials and media outlets representing the Government have employed since the summer of 2016 as well as the treatment of Americans both inside and outside of Turkey. Turkey's leaders have long played on the reservoir of anti-Americanism within Turkish society to their political advantage, but Erdogan oversaw an unprecedented attack on the United States after last summer's failed coup. The Government and government-friendly media engaged in blood-curdling rhetoric that placed blame for the coup on, among others, U.S. Central Command's General Joseph Votel, the CIA, American officers serving at Incirlik, a professor at Lehigh University named Henri J. Barkey, and Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY). After the coup attempt, the Turks arrested Pastor Andrew Brunson, who has been living in Turkey

for twenty-three years, and a NASA scientist of Turkish origin who is an American citizen named Serkan Golge. There are also at least a thirteen other U.S. citizens in pre-trial detention in Turkey. Of those, American consular officials in Turkey have been denied access to five of them. The Turks have also arrested a long-serving foreign service national who was an employee at the U.S. consulate in Adana. With the exception of one American who was jailed before the coup, all are facing charges related to terrorism.

In Turkey today, “terrorism” is a catch-all charge that can be used against peaceful opponents of the Government, followers of Fethullah Gulen—the Pennsylvania-based cleric who once was a partner of Erdogan and is now accused of masterminding last year’s failed putsch—or supporters of the PKK. The latter two are plausible, but there is also another possibility: the Americans being held in Turkey are bargaining chips to secure the extradition of Gulen and an end to the federal case against a Turkish-Iranian businessman named Reza Zarrab. The latter issue is particularly important to Erdogan because Zarrab was instrumental in busting sanctions on Iran, using gold traders in Istanbul and Turkey’s state-owned Halkbank in the process. Zarrab is also believed to have knowledge of corruption at the highest levels of the Turkish Government.

The abuse of Americans in Turkey, which has compelled experts like myself to avoid visiting the country, has taken place alongside violence or threats of violence against Americans in the United States. Recently, fifteen members of Erdogan’s security detail were indicted for beating up peaceful protesters outside the Turkish ambassador’s residence last May. This is a repeat of the melee that Erdogan’s security team precipitated outside the Brookings Institution in March 2016 and at the United Nations in 2011. In addition, Turkish diplomats have sought to create a hostile environment for those who research and write about Turkey. The embassy in Washington routinely sends staff to take video of public events addressing Turkish politics. The embassy’s justice counselor once accosted me in an elevator after an event at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars because he did not like something that I said. After exiting the building, he chased me down the street yelling at me. Turkey’s consul general in Chicago used a clip of Professor Barkey and me laughing during an event and posted it on Twitter claiming that we were laughing about the 249 people who were killed during the failed coup. Given the political atmosphere in Turkey, what the consul general did was nothing less than an incitement to violence. This is all part of an effort to undermine the ability of American scholars and journalists to work in Turkey.

What can the United States do about the deteriorating situation in Turkey and the Ankara’s problematic foreign policy? American policymakers must understand that they have little means to influence Turkey if they continue to define the relationship in the same terms as it was during the Cold War. The United States and Turkey have a long history, but past strategic ties hardly qualify as justification for the same in the present or future. Turkey remains important to the United States but less because it can be helpful and more because of the trouble Ankara can cause.

It is often prudent to approach differences with other countries through private diplomacy and offering more “honey than vinegar” in public. The records from the Barack Obama and George W. Bush administrations also indicate, however, that that remonstrating with Turkish officials in private and publicly praising them has little, if any, effect on the policies that Ankara pursues at home and abroad. There is, of course, no guarantee that the application of public pressure on Turkey will alter its behavior for the better—the opposite may well occur—but it is a superior policy option than sanctioning Turkish actions through silence.

The political, economic, and diplomatic pressure that Russia brought to bear on Turkey after Turkish warplanes shot down a Russian bomber in November 2015 is instructive. In time, Erdogan was compelled to issue an apology and pursue a conciliatory approach to Moscow. I am not advocating a similarly thuggish approach to Turkey, a long-standing ally, but rather offering a case in which Turkey’s leader responded positively to public censure. Toward that end, there is an opportunity for the United States, especially Congress, to make Turkey aware of Washington’s displeasure with its democratic backsliding, its treatment of Americans, and a foreign policy that is at variance with the interests and goals of the United States. It can do this by:

- instructing the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study of the value of the U.S.-Turkey relationship;
- requesting that the Department of Defense study the costs and modalities of leaving Incirlik airbase or shifting some of its operations to other facilities in the area; and making the results of this study public.
- requiring that the State Department review its travel advisory to Turkey;

- restricting Turkey's participation in big-ticket, high-tech weapons development and procurement; and
- publicly demanding that Turkish officials refrain from their ongoing efforts to politicize the American judicial process.

There are fears within the policy community that Turkey has become unmoored from the West. Those fears are warranted, but not entirely accurate. Ankara is and will continue to be a member of NATO, but it is not a partner in the Atlantic Alliance; Turkey is linked to Europe through trade flows, investment, and financial institutions, but it does not desire to be part of the West broadly defined by liberal norms, principles, and ideals. There is no doubt that large numbers of Turks are untroubled by this change. Ahmet Davutoglu—who served as both prime minister and foreign minister—has written that Western institutions are alien to predominantly Muslim societies like Turkey. There are also large numbers who want to remain within the ambit of the West. Above both groups is Erdogan, who is determined to undo the institutions and values of the republic—itsself never a democracy—and replace them with a moralizing, religious (but not theocratic), and authoritarian political order. Whether Erdogan is successful or not, Turkish politics and society have changed dramatically since the 1950s, as has American politics and society, and consequently the United States must re-evaluate its relationship with Turkey.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.  
Dr. Sloat?

**STATEMENT OF DR. ARMANDA SLOAT, FELLOW FOR DEMOCRACY IN HARD PLACES INITIATIVE, HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE, MA**

Dr. SLOAT. Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to discuss recent developments in Turkey and the implications for our bilateral relationship.

With the chairman's permission, I would like to submit my full testimony for the record and summarize key points now.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection. Thank you.

Dr. SLOAT. To state my bottom line up front, Turkey is undoubtedly a complicated and challenging NATO ally. However, it remains strategically important to the United States. Its government, as well as its people, require our continued engagement.

A year after the attempted coup, Turkish society remains deeply traumatized by the aftermath of July 15, 2016, as well as regional risks to the country's security. There is little Western anchor given tense relations with the United States and the European Union. Gulenists and separatist Kurds are seen as existential threats. And amidst an indefinite state of emergency, dissent is limited, press freedom has been curtailed, the opposition remains fractured, and the economy is weakening.

Many Turks were initially supportive of the Government's response to the coup attempt, which was neither expected nor desired. There was frustration with the perceived delay by the West in condemning the coup, and there remains consternation that the alleged coup plotter, Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, lives in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania.

Unfortunately, actions by the Turkish Government are weakening the democracy it purports to protect. Initial efforts to arrest suspected coup plotters and affiliated Gulenists have morphed into an apparent witch hunt against all political opponents, leaving a vulnerable state apparatus and a paranoid society. The elastic definition of terrorism alters the bounds of what is politically permis-

sible while the state of emergency has had a chilling effect on public dissent.

The domestic situation is unlikely to improve in the near future. Turkish citizens voted last April on whether to provide sweeping powers to the president. The results reflected a stark division in society. Official figures showed 48 percent of voters opposed the reforms. Yet, this number could be even higher as the OSCE cited a restrictive campaign framework and there were widespread allegations of fraud.

As preparations for parliamentary and presidential elections are underway for 2019, Turkish civil society, I would argue, remains bowed but unbroken. This was seen most visibly in July when hundreds of thousands of Turks rallied for justice in Istanbul, the largest public protest since Gezi Park in 2013.

In addition to domestic challenges, Turkey sits in a turbulent neighborhood. It has been particularly affected by the civil war and battle against the Islamic State in Syria. These conflicts flooded Turkey with over 3 million refugees, created complex dynamics with Russia and Iran, contributed to major terrorist attacks, and further complicated relations with the PKK, a U.S.-designated Kurdish terrorist organization.

Different priorities in Syria have contributed to tension in U.S.-Turkey relations. The most contentious debates have concerned local forces and the question of with whom to partner in the fight against ISIS. Turkey vehemently objects to U.S. cooperation with the Syrian Kurdish group known as the YPG, given the group's links to the PKK, as well as their aspirations to create an autonomous region in northern Syria. This Gordian knot will remain a bilateral sticking point as thorny decisions remain about security and governance arrangements in post-ISIS Syria.

Despite these challenges, it would be a mistake to curb relations significantly with Turkey. It remains an important bridge between Europe and the Middle East. There is utility in continued efforts to keep Turkey anchored in a Euro-Atlantic community based on shared values even though Turkey does not always live up to those values. There are also real risks from a failed relationship, including setbacks to U.S. efforts to fight the Islamic State, a weakened ability to stem refugee flows into Europe, and the degradation of one of the region's most successful economies. Furthermore, Turkey's foreign policy orientation matters to the West. If the EU and U.S. abandon Turkey, Ankara will seek partners elsewhere, as demonstrated by its recent interactions with Russia and Iran.

As a starting point, the U.S. needs to take seriously Turkish security concerns. On Gulen, the U.S. Government has made clear his extradition is a matter for the courts, but officials should continue seeking ways to help bring those responsible to justice.

Relatedly, the U.S. and Turkey should continue their high-level dialogue on Syria and the Kurds. The U.S. should continue pressing for the resumption of peace talks with the PKK, reiterating its opposition to the YPG's broader territorial aspirations, and working with Turkey and regional partners to develop a long-term political strategy for Syria.

Finally, rule of law must remain on the bilateral agenda. Public rebuke is not always the most effective way to motivate political

change, especially in a country quick to anti-American sentiment. Yet, those in Turkish society who value democracy are seeking moral support. Most critically, senior American officials must stress the importance of human rights and good governance in private conversations with their Turkish counterparts.

Relatedly, the U.S. should expand people-to-people ties, including reinvigorated efforts to enhance our trade relations.

In closing, the only beneficiaries of significantly curtailed ties between the U.S. and Turkey are those who do not want the country facing West. Continued engagement, including honest discussion with the Government about our differences, plus expanded outreach to business and civil society, remains the only way forward.

Thank you.

[Dr. Sloat's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. AMANDA SLOAT

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to discuss recent developments in Turkey and the implications for our bilateral relationship. Although Turkey can be a complicated and challenging NATO ally, it remains strategically important to the United States and requires our continued engagement.

A year after the attempted coup, Turkish society remains deeply traumatized by the events of July 15, 2016 and its aftermath as well as regional risks to the country's peace and security. There is little western anchor given tense relations with the United States and the European Union. Gulenists and separatist Kurds are seen as existential threats. Amidst an indefinite state of emergency, dissent is limited, press freedom has been curtailed, the opposition remains fractured, and the economy is weakening.

Many Turks were initially supportive of the Government's response to the coup attempt, which was neither expected nor desired. There was frustration with the perceived delay in western condemnation of the putsch amidst presumed ambivalence about the desirability of ousting the president. There remains consternation that the man accused of fomenting the coup, Muslim cleric Fetullah Gulen, is living in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania. While Ankara has given the U.S. Government boxes of documents, it has yet to provide sufficient evidence to persuade a judge of probable cause that would warrant extradition.

Unfortunately, actions by the Turkish Government have begun to weaken the democracy that it purports to protect. Initial efforts to arrest suspected coup plotters and affiliated Gulenists have morphed into an apparent witch-hunt against all political opponents. Recent reports note at least 150,000 people sacked from government and academia, 50,000 or more jailed for alleged collusion, as well as over 150 journalists behind bars. When I visited Turkey this summer for the first time since the putsch attempt, the climate of anxiety was palpable. There is a vulnerable state apparatus and a paranoid society. The state of emergency has had a chilling effect on public opposition, as it allows individuals to be held in pre-trial detention for 30 days without charge. The Government's elastic definition of "terrorism" alters the bounds of what is politically permissible; this has narrowed space for dissent, shrunk press freedom, and diminished confidence in state institutions. Americans (as well as Europeans) are getting caught in this web, as evidenced by the imprisonment of pastor Andrew Brunson on hollow terrorism accusations.

The domestic situation is unlikely to improve in the near future. Against the backdrop of the failed coup, Turkish citizens went to the polls last April to determine whether to provide sweeping new powers to the president. While official results claimed 51 percent of voters supported the reforms, the OSCE cited a "restrictive" campaign framework and there were widespread allegations of fraud. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who just began his fourth year as president, is now focused on preparations for parliamentary and presidential elections in 2019. He recently acknowledged these elections will be "difficult," presumably as he recognizes disenchantment among his base given excessive post-coup purges, economic challenges (as pocketbook politics affect his middle class supporters), and claims of government corruption. Meanwhile, opposition parties have struggled to provide an effective counterweight. The pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) is particularly

hamstrung, as its leader Selahattin Demirtas, 13 MPs, and dozens of elected mayors are imprisoned on spurious terrorism charges.

Despite these challenges, Turkish civil society is not dead. The country is deeply divided between supporters and opponents of Erdogan, as evidenced by the 48 percent of the electorate (at a minimum) who voted against the constitutional changes. In June, the Government—led by the conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP)—withdrew a proposal to allow developers to build industrial facilities in olive groves following public opposition. This is a small but not insignificant legislative victory. Later that month, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu—leader of the social democratic People’s Republic Party (CHP)—led a 280-mile “march for justice” from Ankara to Istanbul to protest arrests (including of a CHP MP) as part of the post-coup crackdown. Hundreds of thousands of protesters joined his rally in Istanbul, the largest public demonstration since the Gezi Park protests of 2013. While not a mass uprising, it demonstrated Turks’ continued willingness to demand justice and government accountability.

In addition to domestic challenges, Turkey sits in a turbulent neighborhood. It has been particularly affected by the civil war and battle against the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria. These conflicts flooded Turkey with over 3 million refugees, created complex dynamics with Russia and Iran, contributed to several large terrorist attacks, and further complicated engagement with the PKK (the Kurdistan Worker’s Party, a U.S.-designated terrorist organization that has fought the Turkish state for decades).

Different priorities in Syria have contributed to tension in U.S.-Turkey relations. Erdogan initially focused on the removal of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, which resulted in lax enforcement of border controls despite American and European calls to stop flows of foreign fighters. The U.S. was reluctant to engage in the civil war, but took aggressive action to counter the Islamic State. Turkey initially felt less threatened by the rise of ISIS, a view that changed after an attack by an Islamic State suicide bomber in southern Turkey in July 2015. Weeks later Ankara opened Incirlik airbase to U.S. and coalition forces conducting counter-ISIS missions. US special operators sought ground forces with whom to partner. They found a faction of Syrian Kurds, the YPG (the People’s Protection Units), to be the most organized and militarily effective fighters. They provided logistical and air support to help the YPG take territory from ISIS. Turkey vehemently objected given the YPG’s links to the PKK. Their fears aren’t unfounded: in 2016 alone, the PKK conducted multiple mass-casualty attacks in Ankara and Istanbul that killed far more Turks than did ISIS attacks. Syria-related conflict also contributed to the breakdown of Turkey’s 36-month ceasefire with the PKK.

Amidst protracted and ultimately unsuccessful U.S.-Turkey negotiations about the viability of alternative Sunni forces, Turkey’s top priority became preventing the YPG from achieving its political objective: the connection of three northern Syrian cantons into a single autonomous region, which Ankara feared could result in an independence bid or be used as a staging area for attacks on Turkey. This bilateral dispute came to a head in June 2017, when American officials informed Ankara on the eve of President Erdogan’s visit to Washington that the U.S. had decided to arm the YPG for the battle against ISIS in Raqqa. While Erdogan begrudgingly accepted the decision, Turkey signaled its readiness to protect its redlines days later by firing on YPG forces allegedly targeting Turkish-backed opposition fighters. This Gordian knot will remain a sticking point in U.S.-Turkey relations, as thorny decisions remain about security and governance arrangements in post-ISIS Syria.

Given the precipitous decline in Turkey’s rule of law and the complicated diplomacy often required to reach agreement on shared challenges, it may appear tempting to walk away from the relationship. The European Union has begun its own debate, with the European Parliament calling to freeze accession talks, Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn recommending a “new approach,” and German Chancellor Angela Merkel threatening not to update the Turkey/EU custom union.

While now is an appropriate moment to assess and recalibrate, it would be a mistake to curtail relations with Turkey. It remains an important bridge between Europe and the Middle East. There is utility in continued efforts to keep Turkey anchored in a Euro-Atlantic community based on shared values, even if Ankara doesn’t always live up to those values. There are also real risks from a failed relationship, including setbacks to U.S. efforts to fight the Islamic State (as well as future radical groups that grow in unstable environments), a weakened ability to stem refugee flows into Europe, and the degradation of one of the region’s most successful economies. Furthermore, Turkey’s foreign policy orientation matters to the west. If the EU and U.S. abandon Turkey, Ankara will seek partners elsewhere—as demonstrated by its recent interactions with Russia and Iran.



As a starting point, Washington needs to take seriously Turkish security concerns. While the U.S. cannot give Turkey everything it demands, sustained discussion of its perceived threats builds trust and provides reassurance. On Gulen, the U.S. Government has made clear that his extradition is a matter for the courts. However, U.S. officials should continue engaging with Turkish counterparts to demonstrate the sincerity with which they are reviewing evidence and seek ways to help bring those responsible to justice. That said, Turkey should not employ judicial blackmail by detaining American citizens in the hopes of using them as leverage in their claims.

Similarly, the U.S. and Turkey should continue their high-level dialogue on Syria and Kurdish issues. The late August trip by Defense Secretary James Mattis was a helpful visit by all accounts. Reports suggest he promised transparency in U.S. cooperation with the YPG, as well as further assistance in Turkey's fight against the PKK. More broadly, reconciliation between Turkey and the PKK is the only solution to this overarching regional problem. Washington should continue pressing Ankara to resume peace talks, offering American support as desired. In addition, the U.S. should work with Turkey and other regional allies to develop a long-term political strategy for Syria; it will be particularly important to understand Turkish plans with Russia and Iran. The U.S. should make clear to the YPG its opposition to Syrian Kurdish independence, as well as the need for the group to cut operational ties with the PKK, fulfill its long-ignored promise to withdraw east of the Euphrates River (i.e., not connect the cantons), allow displaced Sunni civilians to return home, and govern in an inclusive manner. In return, Ankara will need to accept some YPG participation in discussions about Syria's political future and the movement of Kurdish civilians between cantons.

Beyond Syria, there are numerous regional issues where the U.S. and Turkey share common interests and can work together. Both countries have concerns about the planned independence referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan later this month, and they will need to manage the potential fall-out if it proceeds. Both have a vested interest in seeing a resolution to the dispute between Qatar and its Gulf neighbors. As the U.S. considers sending more troops to Afghanistan, it is worth remembering Turkey is the only NATO country that increased its troop presence following the Alliance's 2015 transition from a combat to a support mission. Within the Mediterranean, Turkey has the potential to become a regional energy hub and remains a critical player in resolving the Cyprus conflict.

Finally, rule of law must remain on the bilateral agenda. Although public rebuke isn't always the most effective way to motivate political change (especially in a country quick to anti-American sentiment), Turkish citizens who value good governance are looking for moral support. More critically, senior American officials must stress the importance of rule of law in private conversations with Turkish interlocutors. Reports suggest President Trump did not raise such concerns during his Oval Office meeting with President Erdogan, which gives the unfortunate signal the U.S. no longer cares about the state of Turkish democracy.

Furthermore, efforts should be made to expand the breadth of U.S.-Turkey relations. It is unhelpful to personalize bilateral ties in interactions between leaders, while there are limits to a relationship rooted primarily in military cooperation. There is scope to expand people to people ties, which would encourage the half of Turkish society that fears being abandoned by its long-time friends. In particular, the U.S. should reinvigorate efforts to expand trade. This would benefit U.S. companies eager to invest in the Turkish market. It could also motivate reforms to help stabilize the Turkish economy; for example, the indefinite state of emergency remains a significant drag on foreign investment.

In closing, there are strains in our bilateral relationship, divergent views on some important issues, and serious concerns about Ankara's commitment to rule of law and human rights. At the same time, the only people who benefit from the U.S. curbing ties significantly are those who don't want Turkey facing west. Continued engagement—including honest discussion with the Government and expanded outreach to business and civil society—remains the only way forward.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Cardin?

Senator CARDIN. Dr. Sloat, I agree with your conclusion. So let us talk about one of the most sensitive issues, and that is the YPG and our campaign in Syria and Raqqa which, as I understand it, there was considerable outreach by the United States to Turkey as to the importance of using the YPG as the only viable way that we

could get the necessary ground support in order to deal with the campaign in Syria. Do you believe there was a different way to handle this?

Dr. SLOAT. Thank you for the question.

I should note I served in the Obama administration for 3 years as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Turkey up until a year ago. So I was directly involved in large numbers of those conversations.

I think there was a history of differing priorities between the United States and Turkey with the Turks prioritizing from the beginning the removal of Assad, but the U.S. choosing not to get involved in the civil war in Syria but instead focusing on the campaign against ISIS. And that was part of what complicated discussions between the U.S. and Turkey on how to respond.

I would argue that there were decisions that the Obama administration could have made several years prior to potentially support additional Sunni Arab forces. I believe we are in a position now where we have fairly limited options to the YPG, but I do not believe that was necessarily where we needed to end up.

Senator CARDIN. You think there were other options for ground support effectively dealing with the Raqqa campaign other than doing it with the YPG?

Dr. SLOAT. For the Raqqa campaign, I believe the YPG was likely the main option that we had.

Senator CARDIN. From what we have been briefed on, and our own information, I think the United States—the coalition forces—had very few other options. The question is was there a better way of handling this with Turkey. And as I understand, we have invested a great deal of time in working with Turkey to explain the military options that we had.

Dr. Cook, thank you for your four suggestions. I think they are all ones that we should very much be considering.

I want to get to military procurement specifically because it is an interesting proposal you have in regards to restricting arm sales to Turkey, which is something that this committee gets engaged with. But it looks like Turkey is looking towards Russia, as I said in my opening comment, with the S-400 missile interceptor. It also appears that could very well violate the recent statute passed by Congress on sanctions against Russia.

We would expect a NATO partner to work with us in our efforts to change behavior in Russia as it relates to European security. That is not the case right now with Turkey.

Do you believe that the United States should be in a position to tell Turkey that if they proceed with this, that it may very well cause action in America dealing with our sanction authority?

Dr. COOK. Thank you for the question, Senator.

Absolutely. I think we should make it abundantly clear and not just privately but publicly to the Turks that if they move forward with the S-400, there will be consequences for them.

Their relationship with Russia is built on two separate issues. The first is the United States is not a diplomatic or political player in Syria, and for the Turks to ensure their interests in a post-war Syria, they have to deal with the main powerbroker there and that is the Russians.

Second, the Turks tend to try to play the Russians or the Iranians against the United States. Every time they get into trouble, Turkish officials show up in Tehran or they make noises about weapons procurement, whether it is from the Chinese or the Russians. Publically, We have yet to make it abundantly clear to the Turkish Government that there will be consequences in terms of future weapons procurement and other types of relations should they move forward and violate these sanctions.

As I said, there is no guarantee that this will work. At the same time, the kind of private engagement that the Obama administration and the Trump administration have pursued clearly has not gotten the Turkish Government's attention.

Now, one point, if you allow me, on the question of the YPG. There was another option to the YPG. It was called the Turkish armed forces. However, as my colleague, Dr. Sloat, pointed out, the Turks had other priorities when it came to the confrontation with the Assad regime. They prioritized that over the Islamic State. And to some extent, the Turks had conflicts of interests with the Islamic State because the Islamic State was battling Kurds in northern Syria. So it strikes me there was an option, but the Turks took it off the table by refusing to work with us in the fight against the Islamic State.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I have another question, but I will wait until the second round.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Merkley?

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate that the State Department and the administration have been actively engaged in supporting specific NGOs that have been shut down by the Turkish Government. That being said, this administration has said shockingly little publicly about the closing of civil society.

Through 2012 to 2014, the Department of State funded international NGOs to conduct humanitarian work in the context where there was no governance, no U.N., no International Committee of the Red Cross, or typical systems of protections. And these NGOs really stepped up. They provided massive levels of assistance to millions of extremely vulnerable people. Yet, when policies of the Turkish Government changed, these NGOs were left exposed and pretty much on their own, leaving millions of Syrians at risk and underserved.

What suggestions would you have for us and for the administration to ensure the protection of the civil society space and stop any further autocratic sliding in Turkey?

Can you all explain why you think the Government in Turkey is cracking down on civil society and will long-term harm result if it continues and what the resulting legacy of Erdogan would be?

Dr. SLOAT. Thank you for the question.

As I understood your question, one part of it was talking about the work of civil society organizations with refugees. And we have had a large number of American organizations who have been working on the ground in Turkey to support Syrian refugees with Turkey hosting upwards of 3 million of them. A number of them have had challenges over the years in terms of registration—

Senator MERKLEY. And also extensive work inside Syria based out of Turkey.

Dr. SLOAT. Right. And Mercy Corps, unfortunately, is one of the organizations that has been kicked out of Turkey in what to me seems like Turkey cutting off its nose to spite its face, since given the significant demand that refugees have, there is a significant need for these organizations to continue their work.

I think the broader crackdown across the board in civil society in Turkey is extremely unfortunate. Some of this is being done within the guise of countering terrorism, and the Turkish Government's definition of terrorism seems to be constantly expanding from those who were supporting Kurdish separatists, those who were focusing on Gulen, and now anybody, more broadly, who is seen as opposing the Government.

I would argue that the United States needs to continue engaging publicly in terms of expressing our support. That is an important thing that Congress can do. It is also something the administration should be doing. I think the State Department has been coming out with some statements in recent months expressing condemnation of the arrest of Amnesty International and others. I think it would be helpful to see more coming from the White House. I also think there needs to be more private diplomacy. Reports have suggested that President Trump did not raise any of these issues in his bilateral meeting with President Erdogan, and that is unfortunate. We need to have our leaders at the highest level expressing their disapproval of these domestic actions in Turkey.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Dr. Cook?

Dr. COOK. Thank you.

I essentially agree with the thrust of Dr. Sloat's arguments. It strikes me that, as long as the Turkish Government continues to expand its definition of terrorism, civil society organizations, opponents of the Government, journalists, and academics will all be vulnerable to arrest and being held in pretrial detention endlessly; human rights will continue to deteriorate.

As I pointed out both in my written testimony and my summary of my written testimony, it is important for the United States to publicly stand for its own values and the values that the Turkish Government purportedly seeks to uphold, as well, in signaling to the Turkish Government that this is unacceptable from the perspective of the United States and that there will be consequences along a range of issues for the Turkish Government as long as they continue to violate human rights in such an egregious way.

Senator MERKLEY. Well, thank you, both of you. And I think it is incredibly important that our executive branch and our President's team does flag these issues of profound impact on hundreds of thousands of folks who have been cut off from basic nutrition during extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

There are signs that the Erdogan Government influenced the results of the April referendum, and despite the State Department noting discrepancies in voting, our President congratulated him on his election success. It is troubling that a NATO ally may have tampered with election results to allow its president to consolidate power. How significant was President Trump's positive response to

the election results, and do you believe Trump's business conflicts of interest had an impact?

Dr. COOK. Thank you, Senator.

I cannot speak to the President's business interests in Turkey. I just do not know enough about it.

What I will say is it strikes me that there was a theory behind the idea of calling President Erdogan and congratulating him on the referendum, which there have been many questions about. The idea was to bring President Erdogan along so that the Turks would not complicate our operations in conjunction with the YPG against the Islamic State stronghold in Raqqa. What I think decision-makers at the White House did not count on was that President Erdogan would pocket that phone call from the President of the United States and continue to pursue a policy that complicates our efforts in Syria.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Anything else you would like to add?

Dr. SLOAT. I would just add that the phone call, I think, was unfortunate in the sense that it legitimized a referendum that a large number of international organizations, including the OSCE, had expressed concerns about. Turkey had a fairly recent history of relatively free and fair elections. This referendum certainly was not free or fair in the sense that it was being conducted under the state of emergency, and a lot of the concerns that observers have raised certainly have called into question the fairness of it as well.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Gardner?

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to our two witnesses today.

I am struck by a couple of things in your testimony today and your comments and statements you have made. In one statement, Mr. Cook, you stated that "the deepening of authoritarianism in Turkey and the development of a cult of personality has had grave consequences for ideals that Americans hold dear, including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and respect for human rights." Talking about hardly being a model partnership, considerable political regression, populism, nationalism, authoritarianism often manifests itself in hostility toward the U.S., results in policy choices that are at odds with American interests and goals, complicating our effort to fight terrorism, sources of tensions, a venomous anti-American discourse. It is pretty tough stuff in a relationship that is very critical and important.

You also, toward the end of your statement, say "there are fears within the policy community that Turkey has become unmoored from the West. Those fears are warranted but not entirely accurate."

So how do we address the challenges we have that you lay out very clearly in the statement and get to a point where they are not entirely accurate, indeed, we can carry forward in a meaningful, better relationship when it comes to terrorism, when it comes to other interests in the region and the leadership that we need from a NATO member nation.

Dr. COOK. Well, Senator, thank you for the question. They are difficult questions, and there are ones that I think all of us in the Turkey-watching community wrestle with all the time. And that is, how do we anchor Turkey to the West and reaffirm our commitment to Turkey's security and carry on with the transatlantic relationship with Turkey as a firm partner, while the Turks are undertaking actions that undermine our efforts and the efforts of the West and violate human rights and, as I said in my testimony, the ideals that Americans hold dear?

My conclusion is two things. First, there is actually little that will compel the Turks to change the course of their foreign policy and their domestic politics if we continue to define the relationship the way in which we have defined it over the course of the last 60 years.

Senator GARDNER. A model partnership.

Dr. COOK. As a model partnership, as a strategic partnership. Certainly the Turks were critical partners in the Cold War, fought with American soldiers in the Korean conflict. There were crises and problems during that period, but they were overcome by the overarching threat that the Soviet Union presented. There is no overarching threat or big project that the two countries work on together. One could say in the abstract that both countries are opposed and want to work together to counter terrorism. Yet, the Turks accuse the United States of working with terrorists, and the United States accuses Turkey of working with terrorists.

So we have to reevaluate and see this country as a different country. It is a country with differing interests. Its geography dictates that it pursues policies that are in conflict, at times, with the United States. But there is something to salvage from the relationship. As Dr. Sloat pointed out, Turkey is in a critically important location. If you draw lines out from the Turkish capital Ankara, the country literally sits at the center of many of our most pressing foreign policy issues.

That is why I have come to the conclusion that to continue to allow the Turks to give us assurances in private while then going out in public and contradicting what they have assured us is no longer the way to go, that we should demand public accountability for the Turks. I remind you, I cannot remember a time that this Government or any Turkish Government has defended the strategic relationship with the United States in the same way that policymakers here in the United States have.

The purpose of my recommendations is to get the Turks to understand that continuing to provide those assurances without upholding them will have consequences. It is only through that, it strikes me, that we will potentially effect a change in Turkey's behavior both at home and abroad.

Senator GARDNER. And how should we expect this relationship now, between Turkey and Russia, to change the way we view Turkey as a NATO participant?

Dr. COOK. Well, certainly there is reason to be concerned about the Turkish relationship with Russia. Much has been made about President Erdogan's apparent admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Much has also been made about the apparent rise of Eurasianists within the Turkish officer corps. These are people

who would like to explore developing their relations with Russia more and turning away from the United States and the West.

But there are limits to the Russian-Turkish relationship. First, the Turks do not trust the Russians, and they have no reason to trust the Russians. They have gone to Moscow primarily because the United States is no longer a factor in the Syrian conflict, and in order to ensure their interests, they need to deal with the Russians.

This question of purchasing defense equipment from Russia is something that the Turks have sought to do not just from Russia but from the Chinese. It is an effort on their part to try to put the United States and the West on notice.

There is also a concerted effort within Turkey to develop their own defense industrial base, and they often require technology offsets that will help them develop that defense industrial offset. It is unclear to me that this deal will go through.

And then, finally, there is the question of Turkey's economic ties to the West. The United States is not a major player in the Turkish economy. All of our major companies are there, but really the trade and investment flows are between Turkey and Europe. And that, if anything, anchors Turkey to the West.

So it does not keep me up at night—the idea of Turkey drawing closer to the Russians and literally turning from the West. But I think that we will not be able to restrain their behavior unless we take a firm stand on what they have done in Syria, what they are doing at home, what their relations with the Russians do in fact look like.

Senator GARDNER. Dr. Sloat, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Murphy?

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for being here.

In August, we read reports about a clash inside Syria between U.S. forces and Turkish-aligned forces. This comes on the heels of reports from earlier this year about military clashes between the United States and Iranian-allied forces inside Syria. This seems to be the consequence of a fairly rapid and often unannounced build-up of U.S. forces inside Syria.

Some people talk about the fight for Raqqa as if it is the beginning and the end of the conflicts with ISIS. And yet, what we know is that that conflict is just going to morph into one that shifts geographically to the Euphrates River valley, other places throughout Syria.

Can you both talk about what the future potential conflicts are between U.S. forces or forces that the U.S. is directly aligned with and Turkish-based forces in and around Raqqa and as the fight moves to other places? How have we been successful or unsuccessful in efforts to deconflict with those forces that the Turks are supplying and funding, and what are the risks going forward?

Dr. SLOAT. Thank you, Senator. I think you are absolutely right that it is a very messy patchwork at the moment in Syria. The U.S. and Kurds are largely controlling the area east of the Euphrates; the Syrian regime, with Russia and Iran, controlling the center; Turkish-backed forces on the northern border. And then Jordan

and Russia have created a fairly successful deconfliction zone in the southwest. So you are absolutely right. The focus at the moment has been on Raqqa, but once Raqqa has concluded, people are going to be looking toward Deir ez-Zor. They are going to be looking down south of the Euphrates River and then, also, what is happening on the Syrian-Iraqi border.

The U.S., thus far, has been partnering with the YPG in that northern area out of what I believe has been military expedience in terms of their priority of clearing ISIS from that territory. The YPG initially did not want to go to Raqqa because it is outside their main area of interest in terms of the northern cantons that they have been looking to connect. And so there are going to be questions about whether or not the YPG are willing to continue pushing south of Raqqa.

The broader question that then needs to be addressed is what are going to be the security arrangements there. Who is the hold force, particularly in these predominantly Sunni-Arab towns? And what are going to be the governance arrangements in those areas?

And so I think this is going to be a particularly complicated battle space. It is going to be a contentious issue between the U.S. and Turkey, and I think all of the forces operating in this very congested battle space are going to continue to have the potential for conflict with each other because of the different competing alliances, not only between Turkey and the U.S., but also what some of these Kurdish and other forces are looking to achieve politically on the ground.

Senator MURPHY. Before I ask Dr. Cook to comment, that is because as we move further south, there is still the potential that we will be relying on the YPG or Kurdish-aligned forces. Are there new potential conflicts as we look to new partners as we move out of Raqqa and into parts south?

Dr. SLOAT. I think there is a question of who is going to be the force that is going to move on Deir ez-Zor, whether that force is going to get there before the regime and the Iranian-Russian-backed regime gets there, whether the YPG push down that far south. And it is also not clear to me that we have established who the hold force is going to be in Raqqa and beyond. And so, I think this is going to continue to be a live question.

Ideally we would be able to find some Sunni-Arab forces that we can work with as a partner force in this area, both to diversify the friends that we have on the ground and also to be working with a group of fighters that represents a broader swath of the Syrian population than the YPG necessarily does.

Senator MURPHY. Dr. Cook?

Dr. COOK. Thank you, Senator.

Just a few things to add in response to your initial question. Just sitting here, while I was listening to Dr. Sloat respond to you, I came up with at least six or seven different combinations of groups that will fight each other, are going to fight each other, or are fighting each other or could potentially fight with each other once Raqqa is liberated.

The one thing I do have to add is that, whatever assurances that the United States gets from any of these groups about what they will and will not do once Raqqa is liberated, we should discount im-



mediately, not the Turks, not the SDF, not the YPG, not the FSA who in August was firing on American forces, not any of these groups because we have a particular view of what should happen in Syria, and we have made common cause with groups that have a different view, but because they want our assistance, they are willing to tell us that they share our views. But once Raqqa is liberated, once Deir ez-Zor is likely to be liberated by government forces after the liberation of the garrison and the neighborhoods around it, I think all bets are off. I would expect that the YPG will want to move forward and try to bring together the independent cantons and create a territorially contiguous area which will draw the Turks further into the conflict in Syria. You are quite right that the liberation of Raqqa is certainly not the end game in Syria, and we will be dealing with this messy, at best, patchwork of different forces fighting each other for quite some time.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Risch?

Senator RISCH. Mr. Cook, in your testimony, you referenced denying Turkey access to high-tech weapons programs and development. Do you share the same sentiment when it comes to lower-tech arms, more conventional arms?

Dr. COOK. Thank you, sir.

I certainly believe that our commitment to Turkish security should remain and that Turkey should be able to defend itself. It lives in a very difficult and tough neighborhood.

However, my concern in suggesting that the Turks should be denied access to those weapons development is that it is almost a reward for Turkey's bad behavior, for its pursuing policies that undermine our own goals and interests, and for its—I would not even call it democratic backsliding. I would call it deepening authoritarianism in Turkey. What I am not calling for in my testimony is for a breach in relations between the two countries.

Senator RISCH. I get that. But why would the same argument not apply to low-tech?

Dr. COOK. As I said, making Turkey a partner in the development and deployment of the F-35 is a reward for bad behavior, whereas providing them with other weaponry that can help them defend themselves strike me as two different things.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Regarding Turkey joining the EU, could you talk a little bit about Turkey's ability to do that, how you see that?

Dr. COOK. Turkey technically remains a candidate for European Union membership. The European Commission offered Turkey an invitation to begin those negotiations in, I believe it was March 2005. Shortly after those negotiations began, a number of European countries essentially put those talks on hold. The reasons for that have to do with everything concerning Europe and Europe's inability to figure out what the European Union is, whether it is a geographic entity coterminous with predominantly Christian countries or whether the EU is a club of countries that have come together based on common ideals and principles related to democracy and freedom.

If it is the former, certainly Turkey, a country that is 99.8 percent Muslim, will never be able to join the European Union. If it

is the latter, at least in the abstract Turkey can become a member of the European Union. But under current conditions, the deepening authoritarianism in Turkey, the grave violations of human rights, by all measures the rigged referendum of last April, Turkey does not meet any of the political criteria to join the European Union.

Senator RISCH. Dr. Sloat, do you have a comment?

Dr. SLOAT. I think there is a debate going on within the European Union similar to the one that we are having here within the United States in terms of having a lot of concern about the domestic trends in Turkey but also recognizing the necessity of partnering with Turkey on some shared regional challenges and for the EU, to an even greater extent, the degree of economic cooperation that you have between the two countries. The EU also has a further interest in partnership with Turkey, which is Turkish assistance in managing the significant refugee flows coming out of Syria and heading into Europe.

Recently, the European Parliament has called to suspend accession talks with the Turks, and certainly relations between Turkey and some EU countries, particularly Germany, are at about the lowest point now that they have been. So I think a lot of people have been waiting to see what happens in the German elections, if Chancellor Merkel gets reelected, to see whether or not Turkey is able to move forward in terms of some of those accession talks.

Merkel has been making pretty significant noise about wanting to stop discussions about upgrading the Turkey-EU Customs Union, which is something the Turks have long wanted to do, and has expressed concern in recent days about moving forward with accession talks. There is an argument to be made to keep Turkey on that path because it binds it within a framework of values and rules that it needs to continue to aspire to. But certainly relations between the two sides are particularly tense right now.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thanks to the witnesses. Your written testimony is great, and I just really want to ask about one issue that I think we are grappling with here, and that is the strong relationship we have had with the Kurds in both northern Syria and northern Iraq. There is a Kurdish referendum in northern Iraq scheduled, I guess, for the end of this month. The administration has taken a very strong and clear position of requesting that that referendum be delayed on the theory that it could be very destabilizing right now.

The Turkish Government, Erdogan, has had a pretty strong degree, historically, of support for the Barzani Government in Erbil, but my understanding is that the Turks are very opposed to this referendum.

Talk to us a little bit about that tradition of support for the Barzani Government but why Turkey is opposed to the referendum and what might be consequences of it if it goes forward.

Dr. COOK. Thank you very much, Senator Kaine.

It was an extraordinary turnaround for Turkey. During the invasion of Iraq in 2003, it was the external power most likely to invade because of Kurdish nationalism in northern Iraq to some years later, 4 or 5 years later, establishing close ties with Masoud Barzani's KDP, the dominant party in the Kurdistan regional government, to the extent that more than 1,500 Turkish companies invested in the KRG. In Erbil, the capital of the KRG, it almost looks like a Turkish city in a lot of ways—and that there was a calculation on the part of the KDP, less so in the other major political group within the KRG, the PUK, but there was a calculation within the KDP that good relations between the KDP and President Erdogan's Justice and Development Party would reduce Turkish neuralgia over KRG independence and that the KDP would work against the PKK, this terrorist organization that has been battling the Turkish state since 1984, which accrued to the KDP's domestic political advantage anyway, since its rivals were supporting the PKK.

And even after the Islamic State overran Mosul in 2014, some Turkish officials even publicly stated that they did not have too much of a problem with the idea of an independent KRG because, given Iraq's problems, perhaps the KRG would be a buffer to the chaos that was enveloping Iraq. By and large that sentiment is no longer expressed publicly because of the return of the fight with the PKK in 2015 that has killed almost 3,000 people.

I think, broadly speaking, the Turks can accommodate an independent KRG, but while this battle is going on with the PKK. While there is terrorism in the streets in Turkey, they do not believe that this is a very good idea.

The question remains, however, should the KRG go forward with its referendum—and I have been assured by officials from the KRG that it will go forward. I have also been told that they will not immediately seek an exit from Iraq—what options do the Turks have. They are certainly not going to invade the KRG, but they can, given their extensive investment in the KRG, certainly do a significant amount of economic damage to a part of Iraq that desires to be independent but does not really have an economy that can support it.

Senator KAINE. Dr. Sloat, anything to add to that?

Dr. SLOAT. I would just add two additional points. One is the domestic concern for Erdogan is that the leader of the large nationalist party in Turkey, the MHP, has said that the Kurdish referendum should be viewed as a cause for war in Turkey. So I think Erdogan is also trying to balance his domestic considerations in terms of all of the things that Dr. Cook outlined in terms of some of the pragmatic approaches to regional politics with needing to shore up his nationalist base, especially in advance of these elections in 2019.

The second issue is the more geopolitical issue, which is his concern about what the Syrian Kurds are looking to do in northern Syria. There is also a concern that if you have an independence referendum and the KRG establishes an independent state essentially that it sets a precedent in the region, and it would be much easier for the Syrian Kurds to do the same thing there. That would be particularly anathema to the Turks because you have got two dif-

ferent factions of Kurds at play there, and the ones with the YPG that are affiliated with the PKK are seen as a much greater existential security threat to Turkey than the ones that Barzani is leading in the KRG.

Senator KAINE. Thank you for that.

I just want to clarify one thing because I want to make sure I have stated this administration's position correctly. They have been pretty blunt in stating and asking us to take the position that the timing of the referendum is very unhelpful. They have not told us that they oppose the referendum; they oppose Kurds being on a path towards self-determination. They just think the timing is not helpful. And I did not want to misstate what their position is.

Thank you for sharing the Turkish perspective on it. I think it is a really important issue.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Coons?

Senator COONS. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, thank you for holding this hearing.

And to Dr. Sloat and Dr. Cook, thank you for your testimony today on this complex and troubled relationship.

As has been spoken about, as you have testified to, Turkey has detained more than a dozen U.S. citizens since the July 2016 attempted coup, including a resident of Wilmington, Delaware, my hometown. And they have cracked down on human rights and on press organizations.

Why do you believe they are arresting such a significant number of American citizens? And my core question: what unused levers of influence might we have to push human rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law in Turkey in a positive direction in the months and years ahead? Dr. Sloat, if you would start.

Dr. SLOAT. My sense is two things are happening on the first part of your question, Senator.

First, I think some of these Americans are just unfortunately getting caught up in the broader sweep of what is happening in Turkey in terms of going after everyone who is being perceived in some way as supporting the Kurds, supporting the Gulenists, or supporting civil society organizations. Germany, for example, is having the same problem with several of its citizens being swept up in that.

Second, and I think it is particularly unfortunate, there is a sense that Turkey may be engaging in what I would call judicial blackmail. Others are calling it diplomatic hostage taking in terms of recognizing the significance of these individuals to the U.S. Government and determining that they perhaps have higher value to the U.S. than the Turks necessarily saw. So the Turks that end up using this as a negotiating point in their conversations with us and other allies where we point out that these individuals are wrongly imprisoned and should be freed, Turkey says it is a case for the judicial system the same way as when they ask us to release Gulen or Reza Zarrab, we tell them that this is a matter for the judicial system.

In terms of how we respond to this, my understanding is that the administration, certainly in the case of Pastor Brunson and others, has raised the issue at the level of President Trump, of Secretary Tillerson. I think we need to continue making the case to the Turks

on the need to release these American citizens who are being wrongly held. And secondly, we need to not let them engage in this form of judicial blackmail by using these people as bargaining chips to try and resolve some of their court cases through extrajudicial or other means but continue to hold firm to the judicial process we have here.

Senator COONS. Dr. Cook?

Dr. COOK. Thank you very much for the question.

In my written testimony and my oral summary, I referenced the Turkish officials politicizing the judicial process. This issue is what I am getting at. Dr. Sloat was very diplomatic, reflective of someone who has spent time at the State Department. I have not, so I do not feel the need to be as diplomatic.

Essentially these Americans who are being held are more than bargaining chips. Some might even call them hostages.

It is of crucial political importance for the Turks to make some headway in the extradition of Fethullah Gulen, the Pennsylvania-based cleric in exile who has been accused of masterminding the failed coup last July.

And more importantly to President Erdogan is the case of Reza Zarrab, an Iranian Turkish businessman who will go on trial in New York in the coming months accused of busting sanctions on Iran. Mr. Zarrab apparently is aware of Turkish Government officials at the highest level, their involvement in this and corruption around them, which is why this has become so important for President Erdogan to the point where he raised it with President Obama.

Senator COONS. If I might cut you off, I have got about a minute and a half left. I would like to ask you, just briefly, help me with a bigger question. Going forward, we have seen just a fundamental shift in U.S.-Turkey relations and the relations in Turkey and the EU and in NATO. What are the factors that ought to underpin, that could credibly underpin, the U.S.-Turkey relationship in this century going forward given where we are today. If you could both just give me a brief answer.

Dr. COOK. Very quickly, it strikes me that the ideas that formed our understanding of the U.S.-Turkey relationship are based on the previous half century and are no longer valid, and that we should look at the relationship purely in transactional terms.

Dr. SLOAT. I would cite three things.

The first is shared security concerns. Because of where Turkey is geographically, in order to resolve a lot of problems within the region, we need some degree of Turkish cooperation, if not acquiescence and partnership, to go forward.

Second, I think our economic relationship has long been underdeveloped. There have been continued efforts to try and strengthen that, and I think that is an area where we can do that. It is not only good for U.S. businesses, but it also can force Turkey to make necessary reforms that will improve stability and other mechanisms there.

And third, I think it is fundamentally important that we continue to support the people in civil society. If you look at the referendum results, at least 48 percent, if not more, of the country is opposed to what is happening in Turkey; and I think it is impor-

tant that we not abandon our friends there who are looking to maintain a more democratic trajectory in Turkey, counter to what is currently happening.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Dr. Sloat. Thank you, Dr. Cook. I appreciate your testimony, both of you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Markey?

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Cook, can you give us your assessment of the prospects for Turkey's democratic institutions?

Dr. COOK. Thank you very much for the question, Senator Markey.

Turkey was never much of a democracy to begin with. It did have the trappings of a democracy. At best, we could call it a semi-authoritarian system. Throughout, there have been free and fair elections and a dizzying array of coalition governments that are reflective of parliamentary democracies.

All that being said, the democratic institutions, political institutions of Turkey have either been hollowed out or they have been engineered in a way to advance the parochial political interests of President Erdogan or his broadly transformative national vision. The best example of that is the referendum that was held last April that changed 18 articles of the Turkish constitution that altered Turkey from a hybrid presidential parliamentary system to a purely presidential system, which will allegedly take place after the elections in 2019, but we already see the effects of it today.

What this means is essentially President Erdogan has taken advantage of these democratic political institutions to advance authoritarian politics in Turkey. So the prospects for Turkey's democratic institutions and the nature of institutions themselves have difficulties to change them over a long period of time, which suggests that Turkey's immediate and midterm future is likely to be authoritarian.

Senator MARKEY. So hundreds of thousands of people who have lost their jobs, the 100,000 people who were detained, the 50,000 arrests, all of this subsequent to the April 16 constitutional referendum, are an indication of how this consolidation of power has only further deteriorated the democratic institutions.

Dr. COOK. Two points of clarification, sir.

First, the purge, the widespread crackdown that you referred to, actually accelerated after the failed coup in July 2016. But it is a crackdown that has been going on at least for the two-and-half years before that failed takeover.

Senator MARKEY. So let me then go to, if I can, the Gulen question because on that night of the, quote/unquote, coup, that is all we heard from the Turkish leadership was Gulen, Gulen, Gulen and Pennsylvania. And everyone in America was scratching their heads saying there was a revolution that began in Pennsylvania that is about to take over Turkey.

So maybe you could, dr. Sloat, give us some information about what you think are the State Department views and actions that may be taken to ensure that Mr. Gulen, who has lived in the United States since 1999, is not subject to an extradition based

upon his political positions rather than any actions that can be attributed to him or his followers.

Dr. SLOAT. Thank you for the question, but I would like to clarify. While I worked for the State Department in the past, I am not working for the State Department now. So I do not want to be representing the State Department.

Senator MARKEY. I appreciate that. How do you like Cambridge?

Dr. SLOAT. You know, Turkey is much more interesting to watch from the outside than to—

Senator MARKEY. No. I am saying I know you are up in Boston. You are up in Cambridge.

Dr. SLOAT. Yes. It's a beautiful city.

I think there is a recognition that—

Senator MARKEY. Which is just the State Department in waiting for both parties, or it has been until this administration.

Dr. SLOAT. Fair enough.

I believe that the State Department, the Justice Department, the law enforcement agencies within the U.S. Government generally are taking very seriously Turkey's concerns about Gulen and about the followers of Gulen. And I think the fact that there is fairly widespread agreement across all political parties within Turkey about what is seen as Gulen's malign influence on society says something.

The State Department and Justice Department lawyers last fall met with Turkish officials who handed over large amounts of evidence about what they alleged was Gulen's complicity within the coup. As I understand it, there are continued conversations happening between U.S. officials and Turkish officials. Within extradition proceedings, we need to have sufficient evidence that a federal judge can determine probable cause to determine extradition which, as I understand it, the Turks have not yet provided to us. But there continue to be ongoing conversations, and I believe a commitment by the U.S. Government to help address Turkey's security concerns and do whatever is necessary to bring those responsible to justice.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Cardin?

Senator CARDIN. Dr. Sloat, I want to follow up on the human rights issues with your experience as a former person in the State Department. We have had problems with Turkey for a long time on human rights. I remember one time within the OSCE, the Helsinki Commission, we had testimony from one of the opposition figures in Turkey as a result of the testimony before our commission. That individual was indicted for treason.

So Turkey has a long history of concerns within complying with its OSCE commitments. It is a democratic country, but it is tending towards a one-party state. It has committed very serious violations of human rights. Pastor Brunson's detention is wrong, and if he is being held as a hostage, it even is more problematic as far as U.S. relations are concerned.

So how do we focus on being a voice for a large percentage of the Turkish people who look at the United States as one of their important allies for returning democracy and human rights to Turkey?

How do we reinforce that considering the serious challenges we have in our relationship?

Dr. SLOAT. Thank you for the question.

I think you are right about the trend in recent years, and you are also right about our obligation to continue supporting the 50-plus percent of Turkish society that wants to see the country continue going in a democratic direction.

I would disagree a little bit with Dr. Cook's characterization that certainly the Obama administration had been quiet on human rights, as I think it was something that was stated publicly as well as privately. And I think that is important.

The challenge in Turkey is that the country tends toward anti-Americanism already. There is a tendency to look for external bogeymen and others to blame for things. And so sometimes extensive and excessive public statements can end up backfiring within Turkey because they can get manipulated internally as external enemies.

That said, I think it is very important both for the Congress, for the administration, to continue making public statements of support for those supporting democracy within Turkey. I think it is important, when senior officials travel to Turkey, to continue meeting with those who are fighting for democracy, and I think it also needs to remain a significant part of our bilateral agenda with Turkey. I think there is a risk that we end up getting so focused on some of these shared security concerns that some of these rule of law things can drift off the agenda, and I think that is a significant mistake.

Senator CARDIN. That is my concern. Obviously, the urgency of dealing with the security issues, terrorism, our military-to-military—those issues become dominant in our debate, and we sort of do not put the proper attention on the deterioration of human rights.

Yes, I agree with you. I think our key diplomats need to be very visible on human rights issues, including meeting with those that are advocating for the return of human rights in Turkey. The challenge is how do we be even more visible in that support. What else can we do to underscore the importance to the relationship between Turkey and the United States that democratic institutions be restored and human rights respected?

Dr. SLOAT. I think while we need to continue the government-to-government dialogue on a lot of our shared security concerns, there also needs to be an effort to try and broaden the scope of our engagement with Turkey. And it is complicated, but I think that is where more people-to-people ties can play a part.

And I would also argue that is where trying to strengthen and deepen our bilateral trade agenda would come in because there is a way of being able to use economic engagement to motivate some reforms. The state of emergency, for example, is one of the biggest drags on foreign direct investment in Turkey right now because people do not have confidence that their property is not going to be seized, that cases are going to be litigated fairly within court. So the economics can not only be beneficial to American business, but it can also be another direction at getting at the importance of some of these rule-of-law issues.



Senator CARDIN. Dr. Cook, do you have any suggestions in regards to advancing human rights?

Dr. COOK. I do, sir.

If I may, let me just respond to a number of the comments that Dr. Sloat made. I certainly believe that we should be supporting our friends in Turkey, but I suspect that that group is a lot smaller than we suspect. There is a vast reservoir of anti-Americanism in Turkey. That includes people who are involved in civil society and other types of activist activity. In addition, I think that the broader public, given the narrative of the summer of 2016's failed coup d'état, that a Pennsylvania-based cleric with the support of the American Government was somehow involved in the failed effort has narrowed your average Turk's view of the United States.

In addition, I think that the private diplomacy that we conduct and whatever public criticism we have leveled against the Government of Turkey in the past—the effect has been the same. So I am not sure why we are reluctant to continue public criticism and, in fact, turn up the public criticism. At the very least—at the very least—we can be true to our values and perhaps we will get the Turkish Government's attention by being public in our censure of their human rights record.

I also want to point out that the deterioration of human rights in Turkey also has a profound impact on our own security. The widespread purges in Turkey have had a significant effect on the capacity of Turkish security forces, the Turkish armed forces, which is the second largest military in NATO after that of the United States, having a very hard time in its operations in Syria. It is a question whether Turkey actually can be that military partner in part because so many officers have been purged from the armed forces.

Finally, I want to add that it strikes me that it is important for the United States to publicly engage with Turkish officials and the Turkish public about the importance of human rights, about the importance of democratic institutions. I do not, unfortunately, believe that that is going to effect a significant change in the trajectory of Turkish politics if only because President Erdogan seems single-mindedly determined to undertake this transformation of Turkish politics, and the only way that he thinks that he can do it is by accumulating and consolidating personal power.

Senator CARDIN. I thank both of our witnesses. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both. You have been outstanding witnesses. I think the Turkish relationship has been thoroughly examined today, but there will be additional written questions, especially from people who were not here. So we would like to keep the record open until the close of business Monday. I know that both of you have day jobs, but to the extent you could answer the questions fairly promptly, we would appreciate it. Again, thank you for offering your expertise today and helping us as we think through this difficult relationship.

And with that, the meeting is adjourned. Thank you so much.

[Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]



## ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO  
DR. STEVEN A. COOK BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

The U.S.-Turkey relationship over the past couple of years has suffered numerous challenges over the past couple years, largely underlined by an extreme erosion of human rights and alarming decline of democratic values under President Erdogan's leadership.

While Turkey remains a NATO ally and a necessary partner in supporting Syrian refugees and other priorities in the region, it is critical that we continue to stress the importance of democratic institution and human rights that will ultimately help promote stability and security in Turkey and in the region.

*Question 1.* What implications has the "purge" since last summer's attempted coup had on:

- Domestic institutions in Turkey, particularly the judicial system and police?

Answer. The purge, which accelerated after the failed coup of July 2016, has hollowed out the national police force and the judiciary. President Erdogan and his supporters allege that the police and the judicial branch were hives of Gulenist activity and the Government has thus set out to replace police officers and judges with people who are loyal to the ruling Justice and Development Party. The result has been the further deterioration of legal norms and principles-like due process-that have contributed to the deepening of authoritarianism in Turkey.

- International institutions including Turkish delegations to NATO and the U.N.?

Answer. Many of the Turkish officers that staffed NATO were purged. This has had serious consequences for the ability of the Turks to work with NATO. Newly assigned officers to NATO commands lack the experience and linguistic proficiency to operate effectively within alliance structures. In addition, the lack of trust between the Government of Turkey and NATO has carried over to the Turkish personnel now assigned to staff NATO commands.

The Turkish diplomatic corps has been transformed into an arm of the Justice and Development Party, which has overseen a "de-professionalization" of Turkey's representatives abroad including at the U.N.

*Question 2.* How do you assess the Trump administration's response to Turkish security guards violently assaulting peaceful protestors in Sheridan Circle in Washington, D.C. in May of this year during President Erdogan's visit? Do you believe the administration has taken the appropriate steps to fully condemn this assault on American values and fundamental freedoms of free speech and assembly?

Answer. The Trump administration initially approached the assault with diplomatic skill, allowing the Metropolitan Police Department and the US Attorney to investigate the incident while condemning the violence from the podium at the State Department. This applied pressure on the Turks and gave the administration room for diplomatic maneuver. Yet after the Turks repeatedly lied about the incident, bismirched the Secret Service, and evidence emerged that President Erdogan may have ordered his team to take part in the melee, a more forceful response from the Trump administration was required.

It is important to note that the incident on Sheridan Circle is part of a pattern. President Erdogan's security team has a history of precipitating/engaging in fights with people both in Turkey and abroad.

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RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO  
DR. AMANDA SLOAT BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

The U.S.-Turkey relationship over the past couple of years has suffered numerous challenges over the past couple years, largely underlined by an

extreme erosion of human rights and alarming decline of democratic values under President Erdogan's leadership.

While Turkey remains a NATO ally and a necessary partner in supporting Syrian refugees and other priorities in the region, it is critical that we continue to stress the importance of democratic institution and human rights that will ultimately help promote stability and security in Turkey and in the region.

*Question 1.* What implications has the "purge" since last summer's attempted coup had on:

- Domestic institutions in Turkey, particularly the judicial system and police?
- International institutions including Turkish delegations to NATO and the U.N.?

*Answer.* While it is understandable the Turkish Government wants to bring to justice those responsible for plotting against the state and prevent similar events in the future, the purges have been excessively broad and not enabled sufficient redress. Their expansive nature has undoubtedly affected the institutional knowledge and effectiveness of institutions across the country, with a May 2017 Amnesty International report describing the impact on the public sector and lives of those dismissed. Press reports indicate over 4,000 judges and prosecutors, a quarter of the total, have been removed. Reports suggest 13,000 police were suspended from their positions in the months after the coup attempt, with over 2,000 more removed before the one-year anniversary. Turkey fired some senior military staff serving at NATO headquarters and European command centers. There have also been purges in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but I do not have information on how these dismissals have affected the composition of U.N. or other delegations.

*Question 2.* How do you assess the Trump administration's response to Turkish security guards violently assaulting peaceful protestors in Sheridan Circle in Washington, D.C. in May of this year during President Erdogan's visit? Do you believe the administration has taken the appropriate steps to fully condemn this assault on American values and fundamental freedoms of free speech and assembly?

*Answer.* The State Department released a statement condemning the violence and stressing the importance of free speech, and Under Secretary of State Tom Shannon summoned the Turkish Ambassador. In addition, the State Department has been working with Washington DC police and Secret Service to identify and hold accountable those individuals involved. It was disappointing the White House failed to address events that occurred immediately after President Trump's meeting with President Erdogan, which reportedly did not include discussion of human rights and rule of law. It is important for the Trump administration to raise both publicly and privately its expectation that the Turkish Government adhere to democratic principles.

#### *Cyprus*

*Question 3.* What implications does Erdogan's narrow victory in the referendum have on the ongoing negotiations of the Cyprus question?

*Answer.* The negotiation process is currently stalled, as U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres concluded the latest round in Crans-Montana in July 2017 after the parties failed to reach agreement. U.N. Special Envoy Espen Barth Eide has left his position. While there had been hopes for the development of a positive EU-Turkey agenda—to include Cyprus—after the German elections later this month, the current tensions between Ankara and Berlin diminish that prospect.

*Question 4.* Do you believe that Erdogan will be willing to agree to a withdrawal of Turkish troops from Cyprus?

*Answer.* Reports on the negotiations at Crans-Montana, Switzerland suggest Turkey expressed willingness as part of a settlement agreement to reduce its troop presence (currently estimated at 30,000-40,000) to the level of the 1960 Treaty of Alliance, which allowed 650 Turkish troops. The longevity of the troop presence was not resolved in the negotiations.

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LETTER SUBMITTED BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



September 5, 2017

Senator Bob Corker  
Chair, Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
1<sup>st</sup> and C Streets, NE  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Ben Cardin  
Ranking Member  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
509 Hart Senate Office Building  
2<sup>nd</sup> and C Streets NE  
Washington, DC 20510

**Re: Hearing on Priorities and Challenges in U.S. – Turkey Relationship**

Dear Chairman Corker and Ranking Member Cardin:

On behalf of Amnesty International USA and our more than one million supporters nationwide, we hereby submit this statement for the record. This statement addresses the deteriorating human rights situation in Turkey, with special attention to Amnesty International (“AI”) Turkey and other leading human rights defenders. President Erdogan’s assault on human rights defenders and government critics not only threatens civil society in Turkey, but also imperils the critical research, documentation, and advocacy work that AI and other human rights defenders do each and every day in Turkey and in countries all over the world.

Since the failed coup attempt in July 2016, Turkish authorities have waged a crackdown on human rights defenders, including arresting and imprisoning AI Turkey’s Director and AI Turkey’s Board Chair. These arrests represent a dangerous escalation of the ongoing attacks on individual rights and civil society in Turkey. Since the coup attempt, Turkish authorities have imprisoned at least 50,000 people pending trial, and more than 100,000 public sector employees have been summarily dismissed. Authorities have detained at least 130 journalists and media workers and have shut down over 100 media outlets as well as hundreds of non-governmental organizations.

This is the first time, since the founding of AI in 1961, that an AI country director and board chair have been arrested and imprisoned. The case against AI Turkey and other human rights defenders is unjust and represents a dangerous escalation of Turkey's suppression of civil society and individual freedoms. Turkey's imprisonment of leaders associated with the largest international grassroots human rights organization in the world – imperils human rights research, documentation, and advocacy not only in Turkey, but in all regions of the world. If the Turkey prosecutions are allowed to move forward without a strong clear response from the international community, it will not only threaten the work of AI and other human rights organizations in monitoring abuses but will also embolden authoritarian regimes around the world to continue committing human rights abuses, with impunity.

**Details concerning the arrest and imprisonment of AI Turkey human rights leaders:**

- (1) AI Turkey Board Chair: On June 6, 2017, AI Turkey Board Chair Taner Kılıç was detained by authorities. He has been remanded to pretrial detention, which is regularly used in political cases in Turkey and can result in months and even years in prison without a guilty verdict.
- (2) AI Turkey Director: On July 5, 2017, Ms. Idil Eser, AI Turkey Director, was detained by authorities, along with nine other human rights defenders while participating in a human rights workshop in a hotel in Istanbul. In recommending that Ms. Eser be remanded to pretrial detention, the prosecutors specifically referenced two AI campaigns, neither of which were organized by AI Turkey and one which was conducted prior to her joining AI. These bizarre accusations strongly suggest that Turkish authorities targeted Ms. Eser based on her association with AI and her participation in human rights work.

The two AI leaders were not arrested for the commission of any crime, but purely based on their human rights work to protect and defend the rights of others arrested and tortured by Turkish authorities. AI has declared these human rights defenders as prisoners of conscience and will continue fighting for their immediate and unconditional release.

**Policy recommendations:** While the State Department swiftly condemned the arrests of the AI Turkey Board Chair<sup>i</sup> and the AI Turkey Director,<sup>ii</sup> it is critical that the views of the U.S. government be communicated by President Trump and Secretary Tillerson to President Erdogan. U.S. leaders must

make clear to Turkey that business as usual cannot continue under these deteriorating human rights conditions.

AIUSA urges Congress to press Turkish authorities to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Ms. Eser, Mr. Kılıç, and other human rights defenders;
- Immediately and unconditionally dismiss all charges against Ms. Eser and Mr. Kılıç;
- Halt the arrest and detention of human rights defenders, journalists, academics, and activists jailed solely for their peaceful and legitimate work;
- Respect due process and other human rights, consistent with Turkey's international commitments.
- Protect free speech, public debate, and civil society.

Without a clear signal from the U.S. and the international community that these actions are intolerable, President Erdogan's crackdown will continue unabated. The costs for human rights in Turkey – and for human rights around the world – will be immense and too high a price to pay.

For more information, please contact me at [jlin@aiusa.org](mailto:jlin@aiusa.org) or 202/509-8151.

Sincerely,

Joanne Lin  
Senior Managing Director  
Advocacy and Government Affairs  
Amnesty International USA

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<sup>i</sup> Press Statement of State Department Spokesperson, "Detention of Amnesty International Chairperson on Turkey" (June 7, 2017) at <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/06/271631.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> Press Statement of State Department Spokesperson, "Detention of Human Rights Defenders in Turkey" (July 6, 2017) at <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/07/272390.htm>

