

of sexual exploitation and abuse' and which has failed to act appropriately in response. Given the increasing number of peacekeeping operations and the difficulties facing the Secretary-General in finding adequate numbers of military and police personnel to fulfil Security Council mandates, this could be a stringent requirement.

Recent reports have made stronger recommendations focusing more directly on direct UN action against accused individuals. For example, the Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and peace and security, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*, proposed a discussion with all relevant stakeholders to explore the feasibility of setting up an International Tribunal for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN peacekeepers and UN staff in the field. The UK House of Lords Select Committee's April 2016 report, 'Sexual Violence in Conflict: A War Crime', recommended the UK government use its influence to seek 'greater transparency with regards to the collection of data

and reporting of allegations of SEA' by peacekeepers and that it should pursue the option of the establishment of a 'tribunal "light" model'. Witnesses to the committee suggested that such a tribunal would comprise a standing roster of international and independent judges and potential staff that could be called upon as appropriate and would be available to sit where required.

In order to demonstrate that he is a man capable of working for the security of all – including women – the new Secretary-General must devote attention to ensuring that peacekeeping really does make its intended beneficiaries more, not less, safe and secure. One way to do this is by taking seriously these recommendations for a more robust way of ensuring the accountability of those who commit sexual violence in abuse of their position of trust, and to secure justice for those who have suffered in this way.

But ensuring that the blue helmets do not themselves become a source of insecurity is only a starting point. In order to deliver on the organisation's promise of peace and security, the

Secretary-General must take the myriad roles and expectations of women seriously, not only as victims of violence, but also as peacekeepers, combatants, peacemakers and human beings with certain inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms.

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Turkish Foreign Policy: Ankara Seeks to Take Advantage of Regional Rivalries

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Turkey's new foreign policy will see Ankara favouring closer ties with the US and Russia, and orienting away from Europe towards the Middle East.

When the 15 July coup attempt against his government failed, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan seized an opportunity to push forward yet another foreign policy reset. The new policy will see Ankara favouring closer ties with the US and Russia, and orienting away from Europe towards the Middle East.

This reorientation is also driven by the perception of an increased threat from the Kurds in Turkey and Syria. The reset was evident during the incursion by the Turkish army into the Syrian border town of Jarablus on 24 August as part of a wider campaign against the Kurds and Daesh (also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, ISIS).

The Jarablus incursion had the tacit approval of Russia.

The policy overhaul has been in the making since the forced departure of former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu in May. He had been the chief architect of Turkey's foreign affairs strategy during the past decade. However, his 'zero problems with

neighbours' policy could not stand up to the combined tests of the Arab Spring; the Israel-Palestine conflict; the Russo-Georgian war; the failed rapprochement between Armenian and Greek Cypriots; Iranian nuclear issues; and sectarian tensions in Iraq. Erdogan and Davutoglu replaced the over-cautious, risk-averse, ineffective foreign policy of the Kemalist establishment – which was fully dependent on the US – with a proactive, ambitious, but largely unsustainable strategy. Ankara's biggest foreign policy failure, however, was the Syrian crisis. Probably no other country got Syria more wrong than Turkey.

Erdogan was likely forced into a foreign policy reset after a Turkish Air Force F-16 fighter jet shot down a Russian Sukhoi Su-24M bomber in November 2015. Moscow reacted by deploying an advanced air-defence system in Syria, effectively closing its airspace to the Turkish Air Force. As a result, during the eight months following the incident Ankara found itself pushed into a corner, unable to help its allies in Syria because of the Russian air defences and the Kurdish-controlled strip in northern Syria.

Erdogan realised that having hostile relations with Russia and Iran further diminished Turkey's leverage on the US and the EU

The Erdogan administration had also burned its bridges with Israel and Egypt; although relations are still strained with Cairo, there has been a thaw with Jerusalem. Turkey was also receiving the cold shoulder from Baghdad and Tehran – it was frequently criticising Iran for its support of President Bashar Al-Assad's regime. Ankara's relationship with its Western allies was also going through a rough patch due to differences of opinion over Syria and Turkey's domestic policies, which were criticised by the US and the EU. Erdogan realised that



Turkish soldiers and civilian supporters of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul during the failed coup attempt on 16 July 2016. Courtesy of Emrah Gurel/AP Photo.

having hostile relations with Russia and Iran further diminished Turkey's leverage on the US and the EU.

The reset has come at a time when the Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by the mainly Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), were poised to take from Daesh the stretch of land between two Kurdish enclaves. At the same time, pro-Turkey Syrian rebels in and around Aleppo faced being wiped out due to a renewed offensive by forces loyal to Assad. All this added up to a disaster in the making in the eyes of those responsible for Turkey's foreign policy.

Ankara believed that the solution to its problems would be the establishment of a buffer zone in northern Syria. But it became apparent, a year after Turkey first proposed this idea to an international anti-Assad bloc, that there was no appetite for it in the West, which did not want a direct confrontation with Russia, the Syrian regime and Iran.

In a bid to prevent the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish region in northern Syria, Turkish government officials started publicly appealing to the Syrian regime, Iran and Russia. Speaking to *Reuters* on the condition

of anonymity, a senior official from Turkey's ruling AK Party said in June:

Assad is, at the end of the day, a killer. We are not going to change our stance on that. But he does not support Kurdish autonomy. We may not like each other, but on that, we're backing the same policy.

A couple of weeks later, Erdogan sent a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin, in which he expressed regret for the downing of the Russian jet and called for a rapprochement between Turkey and Russia. And, in a departure from previous statements, he also refrained from demanding that Assad step down as a precondition for talks on Syria's future.

Turkey's new foreign policy is based on exploiting geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the US by using Ankara's good relations with both. Erdogan's advisers believe that Turkey would be able to engage with Russia as an ally of the US, while enhancing ties with Washington by stressing its good relations with Moscow. Erdogan's foreign policy team believes that Turkey cannot fill the gap left by the US in the Middle East by directly confronting Russia.

Despite recent claims by some senior Turkish officials that the US was behind the failed coup, Ankara's foreign policy is now more, not less, in line with Washington's on the Middle East. The Turkish incursion into Syria is broadly in line with US policy, as long as it opens a supply route to rebels in Aleppo and prevents full Daesh control of the area between Jarablus and Azaz, about 20 miles to the north of the besieged city. The incursion itself would not have been possible without US support and the fact that Turkey is taking most of the risk is even better for its Western allies.

Turkey's new foreign policy is based on exploiting geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the US

The Erdogan administration, having sacked more than one-third of the military general staff post-coup attempt, which diminished its military capacity, has started to value NATO membership more than ever. However, Turkey's relationship with another major institutional ally, the EU, is a different story. Ankara has realised that the protracted process to join the EU comes with a lot of strings attached. Add to that the major internal crises of the EU, such as financial meltdown in Greece, the Mediterranean refugee crisis and Brexit, and the prospect of membership does not look as inviting as before.

Davutoglu put a lot of emphasis on relations with the EU towards the end of his premiership, but his policy was not fully backed by Erdogan. The president's advisers believe that the EU's role as a global actor will continue to diminish over the next couple of decades. They say that Turkey, instead of putting too much effort into good ties with the EU, should focus more on relations with the US and Russia and engage more with the Middle East.

Erdogan believes that a weaker and divided EU is in Turkey's interests. As far he is concerned, it has become

clear that the bloc will not accept Turkey, a Muslim-majority country, as a member. That is why Erdogan was quick to congratulate the British public for voting for Brexit. Ankara is likely to exploit differences between the UK, Germany and the rest of the EU in the coming years, and the UK's close alliance with the US could give London an advantage in this triangular relationship.

The trade aspect of better relations between Turkey and Russia appears to be gaining traction. However, the relationship between these two former imperial rivals is much more complex. Syria can still cause a rift between the two countries. Despite Turkey's softening of its stance on Assad, if it fails to drop the support it gives to anti-regime rebels who are being bombarded by Russia, the current cosy up will remain limited.

The crisis between Moscow and Ankara showed that Russia has more options to hit Turkey economically (via tourism, gas deals and stopping investment into its nuclear energy infrastructure) and politically (by extending support for Syrian and Turkish Kurds). Thus, Turkey needed Russian goodwill more than vice versa. This asymmetric balance of power gave Russia the upper hand in negotiations to improve relations between the countries.

Post-failed coup Turkey is also trying to improve ties with Iran, which prefers a weakened Erdogan administration to any other possible leadership alternative for the country. But, the two countries are still engaged in a proxy war in Syria. Turkish rapprochement with Iran and Russia and the softening of its stance on Assad helped Ankara to secure a conditional agreement to move into Syria against – primarily – the Kurds and Daesh.

However, having better relations with Iran did not produce a thaw in Ankara's relations with Tehran's allies in Baghdad. In several speeches after the Syria incursion, Erdogan made clear his desire to carry out an incursion into Iraq similar to the one in Syria. This prompted the Iraqi government to threaten Turkey with a regional war. Since then the brinkmanship on both sides has continued unabated. Erdogan

has deployed tanks and artillery to the Iraqi border and Iraq's Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi, responded by saying '[If] a confrontation happens, we are ready for it. We will consider [Turkey] an enemy and we will deal with it as an enemy', adding: 'The invasion of Iraq will lead to Turkey being dismantled'. The current alignment of regional forces makes it highly unlikely that Erdogan will carry out an incursion against the will of the Iraqi government.

Turkey, Iran and Syria share an interest in rolling back Kurdish gains in Syria, despite being at loggerheads on other issues

Turkey, Iran and Syria share an interest in rolling back Kurdish gains in Syria, despite being at loggerheads on other issues. And Iran sees a benefit in cooperating with Turkey against the Kurds as it would weaken a US ally in Syria. Syria also wants to keep the Kurds in check, as evidenced by recent fighting between regime forces and the YPG. However, it is unrealistic to expect that political cooperation between Ankara and Damascus will extend beyond stopping the Kurds.

Turkey's protracted conflict with the Kurds is putting a brake on its attempts to exploit contradictions between regional and international powers. Ankara is backing itself into a corner, and its foreign policy in Syria and Iraq has become an extension of its domestic conflict. Without moving away from prioritising its conflict with the Kurds, Ankara will be unable to conduct an independent, effective and influential foreign policy.

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