

BACHELOR'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT
PPE – Bachelor's in Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Türkiye in NATO: a Backsliding Ally or A Valuable Ally in Distress?
Student's name:	Veli Uygur Özener
Referee's name:	Daniela Chalaniova, Ph.D.

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	50	20
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	15	10
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	15	0
Total		80	30
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	10	5
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	3
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	5	4
Total		20	12
TOTAL		100	42

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria:

The goal of this thesis is to consider Turkish standing in NATO, asking whether Turkey is a backsliding ally or an ally in distress. It is a pity that what could have been a relevant and interesting study of relations among NATO members, turned out as a "half-baked" thesis at best. There are two categories of problems with this thesis relating to: **substance** and poor **craftsmanship**.

SUBSTANCE: The "**literature review**" is not really a review of the field (NATO and/or security studies with NATO focus) or even of current literature, it is a **summary** of three different articles/reports on the topic (or rather a summary of their first few pages). Mr. Özener identifies "three main approaches" (p.10), but this is an exaggeration. I am not aware of any "approach" that would include one text only.

In the "third approach" - which substantively is no different from the first approach identified as Erdogan's democratic failings and neo-Ottomanism - Mr. Özener gives up on summarizing altogether and just copy pastes the 8-10 lines right there (thesis p. 11-12).

The thesis does **not have any** recognizable **theoretical framework** or conceptual apparatus. Two words that come closest to **concepts** in this thesis are "backsliding ally" and a "valuable ally in distress." Such division is fair, given the thesis topic, the only problem is that the "valuable ally in distress" and the way it is defined is something of an oxymoron.

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 (p.10)

If the NATO alliance is founded on defense of *common* values, as the author cites the preamble in thesis introduction, then by definition a *unique* member is not *common*. Does not *share* in the *common* values to defend... which makes the first concept rather under-defined (backsliding from common values as Erdogan's regime is often addressed), and had the first concept been defined in this respect → what would then be the difference between the first and the second concept?

These "concepts" are not used in the "empirical chapters" either, so the "theory" and evidence remain disconnected. We don't even know if the author is trying to find causes leading to one or the other type of ally (explanatory framework) or is just trying to interpret facts from a perspective.

Lacking a theoretical framework, the thesis is an **amalgamate of historical and contemporary information**, a blend of domestic and international events **heaped onto a pile**. Why are *some* events selected while others omitted (why consider Finnish and Swedish NATO accession but not the late 1990s CEE enlargement) we never know.

How is Menderes' Turkey of 1950s virtually the same as today under president Erdogan is brushed away with "people don't change," they know what they want and they still want the same (p. 17-18). The author jumps wildly from Putin to Lenin and back again (p. 22-23). From the present to the past and back, as evidenced in the screenshot below (p.23).

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 ²⁸ 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,

In a nutshell, the information given is about Turkish relations with NATO members, but what exactly points it towards a "backsliding ally" or an "ally in distress" and why is not clear.

CRAFTSMANSHIP: The thesis is hardly 40 pages, when Introduction begins only on page 9 and the last page 41 contains exactly 2 lines → so the text length is much **closer to 30 pages**.

BIBLIOGRAPHY is super short - only 14 sources for a BA Thesis is not nearly enough. Two of the sources being newspaper articles from the daily Hürriyet, another two being NATO press releases. Some of the sources listed (Aydemir's books or the Lewis book) seem to be listed without being worked with (see below).

Bibliography: the information given is **incomplete**.

I wanted to look up Bekdil (2017) but could not find the name of the text (was it a journal article, a book or a newspaper interview?)

I also have my reservations about the **authenticity** of the sources, or the extent to which Mr. Özener actually engaged with them:

Excerpt from Mr. Özener's thesis page 16

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 ³ 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. ³ (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

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Excerpt from Özdemir and Coskun's 2021 paper *Investigation of Adnan Menderes from the Elite Theory Perspective* (not listed in biblio), available at:

<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/1915385>

3.2.1. Political Rise of Adnan Menderes

May 14, 1950 was the date when Pareto's Theory of the Circulation of Elites was tested for Turkey. The founding elites of the Republic had to go to elections by responding to the demands for change On this date, and as a result of the elections, they left their place to the new elites as rulers. The political power changed through democratic elections On May 14, 1950, for the first time in Turkey (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. In this way, the twenty-seven-year single-party rule came to an end (Aydemir, 2011a, p. 492; Aydemir, 2011b, p. 32-33).

The social characteristics of the new ruling elites also differed when compared to the single-party period. The MPs of DP were younger on average, and had lower university education levels; however, the rate of having commercial and legal backgrounds was higher. Another difference was that there were almost no deputies who had bureaucratic or military backgrounds (Zürcher, 2000, p. 321). However, it is debatable whether this difference level was really significant. Mert (2007, p. 20-22) argued that Menderes and other DP elites, who represented the beliefs, values, and lifestyles of the conservative segment, who

We can find precisely ONE reference to Lewis in the thesis (and one listing in Biblio) and precisely the two mentions of Aydemir (and the two respective listings in Bibliography), however, I could find **no reference to Özdemir and Coskun's 2021 paper...**

... which could come down as an honest mistake (forgetting to mention Özdemir and Coskun) or, likely a dishonest "shortcut" as Mr. Özener's **did** make the effort to copy the biblio information from Özdemir and Coskun's 2021 paper into his thesis..

It is a similar story with reference to Oberling 1982. There are precisely two mentions of Oberling, one in text (with exactly the same page number as on Wikipedia on the same topic) and one listing in Biblio.

Furthermore, the thesis page 18 vaguely corresponds to information on a Wikipedia page on Cyprus conflict in the 1960s

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

Interestingly Wikipedia page on Turkish invasion of Cyprus refers precisely to Oberling. p. 120
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cypriot_intercommunal_violence#Crisis_of_1963%E2%80%931964 fn 35

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

Further ceasefires were arranged between the two sides, but also failed. By Christmas Eve, the 24th, Britain, Greece, and Turkey had joined talks, with all sides calling for a truce. On Christmas day, Turkish fighter jets overflew Nicosia in a show of support. Finally it was agreed to allow a force of 2,700 British soldiers to help enforce a ceasefire. In the next days, a "buffer zone" was created in Nicosia, and a British officer marked a line on a map with green ink, separating the two sides of the city, which was the beginning of the "[Green Line](#)". Fighting continued across the island for the next several weeks.^[34]

In total 364 Turkish Cypriots and 174 Greek Cypriots were killed during the violence.^[35] 25,000 Turkish Cypriots from 103-109 villages fled and were displaced into [enclaves](#) and thousands of Turkish Cypriot houses were ransacked or completely destroyed.^{[36][37][38][39][40]}

Contemporary newspapers also reported on the forceful exodus of the Turkish Cypriots from their homes. According to *The Times* in 1964, threats, shootings and attempts of arson were committed against the Turkish Cypriots to force them out of their homes.^[41] The *Daily Express* wrote that "25,000 Turks have already been forced to leave their homes".^[42] The *Guardian* reported a massacre of Turks at Limassol on 16 February 1964.^[43]

Turkey had by now readied its fleet and its fighter jets appeared over Nicosia. Turkey was dissuaded from direct involvement by the creation of a [United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus](#) (UNFICYP) in 1964. Despite the negotiated ceasefire in Nicosia, attacks on the Turkish Cypriot persisted, particularly in Limassol. Concerned about the possibility of a Turkish invasion, Makarios undertook the creation of a Greek Cypriot conscript-based army called the "National Guard". A general from Greece took charge of the army, whilst a further 20,000 well-equipped officers and men were smuggled from Greece into Cyprus. Turkey threatened to intervene once more, but was prevented by a strongly worded letter from the American President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), anxious to avoid a conflict between [NATO](#) allies Greece and Turkey at the height of the [Cold War](#).

A **general lack of references**, in the remainder of the text is quite worrying too. Where does all this information come from?

Pages 21-31 contain in total 3(!) references to sources; two out of the three being newspaper articles. Nevertheless these 10-11 pages contain precise information on legislation voting results (p.25), Biden's proclamations about genocide (p.30), specific types of military systems (p.29), numbers of personnel (p. 28).

It is simply hard for me to believe Mr. Özener would be able to recite this information off the top of his head.

LAYOUT: different **font sizes** and line breaks. why doesn't the "clash of interest in a very small timeframe" fit into a single line? This typically happens when copy-pasting text with different formatting (without removing the formatting) – an "enter" leaves "hanging."

The image below is also **not** the only instance of this phenomenon, see also p.23, p. 27, p.28 bottom...

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.

Different font sizes.

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

“Enter” left hanging

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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

LANGUAGE:

- Abstract, also Chpt. 5: “following [Turkey’s] Ascension to the military alliance” Accession not Ascension (which literally means promotion to a higher rank or Jesus Christ’s “ascension” to heaven)
- 3rd person “s” in verbs; sometimes it is overused in plural for instance, other times it is not used at all when appropriate

- Why not transcribe *Türkiye* into English when the rest of the text is in English, and it is not a linguistic thesis? What is the purpose?
- Mr. Özener does not do paragraphs, in the “empirical” case chapters. It is just one seamless stream of text, quite difficult to read as ideas/arguments are not separated for pages.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F):

42 points = F

Suggested questions for the defence are:

I do not recommend the thesis going to defence as it does not fulfil the requirements of an academic text.

Grading Scale:

- A = 91-100 % – excellent
- B = 81-90 % – very good
- C = 71-80 % – good
- D = 61-70 % – satisfactory
- E = 51-60 % – minimal pass
- F = 0-50 % – fail