

▶ Hollen, a Maryland Democrat, have crafted a more muscular package.

The crisis has also triggered another threat to Turkey's economy, albeit indirectly. On October 16th prosecutors in New York unsealed an indictment against Halkbank, one of Turkey's biggest state lenders, accusing "high-ranking" Turkish officials of operating a scheme to bypass American sanctions against Iran. Mr Trump is reported to have tried to stymie aspects of this case at Turkey's bidding. According to Timothy Ash, an analyst at BlueBay Asset Management, the fact that the prosecutors

have now made their move shows that "developments in Syria and impeachment have broken the dam." The news had an immediate impact on Turkey's banking sector. The bank index dropped by 4%, with Halkbank shares down 7.2%. The government banned short-selling in the stock of Halkbank and six other banks.

Mr Graham also talks of suspending Turkey from NATO. This is nonsensical: the North Atlantic Treaty offers no mechanism for suspensions or expulsions. What is more, Turkey really matters to NATO; its well-trained forces, on which it has been

spending a lot, are woven deeply into the alliance's fabric. The NATO land command is hosted in Izmir; one of its nine "high-readiness headquarters", which could command tens of thousands of troops in a crisis, is just outside Istanbul. Turkey's navy plays a key role in the Black Sea, a priority since Russia seized Crimea. It has almost 600 troops in NATO's mission in Afghanistan. Radars on its territory scan the skies between Iran and Europe for missiles. And it hosts American B61 nuclear bombs as part of NATO's nuclear-sharing scheme.

Turkey and its NATO partners have been increasingly at odds over the past few years. America's embrace of the YPG was one factor. So was the dismissal of thousands of Turkish officers after the attempted coup against Mr Erdogan in 2016; "A drastic de-NATO-isation of the Turkish armed forces" as a report for the Clingendael Institute, a Dutch think-tank, puts it. Turkey's purchase of the \$400 air-defence system from Russia made matters worse.

An EU arms embargo enacted on October 14th will hurt Turkey: about a third of its arms imports come from Spain and Italy. But if such actions push it towards a negotiating table, it will be a table supplied by the Russians—who will be quite happy to supply arms, too, as part of an eventual deal. While it will remain part of the alliance, Turkey may start fielding ever-less-interoperable weapons, and sharing ever fewer goals.

It may also rethink its attitude to Syrian refugees. Part of Turkey's justification for its excursion into Syria is the creation of a safe space to which Syrian refugees can return—or, if necessary, be sent. If stymied, it might yet decide instead to let them through into Europe.

Some, though, will not go anywhere. In Akcakale on the Turkish-Syrian border, Ahmet Toremén, a construction worker, walks past the broken window-frames, burnt mattresses and bloodstains covering the bottom floor of his ramshackle house. It was hit by Kurdish mortar fire from Syria. At least 20 civilians have died in such attacks, according to officials in Ankara. For Mr Erdogan their deaths offer a chance to show that the war was a matter of necessity, not choice. He can rely on no Turkish newspaper pointing out that there were no such attacks before October 9th, just as they do not report the civilians being killed in Syria. On October 16th the Syrian Observatory on Human Rights put this toll at 71, along with 15 killed in an air strike on a humanitarian convoy.

Mr Toremén's family was next door when the shell landed in the corner of their living room; the house had been rented out to a Syrian family. One woman was blinded, one wounded and the family's baby was killed. "They escaped war", says Mr Toremén, "and war found them here." ■

Kurdish homelands

No fixed abode

America's abandonment caps a century of global duplicity

THE TREATY OF SEVRES, signed in 1920, carved the carcass of the Ottoman Empire into a number of nation states, including a "Kurdish State of the Kurds ... east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia." It would, said Winston Churchill, Britain's minister of colonies, be "a friendly buffer state" between Turks and Arabs.

Three years later, the Treaty of Lausanne ditched the idea. Britain was too spent by the first world war to fight another battle with Turkey, resurgent under Kemal Mustafa Ataturk. Iraq's new Hashemite king needed the Kurds, who were Sunnis, to dilute his Shia majority. And some of the Kurds, who were new to the idea of nationalism, rebelled, demanding the restoration of Ottoman rule. That led to bombings by the newly formed Royal Air Force.

The Kurds were to spend the next century strewn across four states, each determined to crush their nationalist dreams. Occasionally someone would seem to help. In 1946, the Soviet Union stood up a Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in an attempt to create a client state and keep control of northern Iran, which it had said it would leave. Western pressure brought about its collapse in less than a year. In the early 1970s the American secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, instructed the CIA to help Israel and the Shah of Iran stoke a Kurdish rebellion in Iraq as a way to sap the Baathist regime's aspirations for Arab hegemony. But in 1975 the shah cut the Kurdish lifeline. "Fuck [the Kurds] if they can't take a joke," shrugged Mr Kissinger. Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard obliged.

In the later part of Saddam's war with

Iran, his cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid waged a genocidal campaign against the Kurds, emptying 80% of the Kurdish villages in Iraq's three northern provinces as the West looked the other way. Still, when President George Bush called on Iraqis "to force the dictator to step aside" during the 1991 Gulf war the Kurds obligingly rose up. This time, the West imposed a no-fly zone in the skies of northern Iraq and encouraged an autonomous Kurdish government beneath it. But when in 2017 those Iraqi Kurds held a referendum to press their demands for statehood, the West ignored it.

To be the underdog is not to be blameless. The Kurdish record features internecine conflicts, smuggling, sanctions-busting and banditry. Armenians remember them as the Turks' foot-soldiers in the genocide. Arabs in parts of Iraq and Syria captured by Kurds chafe at their second-class status. The Middle East has few saints. But it also has few peoples more regularly betrayed than those now fleeing the Turks in Syria.



Kurdish population Majority Minority
Treaty of Sevres, 1920
Territories earmarked for a Kurdish state
Under Turkish control Under British control
Source: Dr. Michael Izady, Columbia University