

# Erdogan sees 'new page' in Turkey-US ties

Istanbul

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan voiced confidence yesterday that he and Donald Trump can open a "new page" in troubled Turkey-US ties when they meet next month, after discord over Syria and last year's failed coup.

The May summit between Erdogan and Trump, their first face-to-face encounter as heads of state, is a chance to mend a relationship between two key NATO allies that was strained by a series of disputes under former president Barack Obama.

"I believe that we will open a new page with Mr Trump in Turkey-US relations," Erdogan told the Atlantic Council Istanbul summit ahead of the May 16 meeting in the United States.

Erdogan made clear he expected a turnaround from Trump on the use of the Syrian Kurdish Peoples' Protection Units (YPG) as the chief US ally on the ground in Syria in the battle against Islamic State (IS) jihadists.

Turkey says the YPG is merely the Syrian branch of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged an insurgency inside Turkey since 1984 that has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

"We expect our American friends to better understand the threats our country is facing and to show the solidarity that we need," said Erdogan.

He said that "concrete support"



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan gestures as he gives a speech on April 28, 2017 during the Atlantic Council summit in Istanbul.

given to the YPG by the United States in Syria was "harming the spirit of alliance and partnership."

### 'Fools'

His comments came after Turkey this week bombed YPG positions in Syria, prompting American accusations the strikes were not properly coordinated.

There have also been three straight days of border clashes between the Turkish army and the YPG, the latest in the Ceylanpinar district of Turkey's southern Sanliurfa province. Eleven "terrorists" were killed, the Turkish army said.

Erdogan warned the YPG that Turkey would "take this kind of measure as long as the threats continue".

Blasting "fools" who he said were trying to form a Kurdish state in northern Syria, he vowed: "We will not

allow the formation of such a state."

The spat over the YPG has so far held up any plan for Turkey and the United States to work together in Syria to prise the jihadist de-facto capital of Raqqa out of IS hands.

Erdogan said 2,500-5,000 IS fighters were believed to still be in Raqqa. A joint operation with the United States but excluding the YPG to take Raqqa "would be nothing difficult for us. We can do this together," said Erdogan.

But Erdogan praised Trump for showing a "more determined" approach than Obama against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad after the air strikes this month that followed a suspected chemical attack.

"It was late coming but something that we welcomed," he said. "The Assad regime has seen for the first time in six years that there will be no silence to the massacre of innocents."



Activists are covered with blankets in front of a tank to protest against plans of German military technology group Rheinmetall to build a tank factory in Turkey in front of the Bundestag in Berlin.

## Turkish army, Kurdish militia in new clashes

Istanbul

New clashes erupted yesterday between the Turkish army and a Syrian Kurdish militia seen as a terror group by Ankara but as a key ally by the United States in the fight against jihadists, the Turkish army said.

Rockets fired from an area in Syria controlled by the Kurdish Peoples' Protection Units (YPG) targeted a Turkish army command post in the Ceylanpinar district of Turkey's southern Sanliurfa province.

The Turkish army fired back, killing 11 "terrorists", it said. There were no reports of casualties on the Turkish side.

This was the third day in a row

clashes have been reported across the tense border after the Turkish air force earlier this week bombed YPG targets in Syria.

The US State Department has said it was "deeply concerned" that the strikes were conducted "without proper coordination" either with the United States or the broader global coalition" against the Islamic State group (IS).

Russia's foreign ministry on Wednesday meanwhile said Turkey's bombing raids were unacceptable and called on all sides to show restraint.

But Ankara insisted that Washington and Moscow had been properly informed ahead of time.

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