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Bachelor's Thesis

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**Türkiye in NATO : a Backsliding Ally or A Valuable Ally
in Distress ?**

Bachelor's Thesis

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2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on
03.05.2023

Veli Uygur ÖZENER

References

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Abstract

Often seen as a wildcard within the Alliance, the Republic of Türkiye's relations with the NATO has been a common point of debate, ever since the years following its Ascension to the military alliance, yet the positions the Turkish leadership have been taking over the last decade under the leadership of Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, have once again sparked the debate of whether the Alliance's southeasternmost member is no longer an acceptable fit for the Alliance or is Türkiye a valuable ally going through a time of distress. To be able to answer this question this thesis approaches the historical context of the Turkish relationship with the Alliance, and its members in an analytic manner, in order to pinpoint the possible distress points that causes tension within the domestic and international policy decisions and outlooks of Türkiye, while analysing the benefits of Türkiye as a NATO ally. As a result, this thesis argues that Türkiye is a valuable NATO ally in distress, and although quite recent, the first steps to de-escalate the stress in this relationship is being taken.

Abstrakt

Vztahy Turecké republiky s NATO jsou často považovány za zástupnou kartu v rámci Aliance a jsou společným bodem debaty, a to již od let následujících po jejím vstupu do vojenské aliance, ale pozice, které turecké vedení v posledním desetiletí zaujímalo. pod vedením Recepta Tayyipa ERDOĞANA znovu rozpoutaly debatu o tom, zda nejjihovýchodnější člen Aliance již není pro Alianci přijatelným, nebo je Türkiye cenným spojencem procházejícím obdobím nouze. Aby bylo možné na tuto otázku odpovědět, tato práce přistupuje k historickému kontextu tureckého vztahu s Aliancí a jejími členy analytickým způsobem, s cílem určit možná nouzová místa, která způsobují napětí v rámci domácích a mezinárodních politických rozhodnutí a výhledů. Türkiye, zatímco analyzuje výhody Türkiye jako spojence NATO. V důsledku toho tato teze tvrdí, že Türkiye je cenným spojencem NATO v nouzi, a přestože je poměrně nedávno, první kroky k deeskalaci stresu v tomto vztahu jsou podnikány.

Keywords:

NATO: The Military-Political Alliance of 31 Trans-Atlantic countries, found in 1949 by the Washington Treaty.

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) Turkish Political-Islamist Right Wing party currently governing the country under President Erdoğan.

CHP : Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party) The Oldest Party in Turkish politics, found by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, acting as the main opposition party.

HDP: Halkların Demokratik Partisi (People's Democratic Party) A left-wing party that receives enormous support from Kurdish – Dominant regions. Often blamed by Erdoğan's government to be the political wing of the PKK.

YSP: Yeşil Sol Parti (Green Left Party) A new party that is essentially an heir to the HDP, created due to the current closing case against the HDP in the Turkish Constitutional Court.

Washington Treaty: Founding treaty of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, defines the structure of the alliance and mostly known for its Article 5, which provides grounds for collective defence if one of the Alliance members are under attack.

PKK: Kurdish Workers Party, a Marxist Terrorist Organisation that aims to create a Kurdistan region in Türkiye, founded by Abdullah Öcalan.

PYD: Democratic Unity Party, A Kurdish party that is operating in the Rojava region, effectively running that region, often targeted by Türkiye which regards it as the Syrian wing of the PKK.

YPG : People's Defence Forces, the armed wing of the PYD.

SDF : Syrian Democratic Forces, an umbrella group for armed organisations fighting against ISIS in Syria, often regarded by Türkiye as the cover-up name for YPG, since most of its members consist of YPG members according to Türkiye.

Klíčová slova:

NATO: Vojensko-politická aliance 31 transatlantických zemí, založená v roce 1949 Washingtonskou smlouvou.

AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Strana spravedlnosti a rozvoje) Turecká politicko-islamistická pravicová strana, která v současnosti vládne zemi za prezidenta Erdoğanova.

CHP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republikánská lidová strana) Nejstarší strana v turecké politice, kterou založil Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, působící jako hlavní opoziční strana.

HDP: Halkların Demokratik Partisi (Lidová demokratická strana) Levicová strana, která získává obrovskou podporu od kurdských – dominantních regionů. Erdoğanova vláda často obviňuje, že je politickým křídlem PKK.

YSP: Yeşil Sol Parti (Strana zelené levice) Nová strana, která je v podstatě dědicem HDP, vznikla kvůli současnému uzavření případu proti HDP u tureckého ústavního soudu.

Washingtonská Smlouva: Zakládající smlouva Severoatlantické aliance definuje strukturu aliance

a je známá především svým článkem 5, který poskytuje základ pro kolektivní obranu, pokud je jeden z členů Aliance napaden.

PKK: Strana kurdských pracujících, marxistická teroristická organizace, jejímž cílem je vytvořit oblast Kurdistanu v Turecku, kterou založil Abdullah Öcalan.

PYD: Democratic Unity Party, kurdská strana, která působí v regionu Rojava, fakticky tento region řídí a často je terčem Turecku, které ji považuje za syrské křídlo PKK.

YPG: Lidové obranné síly, ozbrojené křídlo PYD.

SDF: Syrské demokratické síly, zastřešující skupina pro ozbrojené organizace bojující proti ISIS v Sýrii, kterou Turecku často považuje za krycí název YPG, protože většinu jejích členů tvoří podle Turecku členové YPG.

Název práce:

Turecku v NATO: Zpátečnický spojenec nebo cenný spojenec v nouzi ?

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Introduction

“...we need to consider the world a body, and all nations a part of that body. The pain in the tip of a body’s finger will affect all parts of the body; so, we must not say “What can I do if there is a discomfort somewhere in the world?” We shall address this discomfort as we have it within our own, no matter how far the event is, we should not leave this principle. This thought saves people, governments, and nations from selfishness. Selfishness whether personal or national, should be considered toxic.” said the founder of the modern Republic of Türkiye, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, less than a century ago, while commenting on the new born republic’s stance on foreign affairs to Turkish Ulus Newspaper in 1937, 12 years later the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, in its founding treaty’s second preambulatory clause said; “They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law...” (NATO,1949) and even at a quick glance, it is crystal clear that these two policies align extensively, and that the Republic of Türkiye would be an ideal candidate, which it was, and ascended to the Alliance in 1952, alongside its neighbour, Greece. However, as the years passed, the alignment was begun to be questioned on the side of the Alliance’s public, asking whether if Türkiye is really a fit for the Alliance, starting from concerns regarding not sharing the same values with the Alliance to questioning whether the country is European at all, therefore questioning whether the country is eligible for membership. Furthermore, over the last decade this doubting perspective has been increasing its audience and volume, with more and more people both on a media and academic level beginning to question Türkiye’s position as a member of the Alliance. While NATO did not take any action so far regarding these allegations or demands against Türkiye, the country has been acting in a manner that has been raising the amount of concern and confusion, while at the same time acting as a stabiliser and

providing the Alliance with connections and advantages that no other NATO Member could provide to ensure Transatlantic Security.

This duality, and its increasing nature, consequentially, led to the creation of the question of whether Türkiye in NATO is a Backsliding Ally, which would mean that country is no longer advantageous to the Alliance, or a valuable ally in distress, a unique member of the Alliance with cultural, social and political ties that are essential to ensure security and stability within and at NATO's Borders. Although the question might be tough to answer, due to its quite current nature that is also affected by many international and intranational engagements in a daily basis; this thesis will aim to project a complex, historical content and comparison based outlook on why Türkiye is a valuable member of the Alliance, through taking the reader through a path within the Turkish mindset, providing an understanding of how the Turks look at the Alliance, and why, with reasonings from pre-Ascension Turkish – NATO relations to today's events.

Literature Overview

At a first glance at the existing literature, can be considered to take three main approaches, the first one, that aligns to a certain extent with this thesis' outlook is the stance that the current problems between NATO and Türkiye are based on the Erdoğan's government. One of the most prominent projections on that regard is made by Burak Bekdil, who argues in a 2017 paper that Türkiye has become a strategic liability for the Alliance, and blames this on the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his government (Bekdil, 2017, p.1). Bekdil further argues that, specifically, the leadership of president Erdoğan and his anti Western, religious and "revisionist (neo-Ottoman)" (Bekdil,2017, p.4) political stance and rhetoric is to blame and that it has become a strategic liability for the Alliance. On the other hand, another stance places the cornerstone of the issue between Türkiye and NATO as the Türkiye's

close(r) relationship with Iran and Russia, and its impact on the trust factor with Allies. For example, Nilsu Goren also argues in a 2018 paper that NATO and Türkiye are "experiencing a mutual crisis of confidence" (Goren, 2018, p. 2). Instead of blaming President Erdogan's rhetoric and political stance directly, she focuses on the sides of the equation while also focusing on the Russian factor in the relationship between Türkiye and the US that is being affected by an enormous variety of events, which will be addressed further in this thesis in detail, yet Goren focuses towards the tension between Ankara and Washington created by the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, where both parties' interests are far from aligned. After mentioning the contradiction in their interests therefore policies, the author dives into the Russo - Turkish relations stating this contradiction as the reason of the rapprochement. Then she describes the challenges this warm relationship brings to NATO by discussing a couple of important issues such as the sale of Russian S-400 air defence systems to Turkey. On the NATO side, Goren argues that policy makers within the NATO Alliance are starting to question "Turkey's intentions and future strategic orientation, and how well they align with NATO's" (Goren, 2018, p.2) One example of why the NATO allies are developing these doubts that Nilsu Goren refers to is Turkey's recent dealing with Russia (Goren, 2018,p. 2). Looking at the other side of the coin, Goren claims that policy makers in Turkey lack confidence in "NATO guarantees and fear abandonment" (Goren, 2018, p. 2). Lastly, the third perspective is based on the idea that Türkiye, as a whole, during the last few decades has been consistently backsliding in regards to many ideas, ideals and values that NATO hold quite dear, therefore the "new" Türkiye is unfit for the Alliance. One of the authors who backs this idea is Francesco M. Bongiovanni, through arguing in his 2018 paper, "Yet, the president's (leader) electoral track record means a substantial part of Turkish society backs him, for better or for worse, and consistently so. If they were meant to hurt Erdoğan at home, recent American trade sanctions against Türkiye have at least to some extent reinforced his popularity, rallying

many Turks around him as he shrewdly portrayed America as the ungrateful ally behind the country's current economic woes. Were a new election to take place today, Erdoğan would likely win outright, without the help of the nationalists. It would, thus, be delusional to think that the Erdoğan phenomenon is a mere temporary glitch. Türkiye has undeniably and profoundly changed.”(Bongiovanni, 2018, pp. 55) Then the author further claims that “Under his rule, Türkiye has become more independent, nationalist, Islamist, and less willing to do the West's bidding.”

As the three main perspectives on why and how the relationship between Türkiye and the Alliance is more tense, are listed, one can see that all three perspectives have domestic reasons in common, one might think, Goren's focusing further on more of an international setting, yet it should not be forgotten that the main reason behind the conflicting nature of Ankara and Washington's interests in conflicts in Iraq and Syria are mainly based around the PKK / YPG / SDF axis, and the alleged connections between these groups, therefore the Kurdish Separatism issue, which is one of the biggest if not the biggest domestic security issue the country has been experiencing for the last three decades. Which makes this separatist issue, a very big part of any political party in the country's domestic policies, therefore connecting Goren's points to a domestic root. Obviously, sharing similar cornerstones does not make these claims aligned, as while both Bekdil and Goren approaches from a perspective where the Alliance is likely to find a common ground with one of its most profound allies in regards to security, whereas Bongiovanni argues that the years under Erdoğan has caused too further of a backslide, which will prevent Türkiye from re-adapting into the Alliance in a full manner. (Bongiovanni, 2018, pp. 56)

The Ascension, Menderes and Erdoğan : Change of Heart or Change of Words

To begin to understand how the current circumstances came to existence, a step back should be taken to the environment and the circumstances where Türkiye ascended to the North Atlantic Alliance. The new and modern Republic of Türkiye was found in 1923 following the Ottoman defeat in the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence (Greco – Turkish War) that took place between 1919 – 1922. Following the establishment of the new and independent Türkiye, the country went through a very complex and comprehensive reform process, under its first leader Mustafa Kemal, the Turkish people threw away the old sharia law based way of living that was implemented during the Ottoman era and set up the new state as a “laicite” which is a vital breaking point as laicite is a stronger version of secularism of French origin, where nothing related to the state could be in relation with religion, for example, the official motto of the United States of America, In god we trust, would not be acceptable in a “laicite” form of secularism as it hints of religion, it would be the basis of many further domestic conflicts, even during the years of these reforms, there were many uprisings within central and eastern Anatolia claiming that the new state is trying to prevent people from being Muslim. Following this core change, the reforms continued with the new Civil Code, which established legal gender equality in civil engagements, then the new alphabet, and the women were given the right to vote and be elected in 1934. Therefore it is rightful to say that the new Republic of Türkiye was going through a path that would bring it closer to its European counterparts, although they were fighting against them merely less than a decade ago. However this rapid development era came to an halt, when its leader, Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK, passed away at the age of 57 in Istanbul. As Sir Winston Churchill commented following his death “The death of Atatürk, who saved Türkiye, leaded and elevated the Turkish Nation, is a great loss for both Turkish Nation and for Europe. The teardrops of the men and women from all social classes of his country are the well deserved

proof of the good and right deeds this great man has done in his life.” (Turkish Ministry of Culture, What They Say About Atatürk !) Mustafa Kemal not only being the brain or the operator behind the reforms, he was also seen as the idea behind them, and given the political and cultural respect towards him, those who opposed rapid modernisation and westernisation accompanied by a strong nationalised economic policy, whatever their reasons behind opposing them would be, would often lose their debates against the Father of the Turks both in the parliament and in the eyes of the public. However, his passing has allowed Ismet Inonu, a gifted general who served long as Atatürk’s Prime Minister to take over the Presidency. Although a gifted general and an exceptional diplomat who managed to maintain neutrality during the Second World War under immense pressure, was not liked as much as Atatürk neither within the Parliament nor in public eyes. Eventually, the cracks within the sole party of the time, Republican People’s Party, were becoming more and more audible, and with the leadership of a prominent politician Celal Bayar, and a young and energised deputy, Adnan Menderes, the Democratic Party, was found, officially moving the country into the multi-party era, very soon after, in the first multi-party elections, the Democratic Party became the government following an overwhelming victory. And during the Democratic Party era, under the Prime Ministership of Adnan Menderes and Presidency of Celal Bayar, the ascension of Türkiye to the North Atlantic Alliance happened.

Initially as the NATO was founded, Türkiye was not invited to the alliance as a founding member, however following the removal of Turkish – Soviet Non-Aggression Pact and numerous claims laid on Turkish Caucasian cities by Stalin’s USSR; the North Atlantic Alliance thought it was a smart move to ascend their Southeasternmost counterpart into the Alliance not only because the situation could escalate in Europe if tension were to grow between USSR and Türkiye, but also now that Türkiye had Menderes government instead of Kemalist Ismet Pasha government. This was a key factor as although Menderes was

conservative in certain regards, mainly in order to ensure votes from a more religiously concerned base in Central and Eastern Asia Minor, his government policy was far more liberal in comparison to Kemalist National Economy model, which would allow the US and the other Allies to expand their products and services to an expanding and fresh market. The Korean War was the perfect gateway for the engagement on a military basis, therefore paving the path for the Türkiye's ascension. Following the internal engagement between the US and Türkiye, the Turkish Armed Forces joined the UN Peacekeeping force in Korea, partaking in the Korean War. The Turkish Brigade during the war was codenamed "Northern Star"(Er, 2009) which was a giveaway for the Turkish wish of involvement in NATO through a reference to the Alliance's famous white Northern Star logo.

As a result of the high performance of the Turkish Armed Forces during the conflict, and as per their promises, the Turkish ascended to NATO in 1952 alongside Greece. The reaction was initially quite positive in Menderes's voter base, since ascension to NATO as a newly found country bordering the Soviet Union would automatically translate into Millions of Dollars' worth of aid from the US through the Marshall Plan and other arms renewing programmes. Which in the eyes of the ordinary central Anatolian citizen engaged in farming, was a success of Menderes, since the country was now "richer". Being aware of the Soviet threat, the urban population, state officials and armed forces personnel, also appreciated the ascension, however with a slight doubt on the Armed Forces side of thing since the Turkish Armed Forces, holding a position that is separated from the governmental hierarchy, which would mean they only take orders from the Assembly itself in action, had much more freedom in the way they operated as the designated protectors of the Turkish Republic in comparison to it's new Allies' Armed Forces. This combined with the fact that the most of the high ranking officers of the Turkish Armed Forces at that time also were veterans of the First World War, and were uncomfortable with having foreign commanders due to their not quite

positive experience with their German commanders. However as the time went on, the Menderes government moved their privatisation efforts further into corruption, and moved the country further away from the initial Kemalist ideals and ideas especially further away from laicite which led to a major concern in the Armed Forces and a portion of the population, combined with the inability to realistically maintain the economic and social promises. The support behind the Menderes government has begun to decline drastically. With support declined and the Armed Forces having high concerns about the integrity of the Republic, in 27th of May 1960 the Turkish Armed Forces performed a coup d'état and took over the government. Although they immediately announced that they do not intend to maintain the power and will pass the power back to civilian government as soon as a safe and fair election is ensured. The concerns in Europe, especially in NATO allies begun to spread as not only this was a major blow to the growing Democratic Türkiye with European Values image, but also the fact that the coup happened while General Rüştü Erdelhun was tasked as the Chairman of the NATO Military Chiefs of Staff Meeting that year, and was arrested as a result of the coup d'état also established the first concerns regarding appointing Turkish staff at key positions, which would increase in the following decades.

The key role the Menderes government and this initial ascension period has played was not limited to the country's ascension to NATO. His government and domestic politics are the most parallel to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of the contemporary, as when The political power changed through democratic elections On May 14, 1950, for the first time in Türkiye (Lewis, 1993, p. 303). The DP received 53% of the votes in these elections, mostly from rural areas, with 408 deputies; and the CHP took 40% of the votes and had 69 deputies. (Aydemir, 2011a, p. 492; Aydemir, 2011b, p. 32-33). Just like how Erdoğan and his AKP scored a major victory and took parliamentary majority with rural voter base in 2002 Elections. Also in the sense of practice, these two leaders and their voter bases were quite alike; Adnan Menderes decided to

convert the Islamic Call for Prayer from Turkish back to Arabic, which was highly appreciated in his voter base, similarly Erdoğan promised to lift the ban on headscarves in government buildings, including universities, which he delivered following his victory in 2002 and is still used as a response towards any critique of him by his supporters.

However as it is mentioned beforehand, the ascension to NATO happened through the governance of Menderes, and the talks of Türkiye being kicked out or leaving NATO is happening in the term of Erdoğan, who are two similar leaders with very similar voter base. This is simply because both leaders practically projected the Alliance towards their voter base in the extent that they used it as a Political Tool in domestic policy. One recent example to this is the fact that while Erdoğan and his government was raising tensions over 2021 with both US and Greece, two prominent NATO allies claiming that they are trying to prevent Türkiye from growing further, over the issues in the East Mediterranean and Syria, becoming a prominent issue of daily politics in Türkiye; the Turkish Armed Forces were in the leadership of Very High Readiness Joint Task Force of the Alliance, which is the most vital armed response capability of the Alliance in case of any threat to the Transatlantic Security.

Moreover, the main importance that of the Menderes government's era and its relation to Erdoğan Government's Era is that it stands as a firm example of the fact that People of Türkiye, did not change drastically following Erdoğan Era, as claimed by Bongiovanni and others. Erdoğan's Era obviously had an impact, but not by changing the Turkish Populace in the essence, his impact was to follow the policies that the religiously conservative and Neo-Ottoman Revisionist people asked for throughout the years, which allowed them to be more visible, and more impactful in the eyes of the global populace. Therefore it is safe to say that Türkiye's populace did not change through Erdoğan's era to an extent where it is viewed by those who think that Türkiye is no longer a country that can relate or operate together with the values and ideals that the North Atlantic Alliance operates in. On the contrary, Türkiye is, and

has been a country who tried to operate with these values and ideals and serve the goal of global and transatlantic security, in spite of the fact that those people who are being used as the reasoning behind defining Türkiye as unfitting country to be an Alliance Member, existed and thought the same since the country's ascension in 1952.

Cyprus : The Break of Trust and the Beginning of Paradox

The second and probably the longest lasting issue that has caused concerns regarding Türkiye as a NATO member was the Cyprus Crisis and the high tensions it caused with the Greeks, which still lasts. On the 21st of December 1963, a series of violent actions against the Turkish Residents of the multi-national Republic of Cyprus was undertaken by their Greek neighbours, creating a death toll over 500 (Oberling, 1982, p. 120), which was ceased as a result of a series of warning flights conducted by the Turkish Airforce on the 30th of December same year. Following this incident, the guarantor states; UK, Greece and Türkiye, signed the Green Line Treaty, de-facto separating the population physically on two sides of the line, to prevent further escalation. While the UN Peacekeeping mission was successful in separating the populations, the end of the crisis meant the end of any Turkish government participation to the Isle's governance, which led to Türkiye rising the solution of partition of the Island, which was answered by the infamous letter authored by President Johnson of the US, stating that the US is against any sort of intervention to the Island, and if such intervention leads to any conflict with the Soviet Union, Türkiye will not receive any assistance from the US. Which would lead to the failure of the Motion to Invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, that Türkiye will raise to the North Atlantic Council if a conflict with the Soviets were to happen, which not only created the breeding grounds for a bigger conflict in Cyprus but also a negative attitude in the minds of the Turkish population, creating a basis for the lack of mutual confidence between the North Atlantic Alliance and the Turkish People and the Turkish Government. The already existent and unresolved Turmoil in the Isle of

Cyprus was expected to breed further conflict by many, but given the geopolitical and the cultural importance of the Cyprus Island, none of the parties, especially foreign parties, wanted to play their hand early, yet when the Greek Cypriot forces under the Command of Nikos Sampson has conducted a Coup d'état against the President of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios on 15th of July 1974, and reports of violence, alongside Sampson's attempt to seize land being reported by the local sources, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit hastily, convened with the National Security Council, followed by a Meeting with the opposition leaders. As a result of these meetings, The Turkish Armed Forces has initiated a build-up in Mersin, alongside Eastern Thrace. In the meantime, Prime Minister Ecevit went to London to discuss with the guarantor parties alongside the US, yet failing to reach any resolution whatsoever. Seeing also the Alliance has done very little except for a warning that was Issued to the Colonels Junta in Greece during a North Atlantic Council Meeting and echoing the statements of the UN, the Turkish PM returned to Türkiye and ordered the TAF to put boots on the ground. Turkish troops landed by air and sea to Cyprus on 20th of July, and begun its mission to take control of the key points in securing the Turkish region. However, on 22nd of July, PM Ecevit announced a ceasefire in accordance to the UNSC Resolution 353. The first portion of the Peace Operation has resulted the Colonel's Junta in Greece leaving government, restoring civilian democracy in Greece, and the resignation of Nikos Sampson. Following the ceasefire, the first Geneva Conference on Cyprus gathered, where the Turkish side presented a geographically drawn, federative two-state solution which was refused by the Greeks. As a result of the inability to reach any solution, and over the worries of the Turkish Generals over the Greek side using the Conference to buy time to strengthen their defences, the Turkish side conveyed the Password "Let Ayşe go on Vacation" which is one of the staple things that the Turkish people remember about the operation even today, and the Turkish Forces in the Island carried on with their advance. As a result, the US Congress has decided on a Weapons

Embargo on the Turkish Republic which at the time the Turkish Republic was highly dependent, if not entirely dependent on US Arms. This embargo was lifted in 1978 by the Congress, yet it led to Türkiye reconsidering its position within the alliance, its outlook towards NATO alongside the realisation of the dependence on Foreign Arms by the Turkish government, “Therefore, the following years marked the establishment of state-owned enterprises in the defense industry. Some of these organizations, such as Military Electronic Industry (ASELSAN, from the original Turkish form of the name)” (Durmaz, 2014, pp.51), which are mainly responsible for current Turkish title as an “Emerging Arms Producer”. As Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit said during an interview with the BBC in 1978 following the Cyprus Crisis, “Turkish contribution to NATO will be on the same level as NATO’s contribution to Turkish Security” which set the ground for the majority of the Turkish policy regarding the Alliance ever since. As this whole crisis created an extensively further decay in the belief of Turkish People and the Turkish Political Sphere, from the government to the opposition, in the North Atlantic Alliance’s capability but more importantly willingness in ensuring Turkish safety and security if need be; It created the requirement of Turkish movement into a different policy regarding it’s security understanding. Which moved Turkish Security into a more independent framework, which was projected crystal clear with Ecevit’s visit to Moscow in 1978. Consequentially, the Cyprus Crisis, and it’s further projections as a result of the tension it built upon the existing rivalry between Greece and Türkiye over historical issues that spans for more than half a millennium was a source for great damage in the perspective towards both the Alliance and Türkiye over the years as repeatedly, the world’s biggest political-military alliance failed to prevent two of its members from engaging into hostilities with each other. For example, the existence of Kardak Crisis which happened when the Turkish Cargo Ship Figen Akat was mounted on a isle of rocks 6 miles off coast of Bodrum called Kardak, and requested help

from the Turkish Authorities, refusing the proposal of Aid by the Greek Coast Guard, yet caused confusion as this little island of rocks was not something that neither party paid attention to until that point. Following the incident, a Greek newspaper turned the public eye on the Isle, and a Greek Mayor, alongside a Bishop has arrived to the Isle on a boat and raised the Greek flag. Given the historical tension, this was not welcomed by the Turkish side and a group of Turkish Journalists went to the Isle and changed the flag with a Turkish one, moving a crisis of confusion even further. As a reply, the Greek side deployed troops to the Isle, and replacing the Greek flag. This led to the crisis growing a great deal, both countries deploying their Navies to the international waters, as a response the US President Clinton has urged both sides to stand down and de-escalate stating that both parties have more important concerns than a bunch of rocks, and trying to focus them on their roles as Allies, yet this did not help with any resolve and a Turkish Naval Assault Unit infiltrated the Isle, avoiding the Greek Navy protecting the Isle, and raised a Turkish Flag on the Isle. Which marked the end of the crisis, as both parties agreed to de-escalate. As a result, the Chief-of-Staff of the Greek Armed Forces resigned. This crisis impacted the public outlook on NATO, especially due to the inability of it to actually have an impact in order to de-escalate two members as aforementioned, deepening the aforementioned Turkish concern of capability and willingness, alongside invoking concerns of relevancy. Which over the years fed the perspective that the North Atlantic Alliance consistently sides with the Greek to ensure for us to not to overpower our historical rivals, which was fed by mainly pro-Russia or pro-Erdoğan parts of the society, in a neo-Ottoman manner, with the claims that the Turkish future is towards the east, which confused an extensive amount of younger generations regarding NATO and it's relationship with Türkiye. In regards to the question of this thesis, the consistent concern regarding the Alliance's capability and willingness towards Türkiye formed and acted as a cornerstone in the lack of trust between the Alliance and Türkiye. Which is a very relevant point in

answering the question as not only the Turkish Public base their opinions towards the Alliance remembering these factors, but also the Turkish Foreign Policy with both the Alliance and other foreign states are established over the lessons learned throughout the aforementioned crises. However most of the claims that are made towards Türkiye being a “Wild Card” or definitions made towards the country as an unprecedented ally who has questionable relationships outside the North Atlantic Alliance, when made with either with a surface level amount of knowledge regarding the historical context, or in disregard to the context either in Academia, Media creates not only is an unhealthy approach to the general analysis and understanding of the NATO – Türkiye Relationship, but also creates a framework of relationships that are at the core essentially paradoxical in the sense that as long as the mutual crisis of confidence that was mentioned by Goren is not addressed, Türkiye would be forced to further maintain cooperation with third parties which would cause in a decrease in the Alliance’s and other Allies trust towards Türkiye, almost like an ouroboros, preventing the increase in the relations.

Türkiye, United States and Russia : The Triangle that Feeds the Paradox

As a result of the paradoxical nature of the Turkish Relationship with the North Atlantic Alliance following the aforementioned crises with Greece, the issue of relations with Russia has created a complex triangle of relationships, with Türkiye seeming to slide towards one side or the other consistently throughout the relationship. This complex triangle and the understanding the Turkish outlook towards both the United States and Russia or formerly the Soviet Union within this relationship through the historical context is an essential part of understanding why and how the Turkish move within their relationship with the North Atlantic Alliance. To begin understanding this context, one must realise the fact that the Soviet Union was the first country to recognise the Grand National Assembly government that was found in Ankara and which would eventually evolve into the modern Republic of

Türkiye. Alongside this, the USSR government under Vladimir Lenin provided the Mustafa Kemal Government provided the Ankara government not only with extensive financial aid, but also political and military aid through representatives like Ambassador Aralov, General Frunze, and Ambassador Abilov actively being a part of the war as advisors and observers. Therefore an essential to establish is the fact that perceiving Russia as a historical rival in a natural sense might create a blurred approach to the relations between two countries.

Although it is true that two countries currently have conflicting interests in certain global matters like Libya, Syria and more recently Ukraine, or engaged in soft power struggles in regions like the Balkans and Central Asia; it does not change the fact that firstly, Türkiye and Russia, had comparatively the best relations with Russia within any of the Alliance members, and secondly prior to Stalin's land claims which was aforementioned, the new Republic of Türkiye and the Soviet Union, united under the common goal of fighting off the Imperial powers of the time, managed to work out the issues that were remnants of their Imperial pasts both on a social and political manner, therefore projecting a better image into the minds of public. One example of this is the fact that two Soviet Generals are standing behind Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in the victory monument located on Istanbul's famous Taksim Square. Alongside this healing period it must not be forgotten how intertwined the Turkish Economy is to the Russian Economy and vice-versa, alongside the standard energy dependencies that most of the European Allies of NATO is currently experiencing following the Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Turkish are tied to the Russians through both Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, that is being built by ROSATOM, and the TURKSTREAM Gas Pipeline, moreover, one of the most important ties that Türkiye has with Russia is the extensive amount of Tourism Customer potential that Russia provides to Türkiye, and is currently is an essential part of the Turkish Economy. During probably the biggest decay in the Turkish – Russian relationship in the last decade caused by a Russian Jet being shot down by the Turkish

Airforce in 2015. On the following year, according to Turkish Newspaper Hürriyet, only 20 thousand Russian tourists visited Antalya between 1st of January and 31st of August, where in 2015, 2 million 170 thousand Russians visited the city in the same period (Çınar,2016).

Whereas for the Russians, Türkiye controls the sole passage out of Black Sea, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, in accordance with the Montreux Straits Convention of 1936, and although Türkiye guarantees free passage to the civilian vessels during peace time, the movement of the Russian Black Sea or Mediterranean Fleets can be blocked by the Turkish. These factors combined altogether forces both parties to stand in certain lines within their engagements with each other.

Whereas on the side of the United States, the relationships are unfortunately far more complicated with a wide variety of decays and tensions happening over the last few decades. From the days of the War of Independence, the idea of the United States was a big question mark in the eyes of the Turkish Public, during the Erzurum Conference that was organised to plan the National Independence Movement, some recommended an American Mandate in Türkiye, seeing it as the sole solution of having a sort of Turkish Independence and although this idea was rejected firmly, the United States was introduced with a sour taste to many who lived back then. The relationships went further following the Conference of Lausanne and the resulting peace treaty, to which the United States participated as an observer. The perspective changed when the United States became one of the two superpowers after the Second World War, yet never establishing an entirely positive relationship. The ups and downs of the relationships became more common following the 1st of March Bill incident, The newfound Erdogan Government, during its first year in power has brought a bill that would allow the US Armed Forces to station in Türkiye, for the Iraq War. This bill was heavily protested not only by the opposition parties, but also a group within Erdogan's party Justice and Development Party, as a result, the bill failed although it received simple majority of the votes since the

constitutional requirements stated that such bill required a majority of 267 votes, which the bill failed to gather by a difference of only three votes. This was a major disappointment in the West as Justice and Development party, with its liberal economic plans and goals for further European integration during its first term, was a promising opportunity for the western allies of Türkiye to begin a new chapter with it. Apart from the disappointment, the rejection of the bill itself did not have many consequences, however an event that happened just after that, and seen as many as an American retaliation to the failure of the Bill, has damaged not only the relations between Türkiye and US but also the way Turkish people look at their western allies, especially NATO. On the 4th of July 2003, twelve Turkish Armed Forces personnel was arrested by the members of the 173th Airborne of the US Armed Forces, and was held under custody for 60 hours in the city of Sulaymaniyah. The visuals of Turkish soldiers being taken under custody, with bags on their hands caused an immense anger within the Turkish population, and while the issue was resolved diplomatically, this event that is still commemorated by a portion of the society in Türkiye changed how the Turkish people views the US drastically, helping the expansion of the fertile grounds the anti-Western and anti-NATO sentiment growing gradually yet steadfastly within not only the conservative, but almost the entire voter-base in Türkiye. Following this incident, the peak of the PKK terrorism in late 2000s were often connected to the destabilisation in Iraq and increasing US relationship with the Kurdish groups in the area by the public, and as the Kurdish Separatist Issue has been a major issue for Republic of Türkiye, ever since late 80s, if not the biggest domestic issue. Turkish Security Forces have lost almost 8000 members to the actions of the Kurdish Separatist Terrorist Group PKK, ever since it began its activities, alongside this, almost 5000 civilian lives were claimed according to the Turkish Newspaper Hürriyet, while 28.000 terrorists were eliminated ever since (Hürriyet, 2008). Prevention of PKK's activities, varying from Human and Drugs Trafficking, Ransom, Suicide Bombings, Armed

Attacks and assassinations has been one of the biggest priorities of the Turkish Security Policy for years, and when the Syrian Civil War broke out, one of the biggest concerns for the Turkish Security, alongside ISIS, was who their allies were arming to fight against ISIS, The US was publicly supporting the YPG, the armed wing of the PYD, the Syrian extension of the PKK according to the Turkish Official Sources, and most of the Turkish Public. The issue has grown substantially as Türkiye repeatedly protested this aid provided to the YPG. While the issue did not find extensive resonance on the side of the US public, it has put the US and NATO into the Turkish people's crosshairs once again, and a video from a US Senate Armed Services Committee session, where Former US Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter is being questioned by Senator Graham of South Carolina, and admits to the connection between YPG and the PKK, which is recognised as a terrorist organisation by the US, struck down any leeway the US might have had in the eyes of the Turkish public, and giving Erdogan and his government a massive freedom of action both in relations with Russia, and how to respond to the Syrian Civil War. Allowing Erdogan's government to initiate an international military operation into the Syrian borders, Operation Euphrates Shield was initiated to keep the YPG away from Afrin while also eliminating the remainder of ISIS within the region. This was protested widely by Türkiye's western allies, but more specifically the US as Turkish Armed Forces directly engaged the YPG. The continued support towards the YPG and YPG's continuous expansion, towards the Western Euphrates region, which Türkiye drew as a red line following the initial operation, led to two other operations, Olive Branch and Peace Spring, which resulted in Turkish Armed Forces seizing control of hundreds of settlements, creating a pocket of Turkish Controlled zone of land in the Turkish- Syrian border to keep the YPG away from the Turkish Border. During the operations Turkish Armed Forces Personnel and US Armed Forces Personnel that are advising the YPG sometimes got into engagement range, raising tensions to unprecedented levels. While in the parallel the tensions were taken

even further with the disagreement regarding the Gulen Movement and its leader Fethullah Gülen who created the movement in 1960s is a Anti Secularist and Islamist terrorist organisation, which aimed to sway the Turkish Republic's politics and culture in accordance with their own agenda through infiltration of the important positions in the country's Bureaucracy, Education, Police and Armed Forces. While being openly active in Türkiye until the 2010s, the Gulen Movement fell into conflict with the government in 2010s, following the leak of alleged audiotapes of members of the Erdogan family, which allegedly included corruption. The Movement's main connection to the Türkiye – NATO relations was the Coup Attempt, that was organised by the Gulen Movement according to the Turkish Official Sources. As the sun set on 15th of July, the residents of Istanbul and Ankara were confused and slightly worried regarding the low-passes of military jets over both cities, attack helicopters in flight and increased military presence around the Governmental Districts. There were soldiers on one of the bridges that connected Asia to Europe, and they were turning the cars around saying that the bridge was closed. Some rumours of a coup were circling, yet as a nation which experienced their share of coups, they thought that it was an odd and almost absurd hour for a coup, and disregarded the rumours. The confusion was resolved when the News Anchor for the Turkish Radio Television, TRT, Tijen Aktaş read the Coup Statement, on national television, stating that the Turkish Armed Forces have seized control of the country. Declaring martial law and curfew by the order of the Peace at Home council (Referring to the famous quote by Atatürk, 'Peace at Home, Peace at World'). Yet this was not accepted by the Turkish public, and when President Erdogan connected to a TV channel via videocall, a mass civilian movement in support of him begun to the key areas that were hold by the coup supporting soldiers, and the coup attempters were defeated by the morning by the joint effort of the Turkish Intelligence, Law Enforcement and Armed Forces personnel that didn't partake in the coup attempt. While the initial response from the international

community was of sympathy and unity, Erdogan government's request of the Fetullah Gulen who resides in Pennsylvania from the US, alongside some extradition requests from Greece and Germany which were refused by these allies, was the first of the many consequences this coup attempt had on the Türkiye – NATO relations. As the investigations on the Coup attempt carried on, events like massive suspensions from government offices, academia, and military positions that accounted a number over 100.000; that were ordered by executive orders that were powered by the state of emergency declared after the coup attempt, alongside these suspensions, the investigation resulted in about 300.000 people being taken into custody, and nearly 100.000 of them being arrested, with exact numbers differing from source to source. These comparatively large numbers resulted in backlash, especially internationally, accusing Erdogan of conducting a "Witch Hunt" against those who are in opposition of him, with an opportunity presented by the coup attempt, alongside allegations of human rights violations. As a result, this led to the Turkish image in the western world deteriorate rapidly, re-invoking the questions of how fit Türkiye is to partake in the Alliance, standing as one of the strongest pillars of the arguments against Turkish Membership in NATO, through the projection of various statistics like "One of the countries that have imprisoned most imprisoned journalists in the world" Where on the other hand the refusal for the Extradition of Fetullah Gulen and other perpetrators that are in NATO Ally States, created a big disappointment and anger in the eyes of the Turkish public, and increased the negativity of the outlook towards the alliance, which led to the not only religiously conservative right-wing voter but also the left-wing voter and nationalistic voter sharing a perspective against this refusal , and putting the Alliance in the crosshairs as a common enemy. Which was not only impactful to the results of the 2017 Constitutional Referendum which gave Erdogan presidential powers, that are similar to the US, yet more extensive; but also gained Erdogan more political leeway and support in his

further actions that led to tensions vis-à-vis the NATO allies, while any positive development in relations with Russia was widely appreciated by the populace.

The times that these two different challenges presented immensely high tensions between Türkiye and the Allies can be considered as an era where Türkiye – NATO relations reached its lowest, maybe ever since the Cyprus Peace Operation, as during this time period starting from late 2015 presented the relations with various challenges and conflicts of interest especially with the US, Germany and Greece while on the other hand this same period of time, although with hiccups, saw a gradual increase in Russo – Turkish relations, which caused further decrease in Turkish relations with the Alliance, due to the extensive rivalry between NATO and Russia that moved to another step following the Illegal Annexation of Crimea. This has resulted in a growth in numbers of those who deemed Russia as a better option than US, which also meant NATO. This set of events that essentially fed into the paradoxical nature of this relationship with additions like the purchase of S-400 Missile Defence Systems by Türkiye from Russia, The Pastor Brunson Incident where an Evangelical Pastor who lived in Türkiye since mid-1990s was arrested as a part of the 2016 Coup Attempt investigations, according to same in order to suggest a swap to the US for the retrieval of Fetullah Gulen, the arrest of the Pastor Brunson received an intense backlash from the US, the Trump administration first asked for the release of Pastor Brunson, threatening with sanctions if he is not released, then following the refusal of his release, Trump administration went ahead and put economic sanctions, which had a devastating impact on Turkish Lira, while also personal assets of Turkish Ministers of Interior and Justice being targeted. And while Pastor Brunson was sentenced with a sentence over 3 years for aiding terrorism, the court released him considering the time he had already spent under arrest, after which he returned to the US. This issue was viewed in two different perspectives in Turkish public, while one part of the people thinks that this was a bad call by Erdogan government which resulted in serious

economic consequences and unrequired tensions with one of our allies, others argue that this was a classically American way of bullying their allies to bend to their will by the use of their economical capacities, which was a result of Erdogan's rhetoric that US is conducting an economical assault to bend Türkiye's will during the crisis and to keep the Terrorist leader Fetullah Gulen away from prosecution. Lastly, President Joe Biden's use of the term "genocide" referring to the events of 1915, which previous presidents refrained from using during his first address for the Armenian Remembrance Day. His statement fell into Turkish political sphere like a bombshell, and received messages of condemnation from almost every single entity in the Political Sphere, from Mayors to Opposition members to Government members, which have united the Turkish population against the US, some argued, including the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party, Devlet Bahçeli, who is a close ally of Erdogan, that from that point on the US – Türkiye relations will not be same, and while the backlash was not solid, the use of the term is still widely remembered in Türkiye, and some see it as a political stunt by President Biden to make the Armenian Diaspora, which is considerable in size and political power in the US happy.

Finally, once lied down as a whole in a comparative manner, the impact of the difference of the Turkish – American relationship and Turkish – Russian relationship towards the outlook the public and the office holders have can be seen clearly. While the relations with the US Allies have been quite challenging in various ways, the Russian relations were far more stable due to the mutual need. This has led to a situation where the Russians had the opportunity to drag the Turkish more towards their side with a wide variety of incentives like the pricing on the S-400 Missile Defense Systems, while the Alliance, was pushing Türkiye away in a sense where it was more and more worried regarding the Alliance's capability of ensuring cooperation between the Allies. This was caused by the aforementioned paradoxical nature of the relationship between Türkiye and The Alliance, boosted with a repetitive clash of interest

in a very small timeframe between three very stubborn leaders who are known to utilise the image of a strong stance in foreign policy in order to cover for domestic policy mistakes in the eyes of their likeminded voter bases, Presidents Erdoğan, Trump and Putin. This boost over the last decade have brought the relationship to an historical low, therefore creating or reviving the question this thesis aims to answer. The revival from that point on depended on building a certain understanding between the Alliance and Türkiye, alongside initiating discussions between Allies and Türkiye, since the paradox at hand was not going to solve itself. While the fact that Joe Biden was elected as the President of the United States helped with refreshing the relationship between US and Türkiye during the Trump Government, the first initiation was during the recent escalation of tensions between Greece and Türkiye when the drilling and exploration rights to the newfound reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean turned out to be an international question with no exact answer due to the unsolved nature of the Cyprus Crisis between Greece and Türkiye, tensions escalated very quickly as both sides, and their supportive allies respectively, rapidly and steadfastly tried to gain international legitimacy to these rights through the signature of Exclusive Economic Zone Memorandums with other states on the Mediterranean coast (Türkiye – Libya & Greece – Israel – Egypt) as both sides were determined to maintain control in the areas they deemed their right, and the areas were conflicting. As a result, both sides have increased Naval Presence in the area, with occasional aggressive maneuvers against each other. The issue, caught the eye of the rest of the international actors, international as an umbrella organization, NATO has acted within it's International Staff capacity to try and de-escalate the tension between two of its members. Secretary General of the Alliance, Jens Stoltenberg visited Ankara on 5th of October 2020 (NATO,2020) to visit President Erdoğan and flew directly from Ankara to Athens from the next day(NATO,2020), helping de-escalation of this tension between two southern allies.

This de-escalation that was crafted by the Alliance not only was an initiation for the betterment of the relations with Ankara and a more solution oriented stance on both sides, but also the Alliance have proven globally to ensure it's allies unity, and stability in the face of crisis, which was a message that served extremely in favour of the Alliance both in its relationship with Türkiye and Greece and also in regards to the International Opinion regarding its image. This initiation of betterment and the new solution oriented perspective by both sides were observed fairly recently once again. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, two quite prominent partners of the North Atlantic Alliance, Finland and Sweden, applied to ascend to NATO Membership. Which was appreciated by almost all Allies, except for Türkiye, which vocalised it's concerns regarding the existence of pro – PKK organisations in these Allied states, and requested actions to be taken and promises to be made by those two new prospective allies. Given the nature of the decision-making process of the both the North Atlantic Council asking for a silent consensus for every decision, and as the Article 10 of the Washington Treaty of 1949 defines the invitation process of an another nation into the North Atlantic Alliance as the following; “The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty. Any State so invited may become a Party to the Treaty by depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of the United States of America. The Government of the United States of America will inform each of the Parties of the deposit of each such instrument of accession.” (NATO,1949) Türkiye found itself in a window of opportunity where it can address one of it's security concerns in a NATO ground as the entire alliance needed a yes from the Turkish. Once again the solution based – manner worked well for the relationships between both sides when following the Trilateral Memorandum was signed between Türkiye, Sweden and Finland during NATO's Madrid Summit in 2022. This was a breaking point in the recent relationship

between the Alliance and Türkiye as it was a concrete step in eliminating the paradoxical nature born out of common lack of trust against each other, which was, as aforementioned, one of the major reasons behind not only the negativity behind the relationship, but also the questioning and doubts regarding Türkiye's membership to the North Atlantic Alliance.

Finland, Sweden and Elections:

Although this memorandum of understanding was signed by Sweden, Finland and Türkiye, the accession procedure did not go as smoothly as expected by the other allies, and an observation into the whole procedure reveals that, Türkiye, especially the government has further expectations for their vote for Finland and Sweden's accession, to begin with the international side of the things, Turkish will to use this situation as a bargaining chip for former problems, especially in the means of acquiring further military equipment from the allies became crystal clear when the US allowed the purchase of F-16 Modernisation kits, shortly after Finland's accession was ratified by the Turkish Grand National Assembly. However the domestic side of things project a more challenging future for the ascension of Sweden. Following the event of the Quran being burned in front of the Turkish Embassy in Sweden, with the already existent concerns regarding the PKK and their alleged presence in Sweden, President Erdoğan was given two significant cards to play moving towards perhaps the most important election for him since he got elected as the Prime Minister over 20 years ago. Before further explaining the cards he was given through this, it is necessary to dig in into the importance of the elections on 14th of May. This is the first election where Erdoğan is significantly challenged by the opposition through his rule, this derived from two separate things, first one being the financial collapse of the country, combined with mismanagement and inability to act during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, and more importantly, during the devastating earthquakes that hit south-eastern Türkiye on 6th of February, the fact that the search and rescue organisation by the government's immense failure, shutdown of Twitter after the earthquake which was used as the main communication platform to direct rescue teams and aid materials by the volunteers,

and the massive losses have significantly shaken the trust many Turks put into Erdoğan's government since in the most of the fields that the Erdoğan Government was lacking action, the opposition through their two Metropolitan Municipalities in Ankara and Istanbul, managed to fill the void. And within these circumstances, Turkish opposition has managed to unify its ranks against Erdoğan, with more than 15 parties ranging from the Kurdish-Dominant Green Left Party, to Turkish Communist Party, to Nationalist IYI Party, announcing support for CHP's Presidential Candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, this meant that except for the two other candidates, who is expected to receive barely %5 percent of the vote, made the election between Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu. Kılıçdaroğlu also announced, highly revered and famous mayors of Istanbul and Ankara, Ekrem İmamoğlu and Mansur Yavaş, would serve as Vice-Presidents during his presidency, creating further support for himself. With the record number of Voter Participation in Foreign Countries, as voting has already started at the time this work is being prepared, with major opposition-favouring observations from the voter grounds, Erdoğan is at a challenging position. The first cards he was given through the issue of Sweden's accession to NATO, derives from the Kurdish issue, as Erdoğan focuses his election campaign on marking the opposition candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu as a PKK supporter, due to the support that came from YSP, formerly HDP, and their imprisoned Leader Selahattin Demirtaş, although they are not in the same coalition. Erdoğan is using the refusal of Sweden's accession as a recent example to his government's "Fight Against the PKK", and while doing that, he also holds the opportunity to cut a deal with the NATO Allies of Türkiye similar to F-16 Modernisation kits, if the election goes to the second round or he comes out successful, in order to present this as an international success of his government, to win over indecisive voters or cement his power. With all of this in mind, it should be noted that Sweden's accession, and undeniably, Türkiye's relations with the Transatlantic Alliance, is strongly tied to the upcoming election, its campaigns, and results.

Wildcard or the Bright Side : Why Türkiye is a Valuable Ally

Following all of the reasoning behind why the relationship between Türkiye and NATO has been tense throughout the entire context might create the feeling that the problems that have existed or are existing between the Alliance and its southeasternmost ally might be far too much to handle, yet the issues, as can be seen with the resolution of the last to issues mentioned above, are fairly easy to resolve when two parties can communicate with the right mindset. And as the future solutions are achieved, the North Atlantic Alliance will further benefit from the perks the Turkish provide by being an Ally. Starting with the most obvious, The Anatolian Region, also known as the Asia Minor, where modern day Türkiye is located has been one of the most geopolitically and strategically important locations for the entire Globe for centuries, if not a millennium. Connecting not only the Black Sea to the Mediterranean through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, but also acting as a bridge between Asia and continental Europe. Türkiye's geopolitical location provides the Alliance with an invaluable strategic advantage in regards to its operational capabilities in the Mediterranean, The Black Sea, Middle East and if needed Caucuses and even Russia, henceforth holding a great importance in the NATO's operational versatility, not only that is almost impossible to replace, but also it stands as a geopolitical point where it's accessibility third parties would cause great challenges to the Transatlantic Security. Secondly, as a

culturally unique ally, Türkiye's ties, be it religious, ethnic or historical, allows the alliance to resonate with partners and possible partners that are otherwise harder to communicate, through programmes like Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, Türkiye acts as a hub for better NATO cooperation with the Middle Eastern and Gulf Regions, due to cultural and religious ties.

Alongside cultural ties, the Turkish Relations with the Central Asian Turkic States, which are close and consistently improving through the Organisation of Turkic States (Formerly Turkic Council), provides NATO with a connection, or even a slight amount of influence in a promising and prospering region, Central Asia, which is otherwise dominated by China and Russia in the influence sphere. Thirdly While Erdoğan's Türkiye has been criticized for many things by its western Allies, its emergence as a Defence Technology Producer has been appreciated, although with caution by its allies. Ranging from Armoured Personal Carriers to Famous and Field Tested Armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Systems, Türkiye has been turning its arms industry into a steadfast supplier. The shining superstar of this emergence, Bayraktar's TB-2 Armed UAV's which totalled thousands of hours of flight hours in the hands of various armed forces, in various fields such as Syrian Civil War, Libyan Civil War and Nagorno – Karabakh War and most importantly Russian invasion of Ukraine; where the Ukrainian Defenders have dedicated an entire song to the Drone and its capabilities. TB2 is currently owned and operated by many countries including but not limited to the Armed Forces of; Qatar, Ukraine , Azerbaijan, Libya, Morocco, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan with Poland and Iraq expecting delivery for their orders, which elevates Türkiye's position as a provider in a field of arms technology where competition is rather limited, therefore raising the country's importance within the Alliance. Companies like ASELSAN, ROKETSAN, SARSILMAZ and BAYKAR is expected to carry on with their growth over the upcoming years. And Lastly, while the argument that Erdoğan's 20 years have changed the population drastically might be an overstatement as aforementioned, the fact

that he had an impact on the society but more importantly on the policy. Although this thesis have ran through the breaking points of tension between Türkiye and NATO during and prior to Erdoğan's rule, there have been certain political changes on the domestic level, just as Bekdil has presented, that have moved the discussion on the value basis, just like the ironical Turkish withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention on the Prevention of Violence Against Women, have raised eyebrows amongst other Allies, whereas pushing further the chance of Erdoğan in domestic politics. These factors, combined with the economic hardships during the COVID-19 pandemic, following the decision to decrease Interest rates in the country with a religious explanation as reasoning, they have left the population with very little purchasing power, with inflation rate in the Customer Price Index Reaching 78,62% (Milliyet,2022) in comparison to last June according to official sources, whereas some members of the public argue that actual inflation is over 100%, and the fact that Türkiye is one of the biggest humanitarian aid givers, hosting millions of refugees during this sort of an economic collapse, gathers significant backlash, even in cities that were previously strongholds for Erdoğan's AKP. All of the aforementioned topped with the increasing domestic violence and violence against healthcare workers the chances of Erdogan securing another term gets lower every day according to many. And as mentioned previously in the previous chapter, as election draws closer, even polls conducted by companies that are known to be close to Erdoğan's AKP, are projecting a possible failure for Erdoğan. If the election results come up as expected by many, although a period of problem solving and restructuring might be required in Türkiye both in domestic and international policies, the Turkish Nation would be distancing from revisionist or religiously conservative rhetoric that Erdoğan's government has been pursuing, that were in contradiction, at least in certain areas with the greater benefit of Türkiye. Therefore the NATO Allies, may be hopeful that with the fresh blood in Türkiye, the relations with this strong and valuable ally may take a big turn towards positive, which would rapidly increase the capabilities and the stance of the Alliance due to the aforementioned advantages,

and might help Türkiye to once again meet the entirety of the Transatlantic values that the Alliance was found upon.

Conclusion

To Conclude, the answer to the question whether Türkiye is a backsliding ally that is past the point of no return, or is it an important and valuable ally that is in disarray for a wide variety of reasons is crystal clear. Türkiye is a valuable ally, that has so much from having the second biggest Army in the Alliance to the it's unique connections which allowed it to negotiate and broker the Ukrainian – Russian Grain deal during a full – out Invasion of Ukraine by Russia; that has been going through tough times socially, politically and economically. However through a thorough understanding on the side of the Alliance; regarding the Turkish Perspective towards the Alliance, will to maintain the solution-oriented thinking, understanding the Turkish – Russian relationship fully, whereas on the Turkish side through the will to cooperate further and a healing process on domestic and international policy, possibly through the young generation in the country, who have better access to information and fairly more politically aware due to the immense challenges of today; both parties can return to a relationship that is purely mutually beneficial, with only minor hiccups, which will not only cause not only an increase both the Turkish and the Alliance's current international opinion, but also will help ensure a secure transatlantic region and a peaceful globe.

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Summary :

This work looks at the topic of Türkiye 's membership in NATO and the increasing doubts about its suitability as an ally. The literature on the subject is reviewed, with three main approaches identified: blaming Türkiye 's current problems on President Erdogan's government, emphasizing Türkiye 's closer relationship with Iran and Russia, and focusing on the historical and cultural ties between Türkiye and NATO. This work takes the third approach and argues that Türkiye is a valuable member of the alliance due to these ties and its strategic location. The thesis will explore the Turkish mindset towards NATO and provide historical and comparative perspectives on Türkiye 's role in the alliance. Through an explanation and the analysis of how Türkiye became a member of NATO and how it's relationship with the West has developed through the years that comes up to Erdoğan. Suggesting that while Türkiye's relationship with the West has been complicated at times, it has been a key player in maintaining security in the region and remains an important partner for NATO.

Then moving on to the Cyprus crisis and its impact on Türkiye's relationship with NATO, crisis resulted in the US Congress imposing a weapons embargo on Türkiye, which led to Türkiye reconsidering its position within the alliance, and its outlook towards NATO, alongside the realization of the dependence on foreign arms by the Turkish government. The crisis created a further decay in the belief of the Turkish People and the Turkish Political Sphere, from the government to the opposition, in the North Atlantic Alliance's capability but more importantly willingness in ensuring Turkish safety and security if need be. Therefore creating a paradoxical relationship regarding bilateral trust between Türkiye and the Alliance. Carrying on with the paradoxical idea, the thesis takes on the relationship between Türkiye, US, and Russia, suggesting that the current standing feeds the growth of the paradoxical relationship through examples of former and current engagements between Türkiye and two parties. Continuing by touching on the issue of the Sweden and Finland's accession to NATO, and how it is impacted by the upcoming elections in Türkiye, and how Erdoğan uses it as a bargaining chip for both international and domestic gain. Then explaining how Türkiye is still a valuable ally from the points of geopolitics, Türkiye's cultural uniqueness, developing military industry and the opportunities these can provide to NATO, especially with a possible new government in power after the elections.

This thesis concludes that Türkiye is a valuable ally, despite facing social, political, and economic challenges. However, for the alliance to maintain a strong relationship with Türkiye, there needs to be a thorough understanding of the Turkish perspective and a solution-oriented approach. The Turkish side also needs to cooperate further and engage in a healing process on domestic and international policies, possibly through the young

generation. If both parties can work together, they can have a mutually beneficial relationship with minor hiccups, which will help ensure a secure transatlantic region and a peaceful globe.