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Glossary

AOG	Armed Opposition Group
GoR	Government of Russia
GoS	Government of Syria
GoT	Government of Turkey
HTS	Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (alliance of 'extreme' AOGs, notably Jabhat al-Nusra)
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KSA	Kurdish Self-Administration
DBP	Democratic Regions' Party
HDP	Peoples' Democratic Party
SDF	Syrian Democratic Force (mostly made up of and led by YPG forces, approximately 10% are from Arab tribes)
YPG	Peoples Protection Unit

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Sources of information include Mercy Corp Humanitarian Access Team (MC HAT), INSO, and websites including, but not exclusive, Institute for the Study of War, Chatham House, Human Rights Watch, Al Jazeera, SouthFront, Rudaw, and Al-Monitor.

In the text when '*Comment: ...*' appears in *italic* and the subsequent text is also in *italic*, this information is not fact, but the opinion of the author.

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Locations	Risk Level	Comment	Forecast
Turkey except for those areas specified below	Low	<i>The number of terrorist incidents, especially those targeting civilians and internationals have reduced significantly over the last 2 years. Post-coup policing has been very effective in eliminating terrorist and militant activity.</i>	Risk levels are expected to remain low. However, due to the political sensitivity in the country, visitors should refrain from openly criticising the government.
With-in 5km of Syrian border	High	<i>Tensions are particularly high on the border with Syrian territory controlled by the Kurdish Self-Administration. GoT forces regularly shoot small and heavy weapons across the border at YPG targets.</i>	<i>Tensions on the border with the Kurdish Self-Administration will remain high & could increase should Turkey launch an offensive into the Kurdish region. On the border with areas controlled by Turkey & its aligned AOG, risk levels may reduce in the medium term as Turkey reinforces its control over the region it occupies in northwest Syria.</i>
Turkey South East: Sirnak, Hakkari, Diyarbakir, Van, Batman, Siirt, Bitlis	High	<i>Even though the threats in these areas are indirect, there are numerous Police/military checkpoints and often curfews. Visitors will raise suspicion with the authorities and visits must only be made if essential.</i>	<i>PKK attacks and anti-PKK operations by the police & military will remain high. The risk-level is expected to remain high and may increase in some areas should the GoT launch an offensive against the Kurdish Self-Administration in Syria.</i>

1. Domestic News

ECONOMIC TROUBLES

Economic growth in Turkey was 7.4% in 2017, one of the highest in the world. However, in 2018 the economy grew 7.3% in the 1st quarter, 5.3% in the 2nd quarter and 1.6% in the 3rd. Turkey continues to go through an economic crisis marked by rising unemployment and inflation (25.2% in 2018), a growing external debt burden and a highly volatile Turkish lira.

Comment: Turkey's economic troubles are compounded by its poor relations with the west. The GoT is building its economic ties with Russia and China, notably Nov 2018 saw the completion of the TurkStream pipeline that will deliver Russian natural gas across the Black Sea to Turkey and then onto Europe. However, economic ties with Europe are far more important to Turkey if its economy is to recover. Germany, in particular, is essential to a recovery. Germany was the top importer of Turkish goods and the second largest exporter to Turkey. However, in 2017 German annual investment fell to \$295 million from \$1.9 billion in 2013. Worse still, 4.5 billion euros (\$5.1 billion) were transferred from Turkey to Germany in the second quarter of 2017 as Turkey's economic crisis developed. The GoT needs to mend fences with European leaders if he wants to find the money to withstand its huge debt and stop the transfer of foreign capital out of the country.

GoT PURGE

On 10 December 2018, the website 'Turkey Purge' <https://turkeypurge.com> reports that since 15 July 2016:

- 217,971 people have been detained in Turkey
- 82,142 have been arrested
- 319 journalists arrested (a third of the journalists imprisoned around the world are in Turkey)
- 4,463 judges & prosecutors have been dismissed
- 189 media outlets shutdown

In Nov 2018 alone 270 arrest warrants were issued by Turkish courts for individuals accused of having links with the Gulen Movement, whom the Turkish government accuse of being behind the 2016 coup attempt. Note the Turkish government and aligned media call the movement Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETÖ); this is not a name adapted by the Gulen Movement. Most of the 270 are army, air force and navy personnel.



Turkey

— International boundary

IRREGULAR MIGRANT FIGURES

The GoT Ministry of Interior stated that for the first 11 months of the year Turkish security forces have held 251,794 irregular migrants, this is a 56% increase compared to the same period in 2017. In 2017 the majority came from Pakistan, followed by Afghans and Syrians. In 2018, Turkey had also deported 53,860 people and arrested 5,522 human smugglers. Turkey remains the main route for migrants and refugees wanting to enter Europe.

PKK RELATED INCIDENTS

At the end of Oct 2018 in Mardin province, police seized a vehicle carrying around 247kg of explosives, bomb-making materials, a rifle and ammunition. Five suspects were arrested. The authorities said that the PKK were responsible.

On 11 Nov in Sirnak province, 2 Turkish soldiers were killed and five injured in an IED attack most probably carried out by the PKK.

The 27 Nov was the 40th anniversary of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militant group. On the 24 Nov 12 suspected members of the PKK were arrested in Istanbul. The suspects were reportedly planning to carry out IED attacks to mark the party's founding.

Interior ministry announced police had detained 687 suspects and arrested 125 for alleged links to PKK in Oct 2018. Authorities detained at least 40 members of pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and sister Democratic Regions' Party (DBP) in Mersin, Batman, Ankara, Izmir and Istanbul.

ERDOGAN DISMISSES EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS RULING

On 20 Nov, President Erdogan dismissed a European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruling calling on Turkey to release Selahattin Demirtas, former co-chairman of the pro-Kurdish HDP. Demirtas was detained in November 2016 and is facing multiple terrorism charges.

2. Syria and International News

TALKS ON ENDING THE WAR IN SYRIA

Turkey continues to take an international lead in talks to find a solution to the war in Syria. On 27 Oct it hosted the leaders of Russia, France and Germany in Istanbul to discuss developments regarding Syria. Reportedly the discussions focused on three main issues:

- Idlib and the Demilitarization Zone. *Comment: Idlib is a concern for GoT who want to avoid a Syrian offensive and the resulting displaced civilians crossing into Turkey. Turkey probably also wants to maintain its influence in the region and keep the Russian out of the northwest of the country.*
- The return of Syrian refugees. *Comment: This is of importance to Turkey and the European countries.*
- A political solution to the Syria crisis — including the formation of Syrian Constitutional Committee as agreed at the Sochi summit in Jan 2018. *Comment: Russia has taken a lead in the development of a new constitution as it will keep them in a central role in Syria and give them international standing in finding a political solution to the crisis.*

After the summit the four leaders issued a joint statement that emphasized the need to maintain Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the necessity of continuing the fight against terrorism, the need for resolving the Syrian crisis through a "negotiated political process," and called for conditions to enable "safe and voluntary return of refugees to Syria." The four leaders also supported the Russian-Turkish Sochi deal for a demilitarization Zone in Idlib.

Comment: The summit in Istanbul was also an opportunity for Russia to involve the Europeans in the development of Syria away from U.S. plans. Russia will also be hoping to have the Europeans carry some of the financial burden in redeveloping the country, whilst not diminishing its own hold on the region. It is also noteworthy that the Iranians did not attend the summit; this was necessary to make the European feel comfortable with their involvement.

At the end of Nov, the 11th Astana talks took place. Orchestrated by the governments of Turkey, Russia and Iran, the talks were to center on humanitarian issues. However, the main outcome was the GoS reinforcing its rejection of UN involvement in the Syrian Constitutional Committee and that it would only accept amendments to the current constitution. This goes against the outcome of talks at the Sochi summit and GoR efforts to deliver a constitution and a final political solution to the war. *Comment: It is unclear if Russia is party to the GoS reversal concerning a new constitution, especially as it seemed to be an important part of their strategy.*

THE ASSASSINATION OF JAMAL KHASHOGGI

The assassination by the Government of Saudi Arabia of reporter Jamal Khashoggi on 2 Oct 2018 continues to dominate the news and geopolitics. On 10 Nov President Erdogan stated that the audio recordings related to the killing had been given to Britain, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia and the United States. At the end of Nov President Erdogan demanded the extradition of those responsible - Saudi Arabia claimed to have arrested 18 suspects in Oct. *Comment: The assassination has worked well for Erdogan by raising his international profile and, ironically, presents him in a favorable humanitarian light. More importantly it has proved to be a useful weapon in the regional power struggle between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and given Erdogan leverage in his dealings with the Saudis and the U.S. who want to limit the damage to Saudi leadership.*

RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.A

Relations between the governments of Turkey and the U.S. continued to be complex. In Oct and early Nov relations improved with:

- Turkey's release of U.S. pastor, Andrew Brunson, in Oct 2018.
- The U.S. granting Turkey a waiver from the oil sanctions on Iran in early Nov.
- The U.S. government's praise of President Erdogan on his stance over the Saudi assassination of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi.
- The implementation of the Menbij Road Map in early Nov and subsequent joint Turkey-U.S. military patrols on the outskirts of the city.
- The U.S. putting a bounty on 3 leading PKK members.

However, strong issues still remain, notably:

- U.S. refusal to extradite Fethullah Gülen to Turkey.
- Turkey plans to purchase the S-400 missile-defense system from Russia, despite the threat of sanctions from the U.S.
- The U.S. congress is evaluating Turkey's continued participation in building the F-35 stealth jet.
- The U.S. prosecution of Turkish nationals in relation to breaking the sanctions on Iran.
- The U.S. continued support of the Kurdish led SDF in northeast Syria and the establishment of U.S. Observation Posts on the Syria-Turkey border at conflict hotspots.

Comment: The lead issue for the Turks is the U.S. continued support to the SDF. The driver for the U.S. in the decision to back the SDF is not only the fight against IS, but also so the SDF and Kurdish Self-Administration (KSA) can act as a counter to Iran's growing influence in Syria and Iraq. In Oct and early Nov, actions by the Turkish military strongly suggested they were planning a limited military incursion into areas controlled by the KSA and SDF. In response the U.S. is placing its Observation Posts at these hotspots, allegedly to assist the Turks in their fight against the PKK, but it is undoubtably to stop a Turkish incursion. Despite this Erdogan has publicly stated a new offensive against the Kurdish controlled region will start in Dec 2018.