



It's time to kick Turkey out of NATO - former Reagan adviser

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Bringing Turkey and its nascent democracy into NATO was always a bit of a stretch, but today it makes even less sense and Turkey should be expelled from the alliance, said an analysis for The American Conservative.

Turkey has proven over the years to be politically unstable, with occasional military interference in governance, Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan, wrote on Wednesday.

He pointed to Turkey's invasion of Cyprus in 1974, and nearly going to war with Greece, in addition to military-backed coups in 1980 and 1997. Then, in refusing to allow the U.S. to open a northern front against Iraq from Turkish territory in 2003, Ankara created a rift with the Pentagon, said Bandow, adding that Turkey went on to play a largely malign role in Syria.

The government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan let the Islamic State (ISIS) militants pass through Turkey and enter Syria and in early 2018 launched an offensive against Syrian Kurds who had cooperated with U.S. forces against ISIS.

Ankara also turned against Israel, refused to recognise Greek airspace surrounding islands near Turkey, and remained a major obstacle to a settlement in Cyprus, according to Bandow.

“The discovery of undersea natural gas fields in Cypriot waters led to further conflict between the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey, eliciting retaliation by the European Union,” he said.

Erdoğan accused the U.S. of involvement in the failed coup three years ago, criticised Washington for not deporting the Turkish cleric Ankara sees as behind the coup plot and arrested several Americans, including pastor Andrew Brunson, to use as bargaining chips, said Bandow.

But the real problem, he added, is Ankara's purchase of Russian S-400 air defence missiles, which was spurred by growing estrangement from the United States and Europe.

U.S. officials repeatedly warned that the S-400 posed a threat to U.S. systems, particularly the F-35 stealth fighter. Last week, the Pentagon expelled Turkey from the F-35 programme, denying it an estimated \$9 billion in business. Congress is also calling for economic sanctions on Turkey, as per a 2017 law that bars U.S. allies from buying Russian arms, but President Trump is dragging his feet.

“A better approach would be to eschew further sanctions and press for suspension of Turkey’s membership in NATO, with expulsion likely to follow,” said Bandow. “The only serious potential security threat to Europe today is from Russia. Yet Turkey cannot be trusted to take NATO’s side in a conflict.”

Ankara’s foreign policy now diverges so greatly from that of the West that it has effectively chosen to leave the alliance, he argued.

“The U.S. and other members should ratify that decision and work with Turkey to create a new cooperative framework when their interests align. New circumstances require new policies,” said Bandow.