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**STABILIZING OR DESTABILIZING?
RECONSIDERING
THE REVELANCY OF TURKEY'S NATO MEMBERSHIP.**

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is the Republic of Turkey's involvement in NATO with a special attention to Turkey's gradual withdrawal from NATO member countries. Additionally, this study will also analyze the influences of Turkey's maneuvers in international affairs to NATO's internal strategic concerns. After going through decades of democratization process, membership in NATO and great access to relations with the West that last until the present day, this study also offers reviews of Turkey's urgency and relevancy to perpetuate its NATO membership. The purpose of this study is to understand and identify the relationship between Turkey's international activities, Turkey's socio-political conditions at home and their effects to Turkey's position inside NATO. The data were collected by means of library research and online library research. The principle result of this study is that Turkey's entry into NATO and the drastic democratization in 1950 are all influenced by the international affairs in that period (after the First World War to the Cold War era). The final conclusion of this study is that Turkey is a less practically beneficial country for NATO now and NATO is no longer an essential need for Turkey, as Turkey has gained more self-confidence internationally and thus being no longer reliant on NATO protection, inter alia it is more willing to risk experiments in exercising its foreign affairs.

KEYWORDS: *Turkey, NATO, the West, democratization, coup*

INTRODUCTION

Turkey is known for its unique geographical location at the nexus of Europe and the Middle East. Its prominence as a secular, democratic, and Westward country emboldened Turkey's integrality to Middle Eastern, European, and U.S. foreign policy. For example,

Turkey has been a crucial partner in addressing the European Refugee Crisis, combating terrorism, and promoting democracy outside its borders. This unique role stemmed from the Ottoman Empire era and its predominant fascination of westernization. The desire to become close with the West then pushed Turkey towards reformations that happened in several different eras, and culminated in the establishment of Turkey as a modern, democratic and secular republic in 1923.

However, even up until now, many elements of the republic were still needed to be perfected if it was to follow the complete democratic ideals of the West. Without ignoring the internal pressures for change, Turkey's later shift to a more democratized and liberalized politics can't be separated from the international system during the interwar period to the Cold War era and Turkey's responses to it, which was measured by Turkey's foreign policies. One of Turkey's biggest achievement in establishing a special partnership with the West is its eventual entry to NATO in 1952. As will be elaborated later in this writing, Turkey's strive for secular, democratic, and Westward ideals often clash with its on-again, off-again relationship with the West and its own local culture, which has a strong Islamic appeal and identification with its former territories during the Ottoman era. Turkey was also not materially capable, something that would later become one of its obstructions to join NATO. However, it was also this incapability that enabled Turkey to abstain from the WW II and pushed Turkey towards more democratization in order to become eligible for American aid.

Nevertheless, the Republic of Turkey's achievement for successful entry to NATO. Those changes still have a great impact in today's Republic of Turkey. Therefore, to place this development in the proper perspective, it is necessary to examine Turkey's modernization and entry to NATO from the point of view of its political history, first within its involvement in the international affairs of the interwar period to the Cold War era, and lastly within its domestic political dynamics.

TURKEY IN THE COLD WAR

During the Cold War era (1945-1950), Turkey was experiencing a rapid democratization and economic liberalization, in which American influence was undeniable. At least there were three reasons for this. First, Turkey's economy had suffered considerably as the result of the war. Turkey still needed to maintain a large standing army for fear of war with Soviet, and at the same time the İnönü government also tried to resume their economic development plans which had been suspended. This pushed Turkey to seek for foreign aid and loans, especially from the new superpowers and winners of the war (U.S.A. and Soviet Union) (Senem Üstün, 1997: 31-48).

Second, Turkey and Soviet relations were deteriorating. Soviet refused to extend the 1935 friendship treaty and gave difficult prerequisites for any renewal of it, such as giving away northeastern Anatolia and agreeing to utilize the Straits to guard the Black Sea. Thus, Turkey sought for another source of help. Turkey then made use of the U.S.-Soviet competition for influence. On 12 March 1947, President Truman launched his 'Truman Doctrine', stipulating the U.S. to assist 'free nations' (such as Greece and Turkey) threatened by both internal and external military pressures, especially communist ones. On June 1947,

U.S.A. put forward the Marshall Plan, an economic reconstruction program for European countries whose economy had collapsed as the result of WW II. Turkey was a beneficiary despite its unsuitability with the Plan's target. Indeed, Turkey fought hard for the aid, insisting on its strategic importance to the U.S.A and its 'overwhelming military burden' before being granted the aid in 1949 (Erik J. Zürcher, 2004: 208)

Therefore, Turkey's conformity to the American democracy and free enterprise ideals could be seen as Turkey's way to profit fully from American support and the Marshall Plan. Additionally, Turkey was impressed by America as the new superpower and winner of WW II. Therefore, the matter of international relations also played a great part in shaping Turkey's political and economic change after 1945.

TURKEY'S ENTRY TO NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

The relations among Turkey, other European countries and the U.S. had been built for a long time before Turkey joined NATO. The proof is Turkey's membership in the Organization for European Economic Cooperation and Council of Europe and the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), an organization set up by a 1948 convention in Paris, that coordinated efforts to restore Europe's economy under U.S.'s Recovery Program (Marshall Plan). (OEEC 1998).

The organization emerged from the Marshall Plan and the Conference of Sixteen (Conference for European Economic Co-operation). The OEEC's first objective in 1948/1949 was to prepare the European Recovery Program which justified the American effort. (The Historical Archive of the European Communities 2017). Turkey's membership in this organization is a way to achieve modern Turkey and strengthen Turkey's relations with other members, which predominantly were European Countries.

In 1950, Turkey applied for NATO membership but found out that it was not easy. Adnan Menderes knew that several NATO countries, notably the Scandinavian ones, were opposed to Greece and Turkish membership, arguing that those countries were neither Atlantic nor Democratic (Zucher, 2004:235). But D. J. K. argued that the reasons of Scandinavian's disfavor of Turkey's entry were fear that the extension of the Treaty might drag them into a war in the Mediterranean (where they had little interest in) and that the addition of Turkey and Greece might reduce the amount of arms and equipment supplies from the United States. Another objection also came from British, with three main reasons against admitting Turkey: (1) it would destroy the conception of the Atlantic Pact as a basis for building an Atlantic Community as a political and economic association of nations having common traditions, etc.; (2) it would increase the security risks, introduce military problems which had no relation to the main European defence theater, and would generally disturb the organization which was just starting to find its feet; (3) many of the existing members would be strongly opposed to any extensions of their obligation to go to war (D.J.K, 1952:162-69).

In spite of those obstacles and objections, Turkey had its own bargaining power. U.S. and its allies believed the importance of having MEC (Middle-East Command) and within that idea, Turkey appeared to be convincing and ideal to be involved and make it happen. It was agreed that MEC should in effect be a NATO operational command under NATO

Standing Group (Behçet K. Yeşilbursa, 1999: 70–102). On 24 June, the British Chiefs of Staff agreed to the admission of Greece and Turkey into NATO, on the understanding that Turkey would take its place in a Combined Allied Middle East Command, since Turkey would not join MEC unless it joined NATO at the same time. (Behçet K. Yeşilbursa, 1999: 70–102). Moreover, The United States air experts were strongly in favor of the admission of Turkey, since it refused to consider leasing air bases on its territory unless it was admitted to NATO. (D.J.K 1952: 163). Another Turkey's trump card was its involvement in the Korean War, which made it possible for Turkey to become a full member of NATO on 18 February 1952.

During the Korean War (1950-1953), the United Nations sent an international expeditionary force to Korea to counter invasion from the north and asked for other countries' contributions to help. In June 1950, Turkey was one of the few countries that immediately offered to contribute troops (Zurcher, 2004:237). Turkey sent a 4.500-men brigade in October, but by the time the war was over, Turkey had sent around 25.000 soldiers and ended up with 6000 casualties.(Zurcher, 2004:235). Many people took that phenomenon as the most significant reason behind NATO's acceptance of Turkey as its member.

When Democratic Party took its winning election in Turkey, it started to modernize Turkey as what it had campaigned during the election. The modernization focused on economy and infrastructure while military was not in the priority list, unlike that of the Ottoman Empire. That was what Adnan Menderes announced to the Grand National Assembly when he read his government's program on 24 May 1954:

We shall continue our efforts to bring our heroic army to a position consonant with the needs of today and capable of meeting every kind of aggression. This will be accomplished by using all material and moral resources in proportion to the strength of our economic and financial potential [Applause]. In fact, one of the main goals of our economic measures and development is to maintain, with our own means, a large army as soon as possible...As has been our practice so far, military appropriations will increase in proportion to the growth in our national income.(Feroz, 2002:124)

During his era, Menderes trusted the military to the Young Officers, as the Senior Officer was too busy developing Turkey's economy. However, inside NATO, the character of Young Officers corps began to change. Young Officers, who were open to technology and the strategy of modern warfare, acquired a sense of importance and confidence they had never enjoyed before. They visited other countries and discussed the world's problems with officers who presented perspective different from their own. They became contemptuous of their own politicians who were constantly wrangling with each other while the country's problems remained unresolved. There was even some embarrassment when foreign officers asked about the situation in Turkey. NATO deepened the division between the junior and senior officers along technological lines. (Feroz, 2002:124)

Laws passed in 1954 provided for heavy fines on journalists thought to have

damaged the prestige of the state or the law; several prominent journalists were prosecuted under this law, which was made more severe in 1956, while other laws substantially abridged the independence of civil servants (including university teachers) and judges. In 1955, critics within the DP were expelled; these critics subsequently formed the Freedom Party, which in 1958 merged with the CHP. In 1956, limitations were placed upon public meetings. (Feroz, 2002:124)

The years 1958–60 saw a further worsening of the economy as the government reluctantly introduced restrictive measures. Returns on new investment fell and inflation continued. Serious problems of housing and unemployment were emerging in the large towns, whose population had been growing annually at the rate of about 10 percent, so that by 1960 the urban portion of the population had risen to nearly one-third. CHP attacks became more bitter and the government's response stronger. In April 1960, the government ordered the army to prevent İnönü from campaigning in Kayseri and formed a committee to investigate the affairs of the CHP. It was widely believed that the government's next action would be to close the CHP. Student demonstrations followed, and martial law was declared on April 28. By then, the army had been brought directly into the political arena. (Feroz, 2002:124)

TURKEY AND NATO

Turkey became a member of NATO in 1952. From the Cold War years of the 1950s until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey's significance as a NATO member derived from the fact that it is situated in an area of crucial geostrategic political and economic importance. This significance continues in the post-Soviet period, since it borders the unstable and important regions of southwest Asia and the Middle East. Turkey's importance to its Western allies was underlined by the cooperative role it played during the Gulf War and in Afghanistan. Turkey had been welcoming NATO's project of enlargement in recent years. (Metin Herper and Nur Bilge Criss, 2009:230).

Membership of NATO shook the old-fashioned Turkish army to its foundations. Younger, better trained officers who spoke English or were trained engineers, were taken abroad for training in other NATO countries. The military, traditionally a privileged class, were losing buying power to the growing inflation rate as well. Regular contact through NATO allowed them to measure the gulf that separated them from their Western colleagues (Nicole Pope and Hugh Pope, 2011:88).

Misunderstandings multiplied as the Kurdish refugee crisis took hold. Despite decades together in the NATO alliance, the Turkish and Allied military were not getting on well together either (Nicole Pope and Hugh Pope, 2011: 231). When the Welfare Party eventually came to power in July 1966, Necmettin Hoca, or 'teacher' as he was often called, dropped his fiery rhetoric and abandoned his earlier opposition on such issues as Customs Union with Europe, Turkey's membership of NATO and even military co-operation with Israel (Nicole Pope and Hugh Pope, 2011: 88).

FOREIGN RELATIONS: ATLANTIC TURKEY

The postwar era, and especially the Democrat decade, was a period of intensified incorporation of Turkey into the world capitalist system, not only in the economic field, but also in the realms of foreign policy and defence. Turkey in these years became a solid – albeit peripheral – part of the political and military structures the United States and its allies built up to safeguard the continued existence of democracy and free enterprise in their countries. This was a major break with the Kemalist foreign policy of cautious neutralism. (Zücker, 2004: 235).

Turkey's foreign relations in the postwar period were, of course, dominated by the Cold War. We have already seen how the Truman doctrine was formulated in part with Turkey in mind. When the Democrats came to power in 1950, Turkey was already a member of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation and of the Council of Europe. After the creation of NATO in 1949, the RPP government had already started to sound out the major NATO countries on the possibilities of joining the organization. In August 1950 the new government officially applied for membership. Menderes knew that several NATO countries, notably the Scandinavian ones, were opposed to Greek and Turkish membership, arguing that these countries were neither Atlantic nor democratic, but he thought he had a trump card: when the United Nations sent an international expeditionary force to Korea to counter the invasion from the north and asked for contributions from member countries to stop the invasion in June 1950, Turkey was one of the few countries that immediately offered to contribute troops. The first, a brigade of 4500 men, were sent in October and before the war was over some 25,000 Turkish soldiers had fought in Korea, suffering more than 6000 casualties. This action gained Turkey a great deal of credit among NATO governments, but even so it was another year before Denmark and Norway, which blocked Turkish entry, were finally persuaded to drop their objections. On 18 February 1952 Turkey became a full member of NATO. (Zücker, 2004: 235).

The entry into NATO was celebrated as a great success in Turkey by the Democrats and the opposition alike. The reasons for the enthusiasm for NATO were both rational and emotional. Rationally, it was seen as a guarantee against Soviet aggression and as guaranteeing the flow of Western aid and loans that would make the modernization of Turkey possible. Emotionally, it was taken as a sign that Turkey had finally been fully accepted by the Western nations on equal terms. This feeling seems to have been fairly widespread. Even in the 1970s one could still buy 'NATO wine' in Turkish restaurants. Turkey's membership of the Western bloc in the cold war largely determined its position in the two regions of which it formed part: the Balkans and the Middle East. The country was a key element in Secretary of State Dulles's attempts to encircle the Soviet bloc with regional alliances based on NATO.

In the Middle East, the first American attempt to construct a regional alliance was by bringing together Turkey and Egypt in 1951–52, but there was very little enthusiasm for this option in either country. Relations between Turkey and the Arab countries were strained by Turkey's stance in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Turkey had at first backed the Arab countries because the leadership in Ankara expected the Jewish state to be pro-Soviet. With

the warming of American–Israeli relations from 1949 onwards, Turkey also shifted its position. It sat with France and the United States on the Palestine Conciliation Commission in 1949 and recognized Israel diplomatically. (Zücker, 2004:237). After the failure of the Turkish–Egyptian alliance, the second attempt to form a regional bloc was a treaty of cooperation with Pakistan, concluded in August 1954. In February 1955 this was followed by a treaty of cooperation and mutual assistance with Turkey’s only friend in the Arab world, the Kingdom of Iraq under its strongman Nursi al-Said. Great Britain, Iran and Pakistan also joined this ‘Baghdad Pact’ while the USA received observer status. It is perhaps surprising, in view of the bloody history of the years between 1913 and 1923, that the one country with which relations were good and stable in the postwar years (and had been since the early 1930s) was the old enemy, Greece. The relationship stayed good, with both countries joining NATO, until the growing crisis in Cyprus, which started to erupt in 1954, shook it to its very foundations. (Zücker, 2004: 237).

However, it has been historically proven that membership in NATO brings lots of troubles for domestic Turkey. The year 1958 saw the first signs that all was not what it should be between the government and the armed forces. In December 1957, nine army officers were arrested for plotting against the government. The arrests were made public on 16 January 1958. The Democrats had always distrusted the army, because of the close links of its leading officers with the old regime and İsmet Pasha in particular, but after a purge of the military leadership in 1950 they felt more at ease and, indeed, for the most part of the decade, the top echelon of the armed forces seems to have been loyal to the elected government. The trouble was that by the late 1950s this no longer guaranteed the government the loyalty of the whole officer corps. The reason lay in the fundamental changes wrought by NATO membership and US assistance in the armed forces. (Zücker, 2004: 238).

At the end of the 1940s, the Turkish army was a huge (700,000 strong) manpower-based force led and organized according to Prussian doctrines of pre-First World War vintage. Unbridgeable chasms existed between the recruits, the NCOs and the officers. Because the level of technical equipment within the army was extremely low, there was no need for large numbers of people with special skills. In the 1950s, all this changed. More than \$2 billion of military aid was spent on modernizing and mechanizing the Turkish army, and American teams assisted in the training of personnel. Younger officers with expertise in engineering or communications took up the most vital positions in the army. They often received part of their training abroad through NATO exchange programmes and so had a chance to see how far behind the Western allies the Turkish army and Turkish society really were. We now know that from 1955 onwards plots against the government were hatched in these circles. (Zücker, 2004: 239).

Turkey’s post-war foreign policy, especially under the Democrats, was perceived as a crucial element in their vision to transform Turkey. Thus Fatin Rüstü Zorlu, a career diplomat and one of the architects of Turkey’s foreign policy under Menderes, envisaged new goals for his country’s diplomacy. He saw the principal aims of Turkish diplomacy as not merely to end his country’s isolation and to guarantee its security, but to obtain foreign aid and foreign investments to finance the creation of an economic infrastructure. This was to be followed by huge investments in industry, with an orientation toward Europe and America, so that

agriculture and industry could develop side by side. (Feroz, 2002:118).

During the Cold War – aside from the possible expectation of the Cyprus intervention in 1974 – Turkey was perceived as an important and reliable ally, especially in the NATO context, and as a state that never seriously challenged measures at by Washington.(Richard Falk, 2014:8). Erbakan fueled these fears (Welfare’s ultimate aim) by speaking against laicism and Westernization and criticizing Turkey’s military cooperation agreement with Israel. He pledged to withdraw Turkey from NATO and the European Union Customs Union signed in 1996, in favor of political and economic alliances with other Muslim countries.(Jenny White, 2013:40).

.....Turks are a special people. There has always been Turkishness, from the beginning of history. Turkey should be independent economically and politically. It should be independent of the United States and of the EU. I asked him whether that included NATO. His answer: ”Once we’re completed our duties in Afghanistan, why not?” (Jenny White, 2013:40)

Jenny White found the Turkish officers’ emphasis on disconnecting Turkey from the world disturbing, but when she mentioned this conversation to a liberal, secular Turkish friend of her who works in the bazaar, he partly agreed. ”You have to be part of some agreement like NATO, but to be independent, to have no debts, to stand up straight – I can’t tell you what it feels like for a country that’s been accused of every shit. It gives us back our honor. Honor and shame are forms of cultural knowledge widely characteristic of expressions of national subjectivity, regardless of the individual’s political stance.” (Jenny White, 2013:60-61)

In 2007, after five years of AKP leadership, elite resistance to EU membership and popular fears about the consequences appeared to have gained the upper hand. A 2007 survey found that most respondents who identified as upper support for EU membership had dropped to 46 percent. Turkish support for NATO also dropped to 35 percent, with an equal percentage saying it was no longer essential.(Jenny White, 2013:90) Turkey is no longer the poor, self-contained, predominantly peasant community in the ‘back garden of Europe’ that it was thought to be even as recently as the early 1980s. The opening up of borders, and a new zest for commerce inside Turkey itself has transformed this country - a once economically unimportant outpost on NATO’s south-easternmost flank. (Nicole Pope and Hugh Pope, 2011: 3)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The developments of the Turkish model in the dynamics in the Middle East were received with mixed reactions in the United States. One the one side, it was preferable that nations that seemed poised to control the Arab future were oriented toward Turkey, a major NATO member with an essentially Western-oriented political outlook. (Richard Falk, 2014: 14-15). One turning point in Turkey’s foreign policy came after the anti-Qaddafi uprising in Lybia, leading to the regime-changing intervention under NATO auspices in March 2011. Ankara was initially ambivalent, but later moved toward accepting the NATO undertaking

and eventually seemed to welcome the outcome.

It can be seen that the Republic of Turkey strive for continuous survival, self-sufficiency, and modernization is no easy process. International as well as national conflicts, including political uneasiness and *coups*, color Turkey's national history following its entry to NATO. Turkey had also manipulated, deteriorated, and eventually repaired its relations with the Western democracies and other countries, all for the sake of its own survival and internal stability. Besides Turkey's foreign relations process, Turkey has also faced the dynamics between maintaining the Republic's old way of governance and the new ones. The contrast between Menderes' and Türkeş's governance has showed us the conflicting interests between Turkey's aim for progress (*inter alia* 'being Europe' by keeping its identity as a NATO member) and the need to maintain popularity in catering the local's views. Once again, ensuring state's security, economic, and political program were the government's main interests - and a stable political situation was the prerequisite. Turkey also originally insisted on membership in NATO, not merely for their international reputation and Westernization agenda, but also for the need for defense against possible Soviet aggression.

Therefore, It was rather unwise to create a dichotomy between Turkey's international relations and its domestic politics. However, it was shown that when the two areas were enabled to work hand in hand, there arose a potential betterment both for Turkey and for the rest of the international society - in this case, fellow NATO member states. Thus, reflecting from Turkey's historical development within NATO, Turkey is a less practically beneficial country for NATO now and simultaneously, NATO is no longer an essential need for Turkey, as Turkey has gained more self-confidence internationally and being no longer reliant on NATO protection, *inter alia* it is more willing to risk experiments in exercising its foreign affairs.

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