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The Turkish role in the Eastern Mediterranean region (2018-2020)

الدور التركي في إقليم شرق المتوسط (2020-2018)

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Abstract

This study provided a detailed description to the Turkish maneuvers and interactions with the most important events in the East-Mediterranean, and the way Turkey had played a balanced role between its strategic interests and its political stand toward the most important international issues, taking into consideration its internal front and the ruling party interests. This study tried to understand and unveil the Turkish leadership mind and its ambitions to become a regional power that has the well, power, and influence to enforce its vision and ambition especially in regard to the gas and North Syria. This study came to highlight how effective Turkey were in influencing the international arenas through its moves and influencing the public opinions in those targeted countries in one hand, and through direct and indirect military intervention on the other hand. Turkey has always capitalized on its geostrategic location linking three continents and the importance of the East-Mediterranean geo-economical value and position especially in the maritime, energy supply, and gas routs to Europe. Turkey's ambition to become a global provider and controller of energy supplies has resulted in different political and military confrontations. This study has also tackled the legal arguments that different parties used in their conflicts over the East-Mediterranean gas. The descriptive and analytical method has been applied in this thesis/study in addition to the published analysis by different parties and applying such on the theories applied.

Key words: [Turkey, Eastern Mediterranean region, East Maritime, Asia Continent, North Africa]

الملخص

قدّمت هذه الدراسة وصفاً للتفاعلات التركية مع أهم وأبرز الأحداث التي طرأت على منطقة حوض شرق المتوسط، والكيفية التي وازنت تركيا بين مصالحها الاستراتيجية ومواقفها السياسية تجاه أبرز القضايا الدولية، مع الأخذ بعين الاعتبار استرضاء الساحة الداخلية والقواعد الانتخابية، وحاولت هذه الدراسة فهم الذهنية التركية والطموح التي تسعى لتحقيقه كقوة إقليمية مؤثرة وذات نفوذ يمنحها القدرة على تطبيق تصوراتها خاصة في قضية الغاز في المتوسط وقضية شمال سوريا. وقد خلّصت هذه الدراسة الى مدى تمكن تركيا من التأثير في الساحة الدولية من خلال تحركاتها في عمق الدول على صعيد شعبي وتبني موقف الرأي العام وعلى صعيد مباشر من خلال التدخل العسكري، وفي إدراك تركيا لأهمية موقعها الجيو-استراتيجي والذي يمثل حلقة وصل بين ثلاث قارات، وأهمية حوض شرق المتوسط جيو-اقتصادياً من حيث حركة الملاحة ومخزون الطاقة وأنايبب الغاز، الأمر الذي يتوافق مع طموحها بأن تكون مصدراً لتصدير الطاقة، مما أدخلها في صدامات مباشرة دبلوماسية وعسكرية. وبحثت الدراسة في السياقات القانونية التي تذرّعت بها الأطراف المنخرطة في صراع الغاز في حوض شرق المتوسط، وقد استخدم المنهج الوصفي والتحليلي ورصد التحليلات السياسية واسقاطها على النظريات التي تم توظيفها في هذه الدراسة.

كلمات مفتاحية: [تركيا، إقليم شرق البحر الأبيض المتوسط، البحر الشرقي، قارة آسيا، شمال إفريقيا].

Introduction

Because of Turkey's belief in its geographical location and its importance, which rises to its geopolitical designation, as it is an Eastern intersection of the Asian continent with the European continent and the Arab world, besides the energy sources that led Turkey to switch to a "policy of brinkmanship" (Al Shareif, 2020).

This study focused on the most important goals that the Turkish state seeks to achieve in the Mediterranean region to enhance its role in this region. For Turkey, the conflict in the Mediterranean region took many dimensions; as The legal dimension of the conflict represented by the Greek-Turkish border on the demarcation of the water, an economic conflict represented in gas and oil exploration operations in the Mediterranean basin turkey collided with the Greek island of Greece -Cyprus, and Greece, and a geopolitical conflict in which Turkey sees a state of extending Turkish influence in the Eastern Mediterranean, which shape it's role as an active site and gain a strategic influential (Salah,2017).

Regarding the legal dimension, the roots of this dispute extend back nearly 100 years ago. After World War I, and through the Treaty of Lausanne, the borders of present-day Turkey were demarcated. Turkey, which is the heir to the Ottoman Empire, lost its sovereignty over many islands in the Aegean Sea in favor of Greece. Since then, the two countries have quarreled over the exclusive economic zone between the Greek islands and the Turkish coasts (Wiesel, 2020).

Turkey's demarcation of the maritime borders between it and the Libyan Government of National Accord also led to the disruption of implementing the Mideast pipeline, so the pipeline could not be implemented without obtaining Turkey's approval, because the proposed demarcation led to the annexation of some Greek islands to Turkey's exclusive

economic zone, which the pipeline will pass through it (Wiesel, 2020).

Regarding the economic objectives of the Mediterranean region, according to the estimates published by the US Geological Survey (USGS), besides the estimates of gas exploration companies in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Eastern Mediterranean basin is one of the largest gas basins in the world, as the region floats over a lake of gas sufficient to meet the needs of the European market for 30 years, and the world for one year, at least (RT, 2019).

On the military dimension, the region witnessed an escalation at the tactical level, where there were tensions between the two parties within the framework of close-range maneuvers between the Turkish forces and the Greek forces, such as the "Sea Wolf" maneuver, which is the largest in its history because it included simulations of three seas (the Black Sea and the Sea Aegean, Eastern Mediterranean) (Dillman, 2019).

According to what we see from the escalating movements during the last few years and the results that we could see it as a kind of soft war in the Eastern Mediterranean region, the Turkish behavior that can be seen as confrontational behavior, the multiplicity of scenarios and analyzes that try to delve into the role and strategies that Turkey seeks to achieve in the framework of it's foreign policy.

Importance of the study

Turkey is becoming one of the key players in International regime. It is attempting to exert its influence in multiple regions around the world. One of the most vital areas for Turkey is the Eastern Mediterranean, and understanding how Turkey is attempting to gain influence in the region is key to figuring out how this might shape the region for the future, as well as highlighting the potential for great power competition in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Therefore, the importance of study came from its attempt to contextualizing the ongoing rise of Turkey's influence within both Turkish national interest and great power competition with the States of regain. The study helped provide a comprehensive understanding of Turkey's strategy towards the Eastern Mediterranean region.

Questions of the study

To answer the main key question of “what are the most important transformations in the Turkish foreign policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean region between 2018-2020”? From this main question, a set of the following sub-questions emerged;

1. What are the strategic goals of Turkey in the Mediterranean region?
2. What are the problems that Turkey suffers from regarding the legal framework for ownership of the continental shelf in the Maritime borders with Cyprus- Greece?
3. What are the reasons for the escalation between Turkey and the EU in the Eastern Mediterranean region?
4. How much of the external factor pressure on turkey?
5. What is the position of NATO and the UN Security Council on the Turkish military interventions in the Mediterranean region?

Objectives of the study

This study aimed to achieve the following goals:

1. Identify Turkey's primary interests in the Mediterranean region.
2. Identify Current Turkey Overall strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean.
3. Connect current Turkey practices to overall Turkey strategy.
4. Identify future prospects for the relationship between Turkey and EU as part of NATO.
5. Develop a comprehensive understanding of the Turkish role played in the region.

6. Highlighting the position of both NATO and the UN Security Council on the Turkish military interventions in the Mediterranean region.

Hypothesis of the Study

The main hypothesis of the study was “Turkey is attempting to gain stronger influence in the Middle East region and EU, both as an attempt to secure its vital national interest and as part of ongoing great power competition, with some prominent poles in EU and the Middle East region”.

Methodology

The study was descriptive, attempting to identify Turkey's interest in the Eastern Mediterranean region, studying the rising levels of Turkey's influence in the Middle East, and put it in the rise's context of Turkey to become a more engaged international player.

This Study depended on literature review, using a multitude of books, articles, reports, and expert testimonies.

Literature review

Turkey's pursuit of an active regional role, along with a number of foreign policy principles on which it relied, that were framed by Ahmed Davutoglu including and adopted by the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) since it took power in Turkey in 2002. These principles are summarized in the following points (Yesiltas & Balci,2013):

1. **Strategic depth:** a concept first proposed by former Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. This concept relies on building Turkish foreign policy on the geopolitical dimension, Turkish cultural, social, economic and historical extension, which helps in transferring Turkey to the circle of direct regional and international influence in various Global issues, as the basic premise of Turkish foreign policy is that closer relations with a number of “key states” in the regions surrounding Turkey

constitute a fundamental basis for consolidating relations with the rest of the regional powers in these regions.

2. **Soft power:** by adopting the elements of diplomacy, trade and economic exchange, and intellectual communication, which is considered to have a deeper impact and more usefulness than hard power, but this does not prevent the development of a hard (military) deterrent force that preserves and defends sovereignty, national security and higher Turkish interests. Turkey uses soft power as a tool in its foreign policy, based on the declaration of its leaders that Turkey's regional goal is to achieve security and stability, and that achieving this goal requires building the foundations of regional cooperation, developing solutions to conflicts in the region, and creating regional institutions such as those that have effectively contributed to resolving European differences after cold War.
3. **Proactive diplomacy:** Turkish diplomacy anticipates upcoming crises and offers solutions to them before they develop.
4. **Humanitarian diplomacy:** According to this principle, Turkish foreign policy must be based on humanitarian foundations. Therefore, Turkey will intervene and take care of various crises with humanitarian dimensions in its regional geographical scope and in the international field as well.
5. **Zeroing problems,** which is Turkey's attempt not to be a party to regional disputes and disagreements, and its attempt to resolve these disputes through its diplomatic apparatus.
6. **Adopting a multi-dimensional foreign policy,** as it is not possible to follow a one-dimensional policy, and instead of Turkey being an exporter of problems, it is an exporter of solutions to problems, and a state that constitutes a center of attraction that contributes to the establishment of global and regional peace.

7. **Participation as an active member in all international institutions,** and hosting many conferences held by international organizations.

8. **Building a solid network of relations** in all vital political, economic and cultural fields, laying foundations for revitalizing bilateral relations between Turkey and neighboring states, and developing mechanisms to make borders linking factors and not separating neighboring peoples.

Turkish political role in the Mediterranean

Turkey re-arranged its strategies to work on drafting a new and influential role in the region, where Turkey was neglected for some times and were undermined in Islamic thoughts and in Arab national factor, but Since 2003 after AKP had taken the government, Turkey adapted one of the principles called "zero problem" strategy which is a strategy developed by former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu in his book "Strategic Depth" and outlined it with six principles (Act, 2016).

Turkey seeks to balance its policies between internal affairs and foreign administration in Turkish international relations, as the party adopted the slogan launched by Ataturk (peace at home and peace outside), and in an initiative launched by Erdogan to carry out a process of democratic openness that included 15 million Kurds in pursuit of reconciliation with this component, which is essential in Turkish society.

Ahmet Davutoğlu's perceptions were, without a correct reading of the international circumstances and variables, it is not possible to understand the Turkish foreign policy, and then its new strategic vision, and determine its strategic priorities to secure a successful rise to the regional and international status.

In the previous period, the Zero Problem Policy (ZPP) became the basis of the Turkish foreign policy approach, reformulating its regional activities in the Middle East, and

gradually retreating from the traditional political discourse of the Ataturk bureaucratic elites, to conform to the world vision that prevailed in the field of rights and freedoms to accommodate Western approaches.

The differences between Erdogan and Davutoglu appeared to the public in May 2016, when the Turkish president asked Davutoğlu to resign after a meeting between them, and Turkish newspapers wrote at the time a headline saying, "Turkey has actually entered the presidential system." where Erdogan's orientation was contrary to Erdogan's policy (BBC,2020).

Erdogan resorted to adopting a policy of "strategic independence", as after the development movement achieved by the AKM party, there has become a separation between political and economic positions by reaching with the parties states strategic levels that may affect the two parties, which limits the impact of political positions on economic relations and we will see this in its relationship with Israel.

Erdogan's pragmatism has been clearly demonstrated in recent years, he was thinking as an interactive element in the political equations and the urgent political variables that occur in them that make him descend to the lowest levels of political escalation in the event of escalation and vice versa.

In the Libyan arena, Erdogan's policy shifted from a state of expansion on the ground towards Egypt, and when a collision became imminent, he decreased in the levels of expansion and became inclined to reconciliation, and in the calm state of the rapid escalation, his reaction after the downing of two Turkish military planes and the escalation of the situation with the "Spring Shield" battle in Syria.

Erdogan also sought to present himself as an Islamic leadership to enable him to have a religious ideological discourse that polarizes his internal bases and influences global public opinion, which facilitates his influence in other

countries such as France and most of the Arab world by mobilizing the popular bases in his favor.

At the beginning of the second millennium, the expansion of Iranian and Russian influence in the region increased, so Turkey sought to reshape its role on the regional arena to expand its leverage. In 2011 with the launch of the revolutions of the Arab Spring, challenges and opportunities had emerged that influenced in the Turkish role in the region.

The Dilemma of Turkish membership with the European Union

The dilemma of Turkish membership in the European Union is an old issue, even after the signing in 1963 of the "Agreement Establishing an Association between the Republic of Turkey and the European Economic Community," also known as the "Ankara Agreement".

The transition to the "new" regime has been marked by two important parallel processes that are adversely affecting Turkey-West relations. First, Turkey's democracy has regressed dramatically in recent years. In 2018, Freedom House classified Turkey as "not free" in its report of "Freedom in the World", for the first time since the series began in 1999. So, the shared values that are supposed to bridge the gap between Turkey and the Western alliance have been weakening. Secondly, Turkey's traditional foreign policy statecraft, and particularly its Western orientation, has been eroding under pressure from Erdogan, who expanded and leveraged an international role for Turkey by an aspiration to be the leader of the Muslim world. This unsurprisingly led to an ever longer list of problems in Turkey's relations with its allies, particularly the United States (KIRIŞCI & TOYGÜR, 2019).

"Medi-Paul", A Turkish Company conducted a research opinion poll that showed a 60% of the Turkish people support to the

country's accession to the European Union. But the conviction of the Turkish people has seen a decline of Turkey's accession to the Union in the future Aruban. Looking at the results of 2016, this percentage amounted to 36%, compared to the results of 2017, which decreased to 31%. And reaching the lowest level of confidence in 2019 which amounted to 23% (Medi-paul, 2019).

The main problems facing Turkey's membership in the European Union are summarized in:

- **Issues Related to Demography and Religion:**

In 2015 estimates, the population of Turkey reached 78 million, making it the second largest in the European Union, after Germany. This will make Turkey one of the largest political currents in the European Union Parliament, and may affect the Union's orientation on issues that the European Union does not agree with Turkey, especially issues related to Islam and Muslims (BBC, 2017).

The Turkish President's signature in July 2020 triggered the Supreme Administrative Court's judgment to return the identity of a Sufi verse from a museum to a mosque. International reactions and European indignation when announcing the cancellation of a government decision issued in 1934; regarding the identity of a Sancta Sophia because it represented one of the symbols of the state's secularism.

From the European Union's perspective on Erdogan's decision, Union's stated that it was an "unfortunate" decision, while the French Foreign Minister saw that both Erdogan's decision and the court's decision regarding Sancta Sophia, saying "these two decisions call into question one of the most symbolic measures of modern and secular Turkey". And from an international perspective, UNESCO indicated that it would review the status of Sancta Sophia after the Turkish President announcement (BBC,2020).

- **Economic Dilemmas:**

Turkey ranked fifth among the most important trading partners of the European Union and one of the most important commercial destinations for European investments, since the establishment of the customs union between Turkey and the European Union 20 years ago, the commercial market between them has become intertwined, and the volume of trade between them has quadrupled (Antep, 2019).

Despite the volume of exchange and intertwining between Turkey and the countries of the Union, Turkey's accession to the European Union will constitute an obstacle to the European Union, with regard the issue of immigration, according to data issued by the Turkish Statistical Authority, the unemployment rate for the year 2020 reached about 13.2%, with numbers of 3.9 million unemployed people (tradingeconomics, 2020).

These numbers considered as Threat to the European labor market especially since the opinion poll "Medi-Paul" indicated that the age group, which ranges from 18 to 24 years, ranked first with 66%, and these groups are looking for work and better opportunities in the European labor market (Medi-paul, 2019).

From another perspective, Turkey is characterized by a geo-economics location that makes it attractive to European investments at the expense of Eastern European countries, especially since its economic and social conditions are unstable (Abdullah, 2012), where the volume of trade exchange between Turkey and Germany seeks to raise the volume of trade exchange to 40 billion dollars in the next stage and 50 billion dollars in the second stage (Turkpress, 2020).

A. Cyprus

From an international community perspective, the Cyprus problem is viewed from the perspective of a single state, with the exception of Turkey, which sees in Cyprus two states, one called Turkish Cyprus and the other

Greek Cyprus. Accordingly, Turkey adopts two different policies towards one small island. However, the file is often treated as a single problem with intertwined and multiple political, legal, border, economic and security dimensions.

The Turkish Cypriot coast between 2018- 2020 witnessed an escalation in military and political events, interspersed with diplomatic quarrels and statements, in addition to military maneuvers carried out by the countries of this coast.

The "Sea Wolf 2019" maneuver is considered one of the largest military exercises in the Mediterranean region. It included a simulation of a war on three seas. Turkey wanted to display its military strength and send a message of reassurance to the Turkish Cypriots, as well as wants through these naval exercises emphasize the level of readiness for any unexpected scenarios, so from a Turkish perspective, it was considered in response to a Greek Cypriot quest to steal the rights of the Turkish Cypriot water (Dilman,2019), in addition to the maneuvers carried out by Northern Cyprus with the Turkish side, known as the "Mediterranean Storm", a maneuver organized periodically aimed at clarifying the level of military cooperation between the two parties (Anadolu Agency,2020).

Cyprus has also joined with France, Greece and Italy in a joint military maneuver in the Eastern Mediterranean which was called "Eunomia 2020" maneuver which was described as an indicator to fully obligated to the international law, Italy linked the existing geopolitical status quo in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin as a strategic interest deeply connected to the security of Europe due to competition for abundant energy and Italy's interest in that the presence of important Italian companies for exploration (CNN,2020).

Cyprus has accused Turkey of acting as a pirate in the Eastern Mediterranean and "gas piracy", due to its "illegal" exploration in its

exclusive economic zone. Greece accused Turkey of increasing its role and expanding its influence through "illegal expansion plans" in the Eastern Mediterranean, by an attempt to explore for gas in two "blocks" of its exclusive economic zone (Ayad, 2020).

B. Greece:

The Turkish-Greek relations are considered thorny relations since the era of the Ottomans (Arslan, 1995). Turkey's signing of an agreement with the Government of National Accord (NGA) in 2019 to demarcate the Turkish-Libyan waters had a blatant Greek reaction, as it considered it illogical by virtue of the international law of the sea and by virtue of geopolitics (DW, 2019).

Turkey had canceled the legitimacy of the Greek island of Crete, which lies between the Turkish and Libyan coasts. Turkey took a political turn, by signing two treaties "to protect Turkey's rights stemming from international law, and to protect the two countries' rights to sovereignty over maritime areas" (DW, 2019).

But Greece retaliated against Turkey, with an agreement between it, Israel and Cyprus in 2020, where the Turkish reaction was the Turkish parliament's approval to send Turkish forces to Libya, although this decision was previously opposed (Farhan, 2020).

C. NATO

There are some outstanding issues within NATO blocs, such as the dilemma of the borders of Cyprus and Greece against Turkey, but the weak influence of NATO on the member states clearly weakened its role in the conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean, as it did not have an active role in the Syrian file nor the tensions that occurred in the Mediterranean Sea basin on gas exploration.

In a sign of dissatisfaction with NATO, the alliance emphasized that one of its core values is democracy, as Erdogan's policy after the 2016 coup attempt represented a transgression of the values of democracy, as

the army purged and imprisoned his opponents, and NATO's speech supported the statement of Secretary of State John Kerry.

Turkey falls within the circle of inter-Atlantic struggle to extend the influence of the poles, so the situation represents the rift between transcontinental alliances reaching the Black Sea. Analysts have concluded that Erdogan's fall may be a declaration of the independence of the Kurdistan region, and the autonomy of the Kurdish region in southern Anatolia. Therefore, Turkey needed to be part of a stable alliance such as the NATO alliance (Al-Amoudi, 2016).

NATO's need highlights the Turkish role in the alliance from the perspective of the strategic political map of the region and the equations of influence in the Eastern Mediterranean basin and the Black Sea. The sensitive factor in the equation is the vital summit on the Black Sea Turkey has advanced "Korcek" radars within the ballistic missile defense program, even in the midst of the coalition's implementation of maneuvers in the Black Sea, but it increased its need for Turkish laboratories in the midst of the British Brexit (Al-Amoudi, 2016).

Therefore, the case of overlapping interests between Turkey and the entire NATO alliance is an intertwined relationship within a system of clear interests for each of the two parties and shows the extent of goals that each party may achieve through the other, and this falls within a strategic perspective that reflects the stability of the current alliances within a period of transformation in global powers.

Interactions of Turkish Policy towards North Africa

Most of the major countries focus on the African arena, so these countries were keen to organize what was known as strategic partnerships with the African continent through the African Union. Therefore, America, China and Europe are keen to organize summits for periodic strategic partnerships with this continent, as did some of

the "rising powers" such as Turkey (Al-Sawy, 2020).

Strategic relations represent a depth based on inter-state interests. Therefore, Turkey's economic relations with the African continent are proceeding according to a clear approach when began in 2003. Turkey paved the way for that strategy by expanding its representation. The diplomatic mission in Africa has increased the number of its embassies in Africa from 12 only in 2003 to about 39 embassies (Al-Sawy, 2020).

In the economic strategic perspective, economic councils were set up in a bilateral framework. As this is one of the steps to deepen the entry into the economic joints of the state, the number of these councils reached about 31 councils with 31 countries, and the extension in the African airspace reached about 48 Turkish Airlines routs in 31 African countries (Al-Sawy, 2020).

In addition to this, the development of relations related to the educational aspect and the provision of educational grants by Turkey, as well as the health aspect and charitable work by Turkish charitable organizations, whether those organizations are the government or NGOs. From another perspective, Turkey support for the Brotherhood in African countries and armed groups.

Attempts to neutralize the point of view

The previous three years witnessed a status of fluctuation in the Egyptian and Turkish positions towards each other, and positions varied according to the files that the two parties dealt with. Egypt saw a gesture of goodwill on the part of the Egyptian side, in the file of the Eastern Mediterranean. Where the Egyptian side insisted to reject the agreement on the demarcation of the water borders between Turkey and NAG, but the Egyptian side has insisted that the agreement of Aug, 2020 on demarcating the water economic borders between the two countries starts from the coasts of the land of Greece and not from the Greek islands, just as Egypt refused to

demarcate the two areas surrounding the Greek islands of Mays and Rhodes, which are two areas of great strategic importance for Turkey due to its proximity to its coasts (Elsayed,2020).

With regard to the Libyan file, the escalation between Turkey and Egypt has reached the point of being direct. Egypt's position of "Sirte Al-Jufra" as a "red line" for expansion by the Turkish-backed Government of National Accord forces, after losing the bet on Haftar's forces and losing the battle of Tripoli. Egypt reacted as it has an army to defend its western borders and will not allow any threat (eremnews, 2020).

Turkey corrected its position by de-escalation in light of the desire and necessity to get out of the statutes of "precious loneliness" in light of global interactions with international politics, as well as economic challenges that have burdened the global economy. Turkish interests also require the need to reduce the escalation with Egypt, as they have not found hostility with it over the past 9 years.

Indications of a softening of the Turkish and Egyptian stances were observed after mid-2020:

- **The propaganda war between Turkey and Egypt calmed down.** In an incident that happened to some Egyptian workers in Tarhuna, when some militia members attacked them, which aroused Egyptian public opinion. The Government of National Accord interacted with it in a positive way by coordinating with their counterparts the Egyptian government. (Antar, 2020).
- **Agent diplomacy,** Coincided with more than one visit by Egyptian and Turkish officials in Libya, in separate sessions to dialogue with the parties to the Libyan conflict and reach a political solution, Amr Allah 'iishlar, the Turkish President's envoy to Libya, also indicated that politicians should lead the negotiations in the next

stage, referring to the exclusion of the 5 + 5 Military Committee, and that politicians qualified for dialogue and should contribute to Libya's Aqila Saleh, Speaker of the Libyan House of Representatives in Tobruk, who is supported by Egypt. The Turkish envoy also added that Egypt's role begins with the start of its contact with NGA, and this is a Turkish recognition of the Egyptian role in Libya, and it must be part of the solution.

Through the incident of the Egyptian workers, it is clear that coordination and channels between Egypt and the GNA have appeared in public, after that, the meetings became direct, and in December 2020, the negotiations between Egyptian diplomatic security officials with members of the GNA resulted in the reopening of the Egyptian embassy, and the two counterparts discussed security challenges and ways to confront them. (CNN, 2020)

- **Proximity Messages and Temptation,** Erdogan's statements that there are relations at the intelligence level between the two countries were followed by statements by the Turkish Foreign Minister that there is communication at the level of foreign ministries as well in Dec, 2020. Erdogan's statements were also reminding the proximity by the historical and religious dimensions that enclosed Egypt and Turkey, which make Turkey a country much closer to Egypt than Greece (Bakir, 2018).

In considering the calls, which represents the interests of Egypt by Erdogan to sign the Convention on the demarcation of water borders that enhance the amount of energy to Egypt from the Eastern Mediterranean, there was pressure on Egypt to accept the maritime agreement, "which will grant Egypt a huge maritime concession in its faltering negotiations with Greece" (Antar, 2020).

The return of Egyptian-Turkish relations in the short term represents a win-win equation, and that any alliance that may occur between the two countries in the long run will be the most important alliance in the Mediterranean basin due to the geographical importance of each of the two countries in the basin that can be seen through the length of their areas on the Mediterranean, in addition to the sea straits run by each of the two countries, which connect the Red Sea, the White Sea, and the Black Sea (Sharif,2017).

Turkish military role in the Mediterranean

As for geopolitical theories, Ratzel turned in his bases to the expansionary or contractionary situation of the state, that the state seeks to include areas of strategic and economic value (Sakhri, 2019). It may become a pumping center for the power of the aspiring state, but the threatened state will have areas that threaten its entity.

Another rule of Ratzel in the laws of the territorial growth of the state; which requires talking about a revolutionary figure seeking to expand, Turkey believes that the neo-Ottomanism requires a departure from the policy of “zero problems” and a trend towards direct conflict, With the blessing of the Turkish Parliament on the January 2020 law, which included military provisions.

Turkish military role in Libya

From the military perspective to the strategic (geopolitical) theories that were explained in the previous chapters, we see the status quo in Libya, in terms of the three axes: First, the land war: Until mid-January 2019, the number of mercenaries deployed by Turkey in Libya ranged from 10,000 to 12,000 troop. Turkey used the land war against Marshal Khalifa Haftar, who is backed by United Emirates, and this resulted in the injury of about 2000 of them, most of them in Tripoli (pack & pusztai, 2020).

Most of these mercenaries belonged to the “Syrian National Army”, who originally belonged to two main formations: Ahrar al-Sham (The United States classified them as a terrorist group), and the Sultan Murad group (with a Turkmen majority, a group with an Islamic jihadist ideology), along with small groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra. Turkey aimed to reduce the number of casualties in the Government of National Accord soldiers, and took advantage of the skill of these militias in street warfare, and provided them with artillery and air support in the Battle of The VoR’s intention (a part of al- Qaeda). (pack & pusztai, 2020)

Another support provided by Turkey is the logistical support through arming Al-Sarraj forces and the mercenary forces, as it extended them through a ship bearing the flag of Moldova, a shipment of weapons, ammunition and armored vehicles, in addition to light and medium weapons, the Turkish four-wheel drive anti-mine "Kirpi 2" vehicles, And anti-tank missiles (Mansour, 2019).

The Turkish role was the main reason for the victory of the fighters of the Government of National Accord (GNA), And the war was dominated by Turkey through the axis of the Al-Watiya air base and the entry of its frigates to the Libyan coast, these are considered strategic strikes that showed who won the battle (Genghis & Anis, 2020)

It is important here to note that the extent of the consequences of the Turkish role for the anti-alliance, whether from the Emirates, Egypt and other allies of Haftar, it was the primary factor of the shift of the NAG's policy from a status of “struggle for survival” to policy of " establishing a state", but on the other hand, there were other consequences, which is that Turkey will manage the negotiation policy Regarding the cease-fire settlement (Al-Rantissi, 2020).

Turkey provided generous support to Al-Sarraj’s forces, and one of these aspects was air support, as it provided them with counter-

weapons and technical equipment, the effects of these weapons in some battles were of an operational and a tactical effect.

In 2019, after confirming the presence of the Turkish-made (Bayraktar TB2) attack aircraft, Turkey began a new chapter in its battles in Libya. In a look at the capabilities of this plane, we find that it has distinct offensive capabilities, as its main payload of missiles is anti-armor missiles that are of Turkish origin, and Turkey has used it in operations against the "PKK" in northern Syria, where a plane has already been shot down (Mansour, 2019).

It is worth mentioning that Turkey has exploited the Libyan arena for the experience and weapons in order to review the composition arms deals with other countries, for example, the production of this aircraft in Turkey is considered recent, as it was manufactured in 2014 and currently two other countries own the "Bayraktar TB2" aircraft, namely Qatar and Ukraine (Mansour, 2019).

What reinforces the hypothesis that Turkey used the Libyan arena as a test ground, is the United Nations report for the year 2020, the report indicated the existence of a special type of Turkish drones nicknamed "killer robots" and its manufacturer name is "Kargu-2". What distinguishes this drone is that it represents the first known historical case of an autonomous weapon based on artificial intelligence used to kill (skynewsarabia, 2021).

There is the Korkut self-propelled air defense and artillery system, each vehicle carrying two Oerlikon cannons, in addition to the "Hawk" medium-range air defense system, which consists of triple missile launchers that strike air targets at a distance of 45 km (skynewsarabia, 2021).

Turkish military role in Syria

On January 20, 2017, Turkey launched a military operation in northern Syria called "Olive Branch", which represents the third step in the policies of military intervention in Syria, after the

"Euphrates Shield" operation and the military intervention in northern Idlib. Operation Euphrates Shield, which came in coordination with United States of America, while the Turkish military intervention in Idlib was achieved in coordination with Russia.

Turkish objectives in Syria from a military (geo-security) perspective are as follows:

- 1- Purge the area of militants and its opponents.
- 2- Pressure United States to push it away from its borders.
- 3- The Turkish behavior by increasing its influence on the ground, supports the Turkish position in the face of competing forces in the Syrian ground, such as Iran and Russia.

Turkey was exposed to more than 700 attacks from the city of Afrin during 2017 relying on Article (51) of the Charter of the United Nations, which grants Turkey the right to self-defense in this case, within the context of a 30 km depth as a security belt, and "until the threat of terrorism is excluded from the Turkish borders" (Khalil, 2018).

Turkey relied on artillery and air forces that moved into the Syrian field on January 20, 2018, targeting the Kurdish forces' positions in Afrin, with partial agreements with Russia to neutralize the S-400 system (Khalil, 2018), also Members of the Russian military police withdrew from their positions in the vicinity of the village of Kafr Jannah, north of Afrin, towards the cities of Nubl and Zahraa, north of Aleppo, which are under the control of the Syrian regime (aljazeera, 2018).

The Afrin operation lasted 58 days, in conjunction with the Free Syrian Army, Turkey took full control of Afrin (AA, 2019).

Turkey used members of the "Free Syrian Army" to achieve progress on the ground in depleting the PYD forces, which were supported by some of the surrounding

Shiite villages and are under the influence of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the Hezbollah militia. The Turkish forces were their ally support, and due to that the Turkish army lost 64 of its soldiers in this operation (Abdel Meguid,2020).

The most prominent pivotal points of Operation Olive Branch were the control of the Turkish and Free Syrian forces on the strategic Mount Bursaya of the municipality of Shiran, as the Olive Branch forces were able to control the top of the mountain on January 28. This mountain is considered strategic for PPK, as they were targeting from its top, the Turkish province of Kilis, and the Syrian city of Azaz, which is under the control of the opposition. (AA, 2019)

On March 1, 2020, Turkey launched Operation Spring Shield in the Idlib region, north western Syria. It did not take the time interval between the three previous operations, which is about a year and a half, while this last operation was launched only seven months after the operation “Peace Spring”, so it was clearly that it was a process that was not coordinated in a temporal context like the previous operations.

The timing of this operation was a direct response to the Syrian regime forces’ bombing of a Turkish military convoy with two air strikes where 50-100 Turkish soldiers were died, as these losses are considered the most since the Turkish military intervention in 2016 (spiegel, 2020).

Turkey considered the attack as a violation of the agreement on the de-escalation zones with the aim of reducing the areas of clashes. The idea of this principal dates back to the Astana Agreement in 2017, but its conditions and limits were determined in Idlib through the Russian-Turkish talks at the Sochi Summit in September 2018.

Turkey and Russia exchanged accusations of violating the agreed-upon path in Sochi, as Russia blamed Turkey for failing to fulfill its commitments in Idlib, especially in

terms of securing trade routes that lead to reviving the economy of northwestern Syria. On the other hand, Turkey accused the regime and the Russian air force of not abiding by its ceasefire commitments and has continued to target armed opposition sites in the de-escalation zones. (Studies A. J., 2020)

The Turkish interest necessitated that Turkey try as much as possible to maintain the stability of the de-escalation zones in the north of Syria, as these areas remain under its supervision, in order to ensure two important things for Turkey, as clashes or the loss of these areas, including hundreds of thousands of residents, will lead them to Turkey, which is originally trying to create certain conditions for the return of 3.5 million Syrian refugees to their lands. (Studies A. J., 2020).

Another thing that concerns Turkey is the preservation of the status quo as it has provided its main goal, which is to keep the separatist Kurdish forces away from its borders and secure itself internally and externally from these organizations that it describes as terrorists. It also guarantees negotiating papers if any political settlement is proposed to solve the Syrian crisis and its presence in the Syrian arena makes it a party that cannot be excluded from the negotiation table, thus ensuring that the Acadians do not return to the region and to stop any future threat.

NATO's and UN Security Council's position on Turkish military interventions in Syria and Libya

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis on March 15, and its gradual transformation into a civil war between the regular army and the Free Syrian Army, NATO kept emphasizing that Syria is not on its agenda in terms of intend a military intervention. This position is based on the new NATO security doctrine with regard to managing crises outside the geographical borders of its members (AA Turkey, 2020).

This leads to mention the foundations of this belief, and why does NATO refrain from interfering in Syria, unlike what it did in Libya?, and before that, we will handle with the concept of military intervention in the NATO security doctrine which developed since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union (the traditional enemy of NATO), the latter has known functional transformations from an organization concerned only with common defense - within the geographical scope defined by Chapter V of the Washington Treaty of 1949 - to an organization that gives increasing attention to issues of collective security, as it became Participates in crisis management and peacekeeping operations, and develops partnership relationships with a number of non-member countries (Studies A. J., 2020).

During the past twenty years, NATO has transformed from an alliance that looks after the borders according to a specific system of joint defense to an alliance that looks outside the geographical borders of its members out of the area, where the emerging dangers that have a direct impact on its interests lie. This is evident through its participation in a number of crisis management and peacekeeping operations, such as Operation IFOR and SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Operation KFOR in Kosovo, Operation ISAF in Afghanistan, Operation NTM.1 in Iraq, which has acquired a training nature, Operation Allied Harmony in Macedonia, Operation Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean, then the military intervention in Libya within the framework of Operation Unified Protector, in addition to the increasing humanitarian role in a number of regions such as Darfur and Pakistan. All of these operations require a political and military effort from NATO, and financial funds have been mobilized a task. But at the same time, it raised several problems at the level of its legality, and it turned out that success was not always an ally of NATO (Iseadi, 2013).

This career development prompted NATO to review its doctrine related to managing crises outside borders, as the new strategic concept - the official abbreviation of this doctrine - knew three revisions after the Cold War: during the Rome summit in 1991, during the Washington summit in 1999, during the Barcelona summit in 2010. This new strategic concept emphasizes that there are problems in managing international conflicts. However, NATO's role in building peace strategies should not be understood as turning into the world's policeman without any controls or limitations to the concept of extraterritorial intervention.

Based on these experiences and revisions, the concept of military intervention in NATO's security doctrine has become based on three pillars (Iseadi, 2013):

1. **The first pillar:** the existence of a relationship between the conflict and Atlantic security. This means that any military intervention by NATO in a conflict must be measured by the extent to which it affects its interests and the nature of the parties involved in this conflict: are they member states or partners. If it comes to member states, in this case the requirements of Chapter V of the Washington Treaty will be activated, and in the case of non-member partners, their interests will be taken into account without giving them any guarantee of direct military intervention.

It is evident from this basis that NATO does not claim that it will intervene in all the world's conflicts in all continents without limitations. It does not have the financial and military capabilities necessary for such a mission. Also, this matter is inconsistent with its nature and structure as an alliance that constitutes a basis for securing its members and not for the protection of non-member states. From this logic, this principle can be summarized

in the fact that NATO does not intervene militarily except within the framework of what it can do in line with its nature as a military alliance, that is, in the field in which it has an added value.

2. **The second pillar:** the existence of legal legitimacy for military intervention, meaning that NATO does not seek to be a substitute for the United Nations, but rather stipulates in advance the necessity of cooperation with international organizations, especially the United Nations, as well as regional organizations such as the Arab League in order to build a comprehensive vision for the military intervention of the alliance. Based on this pillar, NATO requires a clear mandate from the UN Security Council so that the intervention is within the framework of the rules of international law, as happened in Libya after the adoption of resolution 1973 in 2011 based on the principle of the responsibility to protect.
3. **The third pillar:** Providing the political conditions and field effectiveness for military intervention. The political conditions are linked to the presence of a demand for NATO intervention on the part of the parties directly involved in the conflict, as well as the availability of regional support. As for the level of field effectiveness, NATO does not aspire to intervene, but rather aspires to win the battle at the field level. In the end, it remains a military alliance that seeks to destroy the enemy's defensive capabilities and impose its political will on it. This is a matter that requires material capabilities, weapons and equipment at the necessary and appropriate level for the success of the military intervention in a manner that will reflect positively on the image of the Atlantic Alliance. These conditions can extend to the post-conflict phase, that is, the phase of reconstruction.

Based on the foregoing, it appears that NATO does not reject the principle of military intervention in managing Middle East conflicts - which during the Cold War and still are - an area of influence and the center of vital interests for it and a large number of its members, especially the United States of America. NATO is linked to a number of countries in this region with two cooperation and partnership initiatives on its own initiative: the Mediterranean Dialogue dating back to 1994, which includes Israel and six Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Egypt and Jordan), and the Istanbul Initiative of 2004, in which four Gulf States participate (Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain).

The success of these initiatives is in large part related to the contribution, directly or indirectly, to the resolution of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa. Hence. It appears that these three above mentioned pillars clearly explain the reasons for NATO acceptance of intervention in Libya and its insistence on not interfering in Syria.

This is why NATO refused the intervention in Syria, in addition to the existence of a division within the Security Council due to the strong opposition to any military intervention by Russia and China, lack of regional support for any military intervention led by NATO or any other party.

Although NATO responded to the deployment of Patriot missiles in Turkey on the 877-kilometre Syrian border and considered this step as a sign of military intervention in Syria, but based on the requirements of joint defense, the deployment of these missiles falls within the framework of activating Chapter five of the Washington Treaty, which stipulates the principle of Solidarity in the event that a member of the alliance is attacked or threatened that affects his security, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and that NATO is dealing with the Syrian crisis based on Turkey's membership in this alliance, which

requires protecting it against any real or potential threat, especially after the incident of destroying Turkish bombers from Syrian air defenses side.

Accordingly, it can be said that NATO criticized Turkish interventions in Syria, especially Operation “Olive Branch”, the study believes that Turkey has thus changed the principles of its foreign policy represented in zero problems, non-interference in the internal affairs of countries and violating their sovereignty, the study also believes that these Turkish military interventions may negatively affect Turkey's desire in joining the European Union, and its relations with NATO may be affected as well .

This position also applies to the position of the UN Security Council on Turkish military interventions in Syria, who, after agreeing to the military intervention in Libya, began expressing concern about the escalation in Libya and calling for an end to external interference in it (Sky news Arabia, 2019).

The geo-economic value of the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean Basin region possesses two aspects of importance. In the first perspective, this region is what it contains buried energy sources at its bottom, on the other perspective, it is the geopolitical importance of its location, where the lines of trade intersect between three continents.

Turkey and Energy

A report published by the US Geological Survey in 2010 showed that there are approximately 122 billion cubic feet of unexplored gas, In addition, there are 107 billion barrels of recoverable oil (Kirschbaum et al.,2010). This was followed by other discoveries of many delta basins after oil exploration companies competed with the success of the consortium led by the American company "Noble Energy" in the discovery of the Tamar field in 2009 off the coast of Israel (Bakir, 2018).

The dispute had arisen between countries over the rights of exploration and drilling, and this is a simulation of the war between companies that aspire to franchises rights, the issue that exacerbates the political situation is the dispute over water borders according to international law. On the other hand, the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) from the other side.

For Turkey, the issue of energy is one of the most important axes that support its regional role, as it imports more than 90% of its oil needs, and the Turkish energy import bill amounts to 40-45 billion dollars annually, and this is one of the things that weaken its foreign currency, negatively affecting the stability of the Turkish lira (Al-Bik, 2020).

The percentage contribution of the industrial sector in Turkey in 2019, about 27.7 % of GDP (Nawara, 2019), Energy is the most important factor on which the industrial sector is based, especially heavy industries, even its the high volume of its exports, but it is one of the most energy importing countries (Al-Bik, 2020).

Turkish company (TPAO) is a company owned by the Turkish Treasury and managed by the Ministry of Energy and has been operating since 2012 primarily to explore for oil and gas in the Faith and Yavuz fields, off Cyprus, specifically in the Iskenderun region of Mersin in the Eastern sea.

In 2018, the exploration work reached 9,342 square kilometers, and the number of new wells dug by the company increased from 18 to 24, and it conducted exploration operations in 69 wells. Its achievements in the region, as Turkey has the largest natural gas market in the region, which serves its ambitions to become a gas corridor and hub for Europe.

For Turkey, the energy file is a strategic priority. It is one of the most important drivers of economic power, both at the international and local levels. It is linked to price stability,

both for the Turkish citizen and for factories that need abundant energy, in addition to the stability of the price of the energy bill. (Al-Bik, 2020).

Struggle over gas pipelines

The Pass-Line Agreements were a clear effect of the escalation of this cold war between countries that oppose Turkish secularism and its accession to the European Union, and built anti-state alliances between countries or even governments that have not yet received full recognition of their legitimacy, whether internally or at the international level.

In 2019, Turkey and the Government of National Accord (NAG) signed two treaty, one security and the other related to marine navigation, and support the Government of National Accord (NAG), Fayez al-Sarraj, as the legitimate representative of Libya (DW, 2019).

Cyprus, Israel, and Greece have signed for the construction of a gas pipeline to transport gas from the gas fields in the Mediterranean basin to Europe. The new pipeline, which called "East Med", will extend under the sea for a long distance of up to 1,900 km, to transport natural gas from the Eastern Mediterranean region to Europe (Abdel Meguid, 2020).

Turkey is trying, through its draft agreement with Libya, to cut off the road to the " East Med" gas pipeline project, which will pass through the island of Crete towards Europe, this island located within the Turkish continental shelf area, according to the draft agreement of Turkey and NAG.

The "Turkish Stream" gas pipeline is a project to build two pipelines with a capacity of 15.75 billion cubic meters of gas annually, each from Russia to Turkey, passing through the Black Sea, so that the first pipeline feeds Turkey, and the second Europe. During 2020. 5.8 billion cubic meters of gas were transported to Europe (Tamazir, 2021)

The "TANAP" Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline Project, to transport gas from

Azerbaijan to Europe via Turkey, was inaugurated in 2015 and pumping began in 2018. The TANAP pipeline is scheduled to transport about 16 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually, and allocates 6 billion to feeds Turkey's needs, while the rest will be pumped to Europe, via the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP). (ALjazeera, 2020)

The location of the Mediterranean Sea is a meeting point between three continents through which the shipping lines of commercial cargo ships meet, and from following the Turkish behavior, we can see that it is trying to be a market for the export of gas.

Also, we can note that Turkey's tendency to harvest the largest concentration of gas pipelines passing through it, with the aim of being a key player in energy security in the Middle East, especially the European, where it will own gas valves towards Europe, which is one of the largest markets consuming gas.

Conclusion

The study revealed the following results:

- It clearly appears in the extent of pragmatism that Erdogan follows towards the rapid political issues and interactions that occurred during the years covered by the study, also it was clear the pragmatism of his balance between Turkish interests and populist positions, especially in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and its political and religious value.
- Turkey's awareness of the importance of its geographical location as it is a fulcrum between three continents, and accordingly it sought to extend its influence in Libya and its strategy in building military bases on the White Sea, so that its agreement on demarcating borders would enable it to control a water field that would divide the Mediterranean into two parts in the shipping lines.
- Erdogan's interest in the Arab world increased, as he was supporting the Arab Spring revolutions, and exporting himself to the Arab peoples, as carrying a new,

balanced and moderate political thought. The media machine also worked to mobilize its followers against any party that Erdogan was hostile to, and to bring out the image of some Arab authorities with the image of dictatorship.

- In the military field, Turkey's role was prominent in the war arenas and upset the balance of power, as happened in Tripoli, in addition to exploiting these conflicts to show off and market its modern military equipment, such as drones that operate with artificial intelligence, and it was a qualitative leap in this field. Turkey's role also was prominent in the war arenas and upset the balance of power, as happened in Tripoli, in addition to exploiting these conflicts to show off and market its modern military equipment such as drones that operate with artificial intelligence and a great path of transformation in this field.

Recommendations

In light of the results obtained, the study recommends the following:

1. Turkey should support its positions and express its interests with concrete and visible action on the ground, not only with statements. Without a military, economic, or investment move, the declared positions will not have an effective impact on the balance of power and the scramble for interests.
2. For Turkey to play its effective regional role, it must increase its allies in the regional neighborhood, provided that Turkey fulfills its obligations towards its allies, and supports them to face the dangers that threaten them, and to defend their vital interests as it defends its own interests.
3. Conducting more studies on the Turkish role in the Mediterranean region, which represents a region suffering from conflicts for more than a century.

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