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**THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE IN THE 20TH CENTURY**

**2018'S 'POLITICAL SYSTEM CHANGE' AND ITS IMPACT ON PARTY
POLITICS IN TÜRKİYE**

**SECURITY IN TURKISH POLITICS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL
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ARTICLES





Danuta Chmielowska★

The Evolution of the Socio-political Situation of the Republic of Türkiye in the 20th Century – Efforts Towards the Europeanisation of the Society and State

Abstract

The events related to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the proclamation of the Republic of Türkiye contributed to a complete departure from the system of constitutional monarchy in favour of a parliamentary democracy. Owing to the decisions on Europeanisation and implemented reforms, i.e., adopting a Civil Code based on the Swiss code, a Criminal Code reflecting the Italian code, a Commercial Code underpinned by the German code (1924), and the transition to the Latin alphabet which replaced Arabic (1928), as well as education reforms (1925), women's suffrage (1934), and the introduction of surnames (1935), etc. the Turkish people became a European society, aware of their rights and obligations. The transition from a single-party regime to a multi-party period (1946) allowed for democracy to be consolidated. Türkiye's participation in strictly European and international political and military organisations was of vital significance and turned the country into an extremely important state. Its failed efforts to join the EEC, and, subsequently, the European Union, resulted in Türkiye abandoning its interest in this form of cooperation (1997).

The socio-political transformations that took place in the 20th century, highlighted in this article, characterise this dynamically changing period. The evolution of the views of Turkish society was clearly marked in the second half of the 20th century, which led to serious changes in the mindsets of the Turkish people and completely altered the image of the country post-2002, allowing the newly established Justice and Development Party to assume power (2002).

Keywords: Democracy, Kemal Atatürk, Türkiye, Turkey, Ottoman Empire

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Introduction

The Ottoman Empire allied with the Central Powers in the First World War only to emerge defeated (Bayraktar, 2005). As a result of the Armistice of Mudros (1918) (Mondros, 1995), Istanbul and a sizeable part of Anatolia were occupied by the troops of the Triple Entente. Pursuant to the decision of the Versailles Conference, in 1920, in Sèvres near Paris, a peace treaty was signed with the participation of the delegation of the Sultan government under which the Empire was to be partitioned. The treaty provided for the preservation of the former Ottoman possessions in the form of a rump state in northern Anatolia with Istanbul as its capital.

The Turkish people accepted neither the occupation nor the terms of the peace treaty. A Turkish resistance movement and partisan units began to form, which gave rise to the establishment of an army in Anatolia under the leadership of the Ottoman army officer Mustafa Kemal Pasha (1881–1938), and a war for Türkiye's integrity and independence broke out (1919–1922) (Mondros, 1995).

In 1920, in the small town of Angora (now Ankara) in central Anatolia, a people's government was established that led to a successful end of the War of Independence (Wituch, 1983). The Sultanate was abolished in 1922, and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 acknowledged the existence of a sovereign Turkish state, although its territory comprised only Anatolia and eastern Thrace. The European powers dictated their terms to the newly-formed state. Every single resident of the country, including foreigners, were subject to Turkish courts. War reparations claims were relinquished, and Türkiye undertook to protect its citizens regardless of their religion, nationality or language. Greece and Türkiye executed an agreement on compulsory population exchange. The Greeks residing in Anatolia (numbering about 900,000 people) were displaced to Greece, and about 400,000 Turkish Muslims (except those living in Western Thrace) were displaced to Türkiye. The Republic of Türkiye was proclaimed on 29th October 1923, and the formation of an entirely new state within ethnic borders with a new republican system began. The country's reconstruction from the devastation of the war commenced, and public, administration, judiciary, education, and army institutions were formed in place of the former, now obsolete Ottoman establishments. Along with the War of Liberation, three ideologies, promoted by the Ottomans, were irretrievably lost: pan-Turkism, Ottomanism, and pan-Islamism. Following a military victory (resulting in the Armistice of Mudanya being signed in 1922), the movement for

national sovereignty went through a phase of pluralism (until 1925), after which an authoritarian government was introduced and the implementation of reforms began.

Socio-political Reforms Following the Proclamation of the Republic of Türkiye and the Reign of Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) (1923–1938)

The following words of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the first president of the young Republic of Türkiye (Jevakhoff, 2004; Volkan, Itzkowitz, 2007; Sonyel, 2003): “Peace in the country, peace in the world”, or, “Yurtta sulh cihanda sulh”, guided the policy of the new state. The focus was on improving the situation of the devastated and neglected Anatolia, and the issue of achieving and catching up with what modern civilisation brought became a priority. Over time, in the 1930s, the Kemalist movement emerged, which gathered together ardent supporters of the nationalist trend propagating the idea of Turkism, aimed at creating a modern European state.

The power formally rested in the hands of the parliament, which elected the government and the president. In the years 1925–1945, there was basically a one-party system in Türkiye. During that time, the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), i.e., Kemalists, were in power (Velidedeo lu, 1973; CHP, 2022; Gökberk, 1997). The opposition parties of the time were weak and infrequent.

The so-called republican period in the history of Türkiye can be divided into stages whose timelines are marked by important political events. The first stage covers the years 1923–1938/40, ending with Atatürk’s death in 1938. During this period, as a result of political, social and cultural reforms, there were fundamental changes in the nation’s life (Süslü, 2002).

Secularism has been enshrined in the constitution over a period of time in Turkey gradually. The Constitution of 1924 stated that “the religion of the Turkish Republic is Islam.” In 1928 however, Islam as the state religion was removed from the constitution. Finally in 1937 secularism as a constitutional principle was added to the constitution in 1937. (Küçükcan, 2011). In the new constitution adopted that year, Türkiye was proclaimed an entirely secular state (Öktem, 1972). Religious schools were closed and Sharia courts, or, courts based on Islamic law, were abolished, religious brotherhoods were dissolved, and their property confiscated. In lieu of Koranic law, new codes were introduced; that of the civil which abolished, *inter alia*, polygamy. New criminal and commercial laws based on Western models (namely, Swiss, Italian, and German) were also introduced. Women

were granted passive and active voting rights (1934) (Chmielowska, 2008). The metric system and the Gregorian calendar were officially adopted. There was even a clothing reform. In connection with the abolition of titles and the introduction of surnames in 1934, in place of the previous names and cognomina, the Turks chose their own surnames. Due to its central location, Ankara became the capital and began its transformation into a modern city (Kołodziejczyk, 2003). The government, striving to become independent from foreign capital, pursued a policy of economic statism. State monopolies (on matches, tobacco products, alcohol, and salt) were introduced and mines, railways, ports, power plants, etc., were being developed (Özgür, 1975). However, the country's dependence on foreign powers and capital persisted due to the lack of its own resources for the development of larger industry. The rural areas remained backward and suffered from a lack of investment. The position of Aghas (great landowners) was not affected, and the reforms covered a narrow strata of society. Among the villagers, craftsmen and small merchants, Muslim traditions were still alive and customary law was followed by the majority of the population. The disparity between full political rights granted to women and their actual situation was growing. Türkiye was also affected by the great economic crisis of 1929–1930. In 1935, the first five-year industrialisation plan was announced and the policy of statism enabled the foundations of Turkish industry to be created and foreign trade to be developed. Attempts were made to modernise the country in order to catch up with Western civilisation, but they also strived to create a cultural and artistic environment that would be loyal to Turkish nationalism, without rejecting the idea of Europeanisation. In the first period of the republic, which lasted sixteen years, the government was committed to the development of the country in all areas.

After Atatürk's death in 1938,¹ power was assumed by his former comrade-in-arms İsmet İnönü, who tried to continue the policies of his great predecessor (İnalcık, 2020; 2010).

Hard Times 1945–1950

Türkiye remained neutral for a long time during the Second World War, and declared war on Germany only in February 1945 (Seydi, 2006), but in April 1945, Türkiye attended the San Francisco conference as a founding member of the United Nations and committed itself to implementing democratic principles by signing the UN Charter. At the same time, problems

¹ In 1934, the Grand National Assembly granted him the title of Atatürk (Father of the Turks).

in relations with the Soviet Union arose, as the Turkish government became increasingly more engaged with Western policy, especially with the U.S. The years 1945–1950 were characterised by fundamental transformations of the political system, economic policy, and foreign relations. It was a period of democratic transition. In 1945, there was a split in the ruling Republican People's Party (Velidedeo lu, 1973), which resulted in the foundation of the Democratic Party in 1946 by a group of deputies (Karpat, 1959).² Referring to Atatürk's ideas, they promised material assistance to villagers, advocated for economic liberalism, and demanded that the policy of state capitalism be revised. They also saw the importance of Islam in the social life of the Turks. The party was chaired by former Prime Minister Celal Bayar, a close associate of Atatürk at one time. At the same time, several other parties, both right-wing and left-wing, including those socialist in leaning, were established. However, at the end of that year, the parties were dissolved, their dissolution occurring in the face of charges of spreading communist propaganda, with their leaders being arrested and brought to trial. Subsequently, parties that propagated the observance of the principles of Islam were established, parties which also shared the fate of the left-wing parties.

Democratic Transition: the Democratic Party Government 1950–1960

In 1950, the Democratic Party won the elections thanks to the support of the wealthy bourgeoisie and religious Muslims (Tunaya, 1952). Adnan Menderes became the Prime Minister, Celal Bayar was elected the President, and Ismet İnönü became the opposition leader. In lieu of a single-party system, a multi-party system began to function. The centre-right Democratic Party gained popularity owing to its programme of limiting state interference in economic affairs and attracting maximum private capital (domestic and foreign), as well as changing the attitude towards the Muslim religion. The ideas of democracy were, however, openly violated. Once Menderes assumed power, the practice of the summoning to prayer from mosques in Arabic – the language of the Koran – was restored, which had been prohibited since Atatürk times. The government also allocated significant funds to the building of mosques. Religious education was allowed in secular schools, the Faculty of Theology at Ankara University was established wherein the Koran was taught in Arabic. During this period, there was a liberalisation of the economy and a modest reduction

² In the elections of 1946, the CHP won 391 seats.

in state bureaucracy. The authorities became interested in the situation in the countryside, and electrification and road development began. The initial period of Menderes' government was marked by some economic recovery, triggered by an increase in U.S. aid. Investments, although chaotic, contributed to the reduction of unemployment.

In terms of foreign policy, the government further strengthened its orientation towards the West. In 1952, Türkiye joined NATO (Nitecka-Jagiello, 1981), and in 1955 signed the Baghdad Pact (later renamed CENTO) with Iran, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom to contain Soviet expansion towards the Indian Ocean. Within NATO, the Turkish army was the second (after America's) most powerful armed force (Poznańska, 1970). Menderes, despite his successes in foreign policy and an increase in national income, enjoyed little support among the Kemalist elite. From the mid-1950s, the economic situation deteriorated significantly. Ill-considered investments and government decisions led, *inter alia*, to overproduction and a decline in selling prices, which in turn resulted in a debt surge and budget deficit. The only people who strongly supported the government were rich villagers and landowners. The effects of this chaotic and pro-inflationary economic policy were, however, increasingly alarming. The Turkish currency became one of the most unstable in the world. Chaotic industrialisation failed to prevent further imports of industrial goods and other consumables, resulting in a constantly negative trade balance in the country and exacerbated inflation. The middle classes, which were economically the most disadvantaged, were particularly dissatisfied and began to support the opposition.

There were attempts to save the deteriorating economic situation with the support from the West in the form of loans (the so-called stabilisation loan), which temporarily stopped inflation and stabilised the currency. At the same time, the majority of citizens, even though not to the same extent, enjoyed the improvement of their economic situation under the Democratic Party as compared to the post-World War II years. It was particularly experienced by the villagers, who were almost entirely exempt from paying taxes by Prime Minister Menderes and benefitted from other favours as well. In the cities, capital gains grew faster than wages and salaries, and merchants and industrialists enjoyed their successes. Despite the improved situation in the rural areas, mass migration from the countryside to the cities began in those years. This time, the Anatolian villages were not only abandoned for seasonal work, but the residents moved to cities and towns on a permanent basis. Unfortunately, only a small percentage were able to find employment there. In terms of infrastructure, cities were not prepared for the constant influx of such a large number of new inhabitants. Slums,

the so-called *gecekondus* (houses built overnight) began to be erected in the outskirts. At the end of the 1950s, the budget deficit amounted to half a billion Turkish pounds. In 1959, the U.S. declared that Türkiye would not receive new loans, and the majority of Turkish society began to publicly oppose Menderes' government. The ruling elite was accused of generating economic instability, a repressive policy, and blamed for the high costs of living. The Democratic Party's response was the purge of journalists, officials, and scientists. The popularity of İsmet İnönü and his Republican People's Party (Nitecka-Jagiełło, 1981) inevitably grew. Adnan Menderes and the Democratic Party's ten years of ruling failed to bring expected peace and stability. It was, in fact, to the contrary; it tightened the police system even more.³ However, in the opinion of experts, the democratisation of the country during Menderes' 10-year rule certainly outweighed authoritarian tendencies. In fact, the military used the abovementioned argument to intervene in the democratic system. The military aimed at re-establishing its tutelage over the country as they perceived themselves as "the guardian of the state".

The Second Turkish Republic 1960–1980

In May of 1960, the Turkish army executed the first coup. A group of military men overthrew Menderes' government, and sentenced him and his closest associates to death by hanging. This was the beginning of the next stage in Turkish history, which lasted until 1980 and a subsequent military coup (Nitecka-Jagiełło, 1981). As a result of the coup, the National Unity Committee assumed power, headed by General Cemal Gürsel. Among the members of the Committee, Colonel Alpaslan Türkeş turned out to be extremely influential, representing the most radical wing demanding a comprehensive reform of the political system. In December 1960, the incumbent National Unity Committee was dissolved, which was a sign that the authorities were returning to parliamentary democracy. The ban on political activity was lifted and new political parties were allowed to register and take part in elections. Eleven new parties applied (besides the long-established Republican People's Party and the Republican Villagers Nation Party). One of the crucial new parties was the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*),⁴ whose main objective was the full vindication of dismissed

³ On 31st August 1960, the activities of the Democratic Party were suspended, and on 29th November of that year, it was dissolved.

⁴ The actual electoral base of the Democratic Party were large cities, while the Justice Party was predominantly supported by affluent people from rural areas and smaller provincial towns.

officers and arrested Democrats. It was considered a continuation of the Democratic Party.

To revive the economy, the so-called State Planning Organization was founded in Ankara, which designed a 15-year development plan, spread over three, five-year plans. The military promptly handed over power to civilians and, in 1961, parliamentary elections took place. Following the elections, a coalition government of the Republican People's Party and the Justice Party was created, led by İsmet İnönü with the participation of smaller parties and independent members. İnönü was unable to implement the previously announced reforms. In 1961, however, a draft of a new constitution was passed that was more liberal than its predecessor from 1924 and allowed for a wide spectrum of political activity, both left and right.⁵ The main goal was to prevent a monopolisation of power and so, due to this, a second house was introduced – the Senate (senato), and all legislation had to be passed through both houses. The Senate was to be an elected body, with the exception of a group of senators appointed by the president. An independent Constitutional Court was also established. The judiciary, public media and universities were granted complete autonomy and a full range of civil liberties were incorporated.⁶ There are also other comments that the 1961 constitution justified a military coup and the closure of the Democratic Party. The role of the army was established by creating the National Security Council, which was the strongest obstacle for the democratisation of the country until the AK Party re-organised civil/military relations.

The strictly secular, or even anti-Islamic, policy from prior to 1945 was not reinstated, but the constitution prohibited the use of religious slogans for political purposes. It was not possible to change the structure of state-owned industries, state monopolies were not affected, and crafts continued to play an important role. Türkiye's economic development was dependent on the world market. Agriculture was characterised by great disproportions, the most developed agricultural lands were to be found on the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, while the most economically primitive region was Eastern Anatolia. Low productivity, insufficiently irrigated lands, deficient fertiliser and equipment supplies, soil erosion, and population growth necessitated food import.

⁵ The first party to enjoy the support of young intellectuals throughout the 1960s was the Workers' Party of Türkiye, founded in February 1961.

⁶ The New Turkey Party, which can be considered a continuation of the Liberty Party, founded by dissidents of the Democratic Party in 1955, received approximately 14% of the votes. 13.4% voted for the conservative Republican Villagers Nation Party. In total, the parties considered the successors of the Democrats remained the greatest political force in the country.

The government undertook the implementation of a project from as early as the 1930s in the form of the development of Southeastern Anatolia (GAP, Güney-Doğu Anadolu Projesi), incorporating the development of an agricultural and industrial base in the region, the construction of 22 dams and 19 hydropower plants on the Euphrates and the Tigris, as well as an increase in industrial production and employment growth. It was, however, unable to resolve any of the pressing challenges and to carry out the necessary reforms. Social tension grew and ideological disputes intensified on an unprecedented scale. Previously-banned trade unions began to be revived. Both the workers and the intelligentsia became radicalised. In the 1960s, mass migrations from villages to cities intensified, and large cities were surrounded by slums.

The social distrust in the new government generated an economic slowdown and paralysed private investment. In 1962, Türkiye's national income amounted to 18 dollars *per capita*, which classified it amongst developing countries. What is more, the extreme Muslim movement was reactivated which was perceived as an attack on the state's secularity.

1965's parliamentary elections were won by the Justice Party, and its chairman, Süleyman Demirel, became the Prime Minister. The President in the years 1966–1973 was Chief of Staff Cevdet Sunay. The main challenge the head of government had to face was to maintain unity within his cabinet and the party since the electorate of the Justice Party were industrialists, merchants, craftsmen, villagers, landlords, religious reactionaries, and liberals – in the ideological dimension, they had very little in common.

The second half of the 1960s was a period of economic recovery in Türkiye. Economic growth surged and real incomes were almost constantly rising. One of Demirel's most significant accomplishments was to convince the army that the country could be ruled by civilians who were the successors to the Democrat Party overthrown by the military just five years earlier (Zürcher, 1993). At the same time, the government was constantly battling left-wing organisations and their representatives, and in 1966/1967 an attempt was made to purge schools and universities in order to remove leftist teachers. Demirel focused on the development of the private and state sectors, and received loans from the OECD – 175 million dollars and 200 million marks from the government of the Federal Republic of Germany. What actually truly helped the Turkish economy, was the former agreement on the mass shipment of Turkish workers to Germany, signed in 1963. The Turkish economic crisis coincided with the economic boom in the Federal Republic which, for an overpopulated Türkiye plagued by unemployment, was an enormous help. Every Turkish

person with a passport, a medical certificate and a contract for employment in any establishment could go to Germany for an indefinite period of time. They earned money themselves and, thanks to foreign remittances, they contributed to the reduction of the country's debt.

In 1964, the foregoing agreement entered into force known as the Ankara Agreement, allowing the free movement and settlement of Turkish people in EEC countries. Not long thereafter, there was an uncontrolled influx of guest workers to Western Europe, the majority of whom were staying illegally, without a work permit. In 1964, there were 10,000 Turkish workers in West Germany, a number which had risen to 133,000 by 1965, and to 600,000 by the end of the 1960s.

In 1969, the Justice Party won the parliamentary elections again and Demirel formed another government. However, the unresolved economic crisis led to violent demonstrations and strikes involving workers and students. They demanded higher wages, jobs for the unemployed, better social welfare, social reforms, the closing of the U.S. bases, and a peace-based foreign policy. The repressions against demonstrators only exacerbated the waves of anti-government demonstrations and terrorist attacks.

Due to a serious internal crisis in 1971, the military forced Süleyman Demirel to resign. Disputes among numerous parties resulted in frequent changes of government. The balance of power was disturbed, and the influence of the private sector over politicians was more profound. Short-term "nonpartisan governments of experts" were established. The country was still in disarray, with leftist terrorism and demonstrations brutally suppressed by the authorities with the support of the police and the military. A state of emergency was introduced in eleven provinces. In 1972, Amnesty International published a report on the torture of political prisoners. In 1973, retired Admiral Fahri Korutürk was elected president, and the Republican People's Party won the election, which formed a coalition government with the National Salvation Party, a conservative party inspired by Islamic values and ethics. This government, among others, granted amnesty to political prisoners.

The Constitutional Court repealed the laws of 1971 prohibiting rallies, mass gatherings, and demonstrations. The ban on opium poppy cultivation, imposed by the U.S. government, was also lifted. A new Law on Land and Agricultural Reform was passed, but nevertheless, the population in cities doubled. Mass layoffs and the return of Turkish workers from abroad contributed to a rise in unemployment. The position of the incumbent Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit was strengthened by the decision to invade Cyprus in 1974 in response to a coup by the Cypriot National

Guard. Following the dissolution of the coalition due to the dispute over the invasion of Cyprus, Ecevit resigned. In 1978, following subsequent two elections and three cabinet changes, Bülent Ecevit formed a coalition government, but despite the successes in the international arena, the internal situation remained complex. Terrorist acts continued, especially in eastern Türkiye, and the opposition insisted on the government implementing a state of emergency. In September 1978, religious conflicts turned into an open war between Sunni and Alevis. In December 1978, another wave of terror began with a series of murders in Kahramanmaraş. Within a week, a hundred people were killed and hundreds more were injured. In order to pacify the situation, the government introduced a state of emergency in thirteen provinces.

The economic situation deteriorated. The country was engulfed in strikes, workplaces were closed, and employment was reduced. A black market emerged, and a grey economy replaced the traditional Turkish private sector. The financial support that was expected from Western countries came with a year's delay and was subject to multiple conditions. The International Monetary Fund granted a loan, and OECD countries granted Türkiye a loan of 1.5 billion dollars, but, despite this, public opinion was that Ecevit did not know how to use the aid. The government began to gradually lose control over the situation in the country. The opposition, especially the one centered around Süleyman Demirel, waged an anti-government campaign. Türkiye was yet again hit by a wave of terror that could not be stopped by the police nor the country's security services. The reason behind this was corruption in their internal structures as well as the fragmentation of left-wing political parties, which obstructed effective surveillance. It was assumed that 70% of the terrorist attacks were organised by left-wing youth groups financed by the USSR, and 30% by far-right groups linked to the Grey Wolves – the youth faction of the nationalist National Movement Party of Türkiye.

The economic situation was also compounded by an energy crisis, caused by a global surge in oil prices in the years 1973–1974. Western Europe was also hit by a recession, which resulted in a decline in the demand for Turkish goods and guest workers. Besides the significant reduction in foreign currency revenue to the Turkish state budget, there was a risk of a large-scale return of Turkish workers from the West. Türkiye was committed to enabling their citizens to work abroad, but the EEC rejected its requests to increase the quota of Turkish workers and to grant them the same rights as those enjoyed by immigrants from other Mediterranean countries. Reluctant to implement actions recommended by World Bank and OECD experts, Türkiye decided to take further loans

and print worthless money, which led to 90% annual inflation. Terror, the rise of Kurdish separatism, and the activities of ultra-right youth groups intensified on an unprecedented scale. This aggravated anarchy was disconcerting for the army.

The army command was afraid that terrorist attacks would disseminate in the east of the country, which could turn into an armed Kurdish uprising, and therefore, at the end of 1978, a project for armed internal intervention was created under the name Operation Bayrak (Flag).

In 1979, hundreds of factories and companies were sold for next to nothing, and their owners with families fled the country. The buyers of these enterprises often became millionaires not long thereafter. The National Security Council extended the state of emergency to six more provinces. In the by-elections to parliament in 1979, the Republicans lost their majority, prompting Süleyman Demirel to form a minority government. Following another wave of terror, which again caused dozens of casualties, Chief of General Staff Kenan Evren handed President Korutürk a letter in which he indicated the army's readiness to intervene should political forces fail to take control of the situation in the country. The threat from right-wing extremist terrorist groups grew, unemployment rose, and inflation skyrocketed which triggered another coup in 1980. The military, yet again, assumed power.

The Third Republic

Following the military coup, the civilian government was abolished, the parliament was dissolved, and parties and trade unions were prohibited from any political activity (Parla, 1993). General Evren officially became the head of state, and the National Security Council became the highest authority in Türkiye, and was comprised of the Chief of Staff and commanders of the land forces, the naval forces, the air force, and the military police. Within three years, the military government brought peace to the country and eradicated terror, except in eastern Anatolia, where Kurdish guerrillas remained active. In a draft of the new constitution in 1982, the powers of the president and the National Security Council were expanded, whereas the freedoms of the press and trade unions as well as civil rights and liberties were limited. In a mandatory referendum, 91.4% of citizens expressed their support for the new constitution. Following the adoption of the constitution and the establishing of Evren's position as president, the next stage in the reconstruction of political life in Türkiye began. In the summer of 1983, a decision was made to transfer power to civilians by holding general elections.

Only three new parties were allowed to take part: the Nationalist Democracy Party, the People's Party, and the Motherland Party (ANAP) with Turgut Özal. The Motherland Party won the elections, taking 45% of the votes. These elections were to answer a fundamental question regarding the kind of economic system the country would choose (Turkuia Basin-Yayin, 1983). Would it be statism, the foundations of which were laid by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the 1930s and which was supported by the military, the members of the Nationalist Democracy Party, and the Kemalists? Or would there be a neoliberal system, the greatest proponent of which was Turgut Özal – the country's chief economist? After the elections, he became the Prime Minister and, in the 1980s, he played the most significant role in shaping the country's policy. Following a military coup, Özal was invited to form a government of experts as a deputy minister with extraordinary powers in the economy, and then he began the first reforms to liberalise the financial sector, consisting in suppressing inflation through a remuneration freeze and a policy of high interest rates. He was backed by the army, which was ready to suppress any resistance. Özal was a politician, but above all he was an economist who tried to lead Türkiye out of economic depression. He forwent statism combined with the privatisation and decentralisation of the economy, and he also liberalised trade and introduced lower taxes. During his government, the telephone network and roads were developed, and electricity was brought to the provinces which significantly increased the citizens' standards of living. Nevertheless, significant disparities between the regions of the country persisted, especially between the provinces and the Mediterranean and Aegean cities that were experiencing a tourism boom at the time. Unemployment remained high. Turgut Özal's rule generally had a positive effect on the economic situation in Türkiye. The army's level of participation in political life was declining, basically being limited to interventions in the event of any violations of the principles outlined by Atatürk. As a result, democracy developed, compulsory religion classes in schools were restored, the banking system developed and further integration with European structures continued, which culminated in Türkiye's application for accession to the EEC in 1987. Türkiye, in line with its pro-Western foreign and economic policy, tried to apply for full membership in the European Union for years.

In 1991, the government introduced constitutional changes to human rights as well as the political system, including increasing the number of deputies in the National Assembly and lowering the voting age to 18 years of age. At the request of the government, the Assembly allowed for the use of the Kurdish language in private and approved the removal of articles

prohibiting class or religious politics from the Criminal Code. These restrictions, however, were maintained under the constitution.

Terrorist acts committed for political purposes were considered a crime. The new Anti-Terror Law that was introduced at that time nevertheless defined the concept of terrorism very broadly. In the following years, a significant number of lawyers, activists of international organisations, journalists, and writers could successfully be prosecuted and judged on its basis (Gevgilili, 1990; Turkish News Agency 2000).

The parliamentary elections in 1991 were won by Sülejman Demirel's party, the True Path Party, in second place was the Motherland Party, and the Social Democratic People's Party recorded a disappointing outcome. The Welfare Party (Refah) achieved its best result, but it was the result of a tactical alliance with the ultranationalist Nationalist Movement Party of Alparslan Türkeş.⁷ Demirel formed a coalition government with the Democrats.

Prior to the elections, both opposition leaders declared that if they won, they would indict President Turgut Özal, but the president remained in office after the election. The relations between the president and the government were, however, strained from the outset, since the parties that supported the government were united in the common goal of disposing of the legacy of the 1980s, which the president epitomised. After June 1996, Türkiye was ruled by a two-party coalition with Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan (the Welfare Party) and Tansu Çiller (the True Path Party), who was both the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Prime Minister.

The new, liberal government programme promised constitutional changes, more academic freedom, the freedom of the press, democratisation, and respect for human rights. To begin with, the infamous Eskişehir prison was closed, but the liberalisation reform package was stopped by the right wing of the True Path Party, and the government was forced to put the reforms on hold. The number of fatalities in a series of political murders by the Revolutionary Left urban guerrilla movement reached ten per month after 1989. The victims were usually judges, policemen, and retired government officials involved in intelligence work or the drafting of martial law. The Kurdish uprising (organised by the PKK, recognised as a terrorist organisation in Turkey) in the South-east escalated rapidly as the economy continued to weaken and inflation soared. Moreover, the government was plagued by President Özal's continued interference and filibustering.

⁷ In the years 1983–1993 the Nationalist Movement Party operated under the name 'The Nationalist Task Party'.

The early 1990s were marked by increased activity in new party formation. There was a split in the Nationalist Action Party – a group closely associated with the ideas of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis⁸ formed the Great Unity Party (Chmielowska, 2018).

A split also occurred in the Social Democratic Populist Party when Deniz Baykal, after an unsuccessful overthrowing of the leader Erdal İnönü, recreated the Republican People's Party. Some veterans of Menderes' Democratic Party joined forces and, 32 years after its ban, formed their own party, while Menderes' son, Aydın Menderes, founded his own Great Change Party. The unexpected death of President Turgut Özal in 1993 due to a heart attack turned out to be more of a shock than the division of the political scene. Despite the resentment towards him and the turmoil and conflicts related to his presidential term of office, public opinion felt that a man of great significance to modern Turkish history had passed away. Many considered him the second greatest reformer of the state after Atatürk.

A month after Özal's death, Süleyman Demirel became the ninth president of the Republic of Türkiye. Tansu Çiller, a female professor of economics and the Minister of Economy in Demirel's government, won the election to become the next party leader. Her appointment as Prime Minister provided a modern image for both the party and the country. Together with Yılmaz's takeover of the Motherland Party, it seemed to herald a change in political leadership dominated by figures such as Demirel, Ecevit, Erbakan, and Türkeş. Although Çiller entered a most grand political scene under Demirel's tutelage, her agenda was more aligned with Özal's (she was very pro-American and supported the free market). She wanted to transform Türkiye into a modern state, but her lack of negotiating and mediation skills led to early elections not long after. Also, in the coalition party of Social Democratic People's Party, Erdal İnönü left politics and was replaced by Murat Karayalçın, the former mayor of Ankara, who became Deputy Prime Minister, but not a member of parliament.

The Tansu Çiller government was dominated by three issues: the economy, the Kurdish question and the problem of the observance of human rights related thereto, as well as relations with the European Union. The greatest challenge for the coalition government came from the Welfare Party (Refah), which was revealed during municipal elections in March

⁸ The ideological system developed by the main ideologist of the Intellectual's Hearth (Aydınlar Ocağı) and its chairman, İbrahim Kafeso lu, was called "Turkish-Islamic Synthesis". The basic tenet of this ideological system was that Islam is particularly attractive to Turks because of the number of similarities between their pre-Muslim culture and the Islam civilisation.

1994. The true winner was Erbakan's Welfare Party, whose support almost doubled. They owed their success to great organisation, the mass character of the party, as well as to its message, contained in the slogan: "adil düzen" – "Just Order". It was victorious in fifteen of the largest cities in Türkiye, including Ankara and Istanbul. The generals were wrong, it was not the Welfare Party that Islamised Türkiye, it was Islam that had been present for centuries which led to the creation of such a party.

Erbakan claimed that a return to the roots of Islam would bring prosperity. He was an engineer, educated in Germany, where he had worked in the arms industry. After returning to Türkiye, he became a professor of technical sciences. He did not have a proper religious education, nor was he an expert on Muslim law. In the mid-1990s, the Welfare Party functioned more as a social welfare agency than as a political party. It gained the support of not only small entrepreneurs, but also the urban poor. The party was supported by trade unions, chambers of commerce, women's and youth associations, and was also supported by 50 publishing houses, 45 radio stations, and 19 TV channels. The Welfare Party clearly created the environment for a corporate system within a pluralist democracy.

Secular intelligentsia, who also hailed from big cities, were concerned about the victory of the Welfare Party in metropolitan areas. The activists of the Welfare Party wanted to change the formula of secularism functioning in Türkiye. They demanded a constitutional provision that would guarantee the right of an individual to live in accordance with professed religious principles. Erbakan was a realist, however, and for the first time as the Prime Minister, he supported an association with the European Union. This strategy laid the foundations for the cooperation of moderate Islamists with moderate proponents of a secular state. His party recognised one of the fundamental canons of the secular state – the prohibition of Sharia (Islamic law), stating that pluralism and democracy preclude its enforced imposition. The Welfare Party's mission was to form a government with great diplomatic tact and negotiation skills. Although it rejected Koranic law, its programme contained a classic set of Islamic values: the rejection of socialism and capitalism, the condemnation of dependence on the West, the promotion of social justice, cooperation with other Muslim countries, along with concern about the development of the domestic economy. Charity programmes were extended: schools and hospitals were established and cooperatives were founded.

The centre-left, which was traditionally supported by the Alevis community, was defeated due to internal divisions and personal animosities of the party leaders. However, after the election disaster, the parties reunited in 1995 under the name of the Republican People's Party and Hikmet

Çetin, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, became its leader. The Democratic Left Party remained under Bülent Ecevit's leadership. The elected coalition government was extremely weak, and, at the same time, the European Union clearly made the conclusion of the Customs Union agreement dependent upon Türkiye's implementation of democratisation changes.

In 1955, the National Assembly eventually passed the package of amendments by a mandatory majority of two-thirds of the votes. They provided organisations and trade unions with the right to engage in politics, allowed civil servants to join trade unions, and also allowed parties to form youth and women's sections within party structures. The voting age was lowered from 21 to 18. The changes were, in fact, a compromise and did not affect the people that were in power during the period of military rule. The detested Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Act also remained in force.

In the elections in December 1995, the Welfare Party gained support and became the largest party in the parliament, so much so that no stable government could be formed without the Islamists. In the new coalition government, Erbakan would be Prime Minister for the first two years, only to resign from the post in favour of Çiller. Even pro-Western business circles recognised that a stable government is more important than a secular government. The army, although concerned, showed no willingness to intervene. It came as a surprise to the Western world that a secular state was governed by an Islamist not long after concluding the Customs Union with Western countries, which was supposed to prevent it. However, a wait-and-see attitude was adopted.

In the first months, the new government tried to avoid confrontation and refrained from using Islamic rhetoric. Six months later, the coalition seemed quite strong and stable. It was tolerated more than supported by the business community, although it was still criticised by the military and heavily attacked by the mass media. The support for Erbakan's policy grew nevertheless. Just before 1997, relations between the government and the army began to deteriorate rapidly. National Security Council presented the government with a long list of demands aimed at limiting the influence of Islamists on the economy, education, and the internal state administration. The most spectacular postulate was the introduction of a compulsory eight-year education in primary state schools, with the aim of eradicating religious schools, schools which were immensely popular among the poorest society members since they offered a free-of-charge and relatively-safe education in the eyes of conservative Muslims. Graduates could continue their education up to university level and gain

employment in religious institutions, but in fact they often worked in government bodies, so in the eyes of the military and secular circles they posed a threat to the secular nature of the state.

Six weeks later, army officials presented their demands as an ultimatum and an almost open war broke out between the Welfare Party and the army. Erbakan survived a vote of no confidence, but the army continued to mobilise further groups, such as trade unions and employers' unions, groups in favour of secularism and being against the government. 161 officers were dismissed on suspicion of promoting Islamisation. Under military pressure, Erbakan resigned in 1997. President Demirel, to the discontent of both former coalition partners, entrusted Mesut Yılmaz with the task of forming a government. Under tremendous pressure from the military, he created a coalition comprising the Motherland Party (ANAP), Ecevit's Democratic Left Party and the Democrat Türkiye Party of Hüsametdin Cindoruk, a group of Demirel's allies who left the True Path Party. The army thus succeeded in carrying out the first post-modern coup.

The main task of the new government was to implement reforms demanded by the army. In January 1998, the Constitutional Court banned the Welfare Party and even Erbakan himself from the political scene for five years, which was subsequently changed into a lifetime prohibition on participating in political life. In February, a case was brought against the Mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. He was accused of inciting religious hatred and sentenced to ten months in prison. A case was also brought against MÜSIAD – the largest Muslim business association. In the meantime, the Islamists reorganised themselves. In 1998, 41 former deputies founded the Virtue Party, and, after having been joined by the majority of colleagues from the Welfare Party, it became the largest parliamentary group. Yılmaz's cabinet navigated between the pressure from the military and attempts to save the economy. In 1997, inflation was the highest since the foundation of the Republic and additionally, in 1998, Türkiye was hit hard by the Russian financial crisis. The government saw a lifeline in urgent privatisation, which eventually gave rise to a corruption scandal involving Prime Minister Yılmaz, who was forced to resign in 1998, and new elections were scheduled. Since it was supposed to be the first election since the 1997 coup, there was fear of an Islamic coup. Geographically, there were clear-cut divisions; the developed west voted for Ecevit's Democratic Left Party, Central Anatolia voted for the nationalist National Movement Party, and the Virtue Party won the backward East. This election result was most likely affected by the sensational detention of the Kurdish leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, which strengthened Ecevit's position. Ecevit's popularity and

generally-recognised integrity, especially when contrasted with the corruption scandals associated with Yılmaz and Çiller, led to the success of the Democratic Left Party. The government formed following the elections was a coalition of the democratic left, nationalists, and ANAP under the leadership of 70-year-old Bülent Ecevit. It may come as a surprise that the far-right and the democratic left established a coalition, but, in reality, the parties shared similar ideological foundations – they were united by nationalism and their belief in a strong state.

The new government was supposed to save the Turkish economy. It undertook to tighten fiscal policy and privatisation in return for loans from the IMF. It was so busy negotiating the terms that when, in the morning of August 1999, a massive earthquake (7.4 on the Richter scale) hit the Gulf of Izmit area east of Istanbul, the government was unable to react quickly or effectively. The destruction was enormous, and, officially, the earthquake claimed 15,000 lives, but the unofficial number was more likely twice as high. In the initial days after the disaster, the state and the government seemed to be in a state of paralysis; no rescue operations were organised during the crucial first twenty-four hours after the quake. The military tackled their own losses, but there was no aid provided to civilians. Dozens of countries, including Greece and Israel, offered help and dispatched specialist teams and medical assistance, but their efforts were met with little cooperation on the Turkish side. Supplies of medications and dressings were seized at the border, and Osman Durmuş, the ultra-nationalist Minister of Health, tried to block foreign aid on the grounds that the Turks did not need foreign blood. The clear disgrace of the government authorities angered the public. The army was also severely criticised, which was unusual for Türkiye. While the government struggled with an economic crisis and the human and material losses in the aftermath of the earthquake, the Kemalists fought for their return to power. The Islamist Virtue Party was accused in court of being a direct continuation of the Welfare Party and, in June 2001, the Constitutional Court ruled on its dissolution. Its supporters split up and formed two parties: the moderate Justice and Development Party of Abdullah Gül and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Islamist Felicity Party. In 2000, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the president of the Constitutional Court, became the tenth president of Türkiye. He enjoyed the prestige, but had no political foundations. He was also critical of the government and wanted to act independently. In 2001, the President confronted the Prime Minister with evidence of corruption in government circles and accused him of covering it up for political reasons. This conflict caused a great economic crisis as investors lost confidence in the stability of the

government that signed the agreement with the IMF. Between 2001 and 2002, the government was fully focused on efforts to keep the economy and the financial crisis under control. This task was significantly facilitated by the influence of Kemal Derviş, the Turkish director of the World Bank. He acted effectively, contributing to the stability of the state, but the ruling coalition's credibility in the eyes of Turkish society was forever lost (Ortaylı, 2007; 2010; 2015; 2018).

Conclusions

Almost 100 years have passed since the events related to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, whereupon the Turkish people became a European society, aware of their rights and obligations. The transition from the single-party regime to the multi-party period (1949) allowed for democracy to be consolidated. Turkey's participation in strictly European and international political and military organisations was of vital significance and turned the country into an extremely important state. Its failed efforts to join the EEC, and, subsequently, the European Union, resulted in Turkey abandoning its interest in this form of cooperation (1997). The socio-political transformations that took place in the 20th century, highlighted in this article, characterise this dynamically changing period. The historical facts presented in the article emphasise the evolution of the views of Turkish society that was clearly marked in the second half of the 20th century, which led to serious changes in the mindsets of the Turkish people and completely altered the image of the country post-2002, allowing the newly established Justice and Development Party (2002) to take the reins of power in the country.

In the end, it was not the economic or financial crisis that brought down Ecevit's government, but the Prime Minister's conduct. It was suggested that he was physically weak and oftentimes emotionally unstable. The parliamentary elections in 2002 brought spectacular results. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party enjoyed a landslide victory and won an absolute majority in the National Assembly. Only Deniz Baykal's Republican People's Party managed to win seats in the Assembly. Ecevit's support, however, plummeted by 95%. The parties in the ruling coalition were blamed for the collapse of the financial system. What is more, the so-called liquid electorate was revealed, and traditional party loyalty seemed to be disappearing. Voters were ready to vote for anyone who brought hope, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan turned out to be that person. Not only was he a charismatic leader with working-class roots, but he was also a popular mayor of a metropolis he ruled over in 1994–1998. Although

in 2002 he was outside the system of power, he gained credibility as an efficient administrator. The Turks voted for him because they believed that he could end yoksulluk – poverty, and yolsuzluk – corruption, and not because they wanted an Islamic state. The defeat of the true Islamists of the Felicity Party (Saadet) in the city of Konya is proof of that. Furthermore, most Turks did not see the contradiction between nationalism and Islam, and they considered Kemal Atatürk to be the greatest figure in the history of mankind and still holds a leading place in hearts and minds, even before Muhammad, perhaps because he made secularism a true religion.

Summarising the extremely-dynamic and politically-difficult 1990s, Türkiye was undoubtedly a unique country on a global scale in terms of politics and religion. Balancing between secularism, democratic political structures, and a strong Islamic influence, Türkiye presented itself as a state with an incomplete, unconsolidated electoral democracy. A characteristic feature of this system was the political importance of the extensive apparatus of coercion (army, secret services), as well as religious associations and bureaucracy operating alongside constitutional bodies. The informal, high position of Islam, fought by the army in the name of the constitutional principle of secularism, was acknowledged. The level of advancement of democratic change in this insufficiently institutionalised, pluralist-civic democracy showed a tendency to resort to force in order to deal with political crises and unresolved ethnic conflicts (such as the overblown Kurdish conflict) and the continued political immobilism. Türkiye was characterised by conflict within the governing elite that destabilised the entire system. Therefore, it is worth emphasising that Türkiye was classified in the same group as the majority of Latin American countries, India, and the larger part of post-communist countries.

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*Zeyneb Çağlıyan İçener**

2018's 'Political System Change' and Its Impact on Party Politics in Türkiye

Abstract

The Republic of Türkiye was founded on Ottoman parliamentary tradition introduced in 1878. However, debates on system change have always been on the agenda. The Turkish political elite has occasionally presented proposals on the need to shift from a parliamentary to a presidential system. The times of political crises set a suitable ground for such favourable arguments. This article focuses primarily on the realisation of the system change witnessed under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership. In the first part, it argues that the three-phase strategy of the AK Party has made its political dreams come true. An issue is first popularised, then narrativised, and finally securitised. Consequently, the new presidential government system was adopted with the April 16th, 2017 referendum. The article analyses how the system change has modified the formation of such alliances among the political parties beyond customary ways. It questions to what extent this novel dimension of party politics would be sustainable. The second part thus elaborates on the formation of alliances and the efforts to make them functional on the way to consensual politics. Lijphart's classification of democracies as majoritarian governments versus consensus governments has provided a theoretical base for a discussion on the return to a strengthened parliamentary system. The article sheds light on the new dynamics of government/opposition relations and their influence on Turkish democracy.

Keywords: Türkiye, Turkey, System Debate, Change, Presidential System, Party Politics, Democracy

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Introduction

The Republic of Türkiye was created upon Ottoman parliamentary tradition introduced in 1878. However, debates on system change have always been on the political agenda. The Turkish political elite has occasionally presented proposals on the need for a shift from a parliamentary to a presidential system. Popularising such proposals coincided with the times when the political elite needed to eliminate external pressures over civilian, democratic politics. The sporadic renewals of such enthusiasm for system change were still far from creating fertile ground for a fruitful discussion, and debates which were held did not provide informative nor critical accounts for the people.

This pattern vividly demonstrated itself again back in 2007 as an escalation of civil/military tension connected to the selection of the next president by the Parliament. The Justice and Development Party (AK Party) was the governing political party at that time, and its parliamentary majority was adequate for electing its candidate as President. It was terrifying for the secular republicans, i.e., the military, since they perceived the AK Party as an Islamist party. In response, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government put system change at the top of its political agenda, and, subsequently, a change in the system was made possible with an April 16th 2017 referendum. The details about the newly introduced system, dubbed a "presidential government system" (*cumhurbaşkanlığı hükümet sistemi*), were not clear at the beginning. The nature of the system has evolved in due course, and has been a politically contentious issue.

Partial, incomplete, and personalised analyses have turned the issue into a good example of antagonism. A new phase of confrontational politics has become a significant feature of contemporary Türkiye and, although the new presidential government system has been adopted with the constitutional changes introduced by the April 16th 2017 referendum, which entered into force in July 2018, it has had no reducing effect on the antagonism between the government and the opposition. Indeed, the result of the referendum worked quite to the contrary in that both sides closed ranks. New alliances around two main political blocs have formed, and this situation does not seem to be transitional nor short-lived. This paper analyses the significance of 2018's 'political system change'¹ by

¹ Although the 2017 referendum introduced a transition to a presidential (government) system, I have intentionally used 'political system change' instead of 'governmental system change'. At first sight it may not seem in congruous with the terminology of political science. Instead of finding the appropriate usage, revealing the meanings attributed to the system change has been prioritised. It is quite striking that the proponents of the AK Party's presidential government model has opted

examining the discussions and developments before the 2017 referendum and by looking at what it has brought to the political arena. Thus, the first part looks at the debates on the constitutional amendments in the pre-referendum period, and how the influence of yes/no camps extended beyond the referendum and plays an essential role in creating political blocs as the new representations of party politics. The paper aims to firstly investigate how system change is realised, and secondly how it has modified the formation of such alliances among the political parties beyond customary ways. It questions to what extent this novel dimension of party politics is sustainable. The second part elaborates on the formation of alliances and the efforts to make them functional on the way to consensual politics. These two parts are germane to the discussion on the relationship between system change and the change in party politics. The way the change in the system was realised has intensified ongoing debates, deepened the rift among the government and opposition parties, and created new alliances out of growing political fragmentation. Examining the overall process with a focus on the continuities and changes of system debate before and after the 2017 referendum will shed light on the new dynamics of the government/opposition relations and their influence on Turkish democracy. Arend Lijphart's classification of democracies as majoritarian governments versus consensus governments will be useful in providing a theoretical base for a discussion on the return to a strengthened parliamentary system and its implications for the future of democracy in Türkiye (Lijphart, 2012).

for defining the change as a “transformation of the political system” (*siyasal sistemin dönüşümü*) (Miş, Duran, 2017). The new system is said to bring encompassing reforms and necessitate a novel political style. Thus, the change is more than mere institutional change (Alkan, 2018, p. 150). It is the reflection of a previously presented argument that Türkiye had a long-time (political) system problem requiring a shift from a bureaucratic republic to a democratic one that could be solved with encompassing state reform and a transition to a presidential system (Yayman, 2016, p. 315). The opponents of the presidential government system perceive the change not only within the institutional capacity of the presidency but as a threat to the democratic republic. The corrosive influence of the new system over all aspects of the country is highlighted on the website of Good Party (İYİ Party) (İYİ Parti, 2022). In a memorandum of understanding of the six political parties, the presidential government system is alleged to have brought “arbitrary and unlawful rule” paving the way to the deepest political and economic crises of the republic (*Güçlendirilmiş Parlamenter Sistem Mutabakat Metni*, 2022). The People's Democracy Party (HDP), the opposition party outside of any alliances, agrees with the opinion that the presidential government system is the source of multiple crises and argues that the new system aims to institutionalise and hence consolidate “arbitrariness and authoritarianism” (Euronews, 2021).

Towards System Change

The desire to change the system of government from that of parliamentary to presidential has occasionally been voiced by political elites as a remedy to overcome the difficulties faced in times of political crisis. This could be due to a failure to form an effective single-party government and being forced to set up short-lived coalitions or because of a stalemate caused by the Parliament not electing a president (Gülener, 2016, p. 110). Political leaders even blamed the parliamentary system in Türkiye for keeping a tight grip on executive will and hindering political reform (Çağlıyan İçener, 2015, p. 316). The 1982 Constitution, as a follow-up of the 1980 military coup, had indeed exacerbated the issue with its dual executive structure with an active and politically irresponsible president having discretionary powers. Some scholars argue that the post-1980 coup system could therefore be named as *parliamentarism attenué* (weakened parliamentarism) (Özbudun, 2000, p. 60). There have been individual initiatives to solve the problems stemming from this weakness since the late 1980s, although none of these could be realised until the April 2017 referendum. The AK Party under Erdoğan succeeded in dominating system-related debate and bringing about system change.

The strategic manoeuvre of the AK Party on the path towards system change can better be understood if we deal with it in three progressive and interrelated phases. Firstly, the issue of system change is popularised, then narrativised, and finally securitised by the AK Party. These three steps have promoted, facilitated, and catalysed the shift toward a system that had no definite label nor clear content at the beginning. The three-phased analysis below is significant in grasping the increasing trend of political polarisation and the rise of bloc politics.

The Popularisation of the Issue of System Change

The popularisation of the issue of system change can be traced back to 2007, when the then President Ahmet Necdet Sezer was about to finish his term of office. Before being proposed as a joint candidate of major political parties in the Parliament, Sezer had served as the President of the Constitutional Court and become widely acclaimed as a man of law and justice. There were no doubts about his loyalty to the Republic's secular character. On the other hand, the November 2002 general elections triggered a significant change in Turkish politics. As a result of the elections, the political parties of the 1990s that had been deemed responsible for an economic recession and political crises were kicked out of Parliament. Beyond all expectations, the AK Party gained the highest vote in the parliamentary

elections with the support of an electorate alienated by the unsuccessful policies of centrist political parties. Only the Republican People's Party (CHP) managed to gain seats in the Parliament as the opposition of a two-party Parliament.

The religious/secular divide was still effective at that time.² Yet the novel discourse of the AK Party leaned on a unifying and constructive language. Until 2007, AK party leaders tried to build a prudent and moderate outlook and consciously refrained from entering into conflict with the secular groups. The discussions on who would be the next president changed the course of events. Despite its efforts both in words and deeds to disassociate itself from its National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) past (one in which it had an Islamist orientation), the AK Party continued to be perceived as a threat to the secular regime. Nevertheless, the party had a sufficient majority to make its candidate the 11th president of the Republic. The terrified secularists started a campaign to eliminate any possible candidate of the AK Party, especially the candidates married to headscarfed women among whom Erdoğan was the frontrunner candidate.

The AK Party went on to announce Abdullah Gül as its presidential candidate. Gül was one of the four founding figures of the party who had been among the young generation of the Welfare Party (RP) that challenged the one-man domination of Necmettin Erbakan. In the first round of the elections at the Parliament, Gül received 357 votes out of 361 participant deputies. Although no similar argument was suggested and implemented in the preceding presidential elections, the Constitutional Court ruled that the number of participants to the election session should not be under 367; hence, the first round was annulled.³ This notorious 367 decision led party notables to look for a remedy to avoid any outside intrusion into the fulfilment of national will. The AK Party proposed

² The impact of religiosity in voting behaviour was indicated by various studies (Çarkoğlu, 2007; Kalaycıoğlu, 2012). Based on these, Esen and Gümüşçü draw attention to the situation that religious conservative voters in low-income neighbourhoods supported the AK Party whereas middle-class secularists in coastal areas and major cities voted for the CHP (Esen, Gümüşçü, 2017, p. 310).

³ The CHP did not propose any candidate in the 2007 presidential rally. The party chose not to participate in the first round of elections and appealed to the Constitutional Court as the main opposition party for the annulment of the election. The other minor parties which had a smaller number of deputies, i.e., the Motherland Party (ANAP) and the True Path Party (DYP) also declared that they would not enter the General Assembly during the election session. In spite of the decision of these centre-right parties, 2 deputies each from the DYP and the ANAP participated in the session. But still this is important to trace back to the situational alliance of the CHP and the centre-right parties for the common purpose of protecting the republican establishment against the AK Party.

constitutional amendments to elect a President by popular vote, and the Parliament accepted them. Yet the then President Sezer did not approve of the amendments and vetoed the proposal. In accordance with the constitution, if the majority of the deputies accept the proposal as it is and send it back to the president, he can then take the issue to a referendum. President Sezer followed this procedure, and a referendum was scheduled for October 21st, 2007.

Sezer was not alone in the struggle to eliminate the AK Party's potential presidential candidates. The army reacted to mounting political tension with the April 27th e- memorandum. The generals were still under the influence of the military's self-assumed role of being the guardians of the secular, republican regime and the mentality of seeing the February 28th process as being necessary to continue until the reactionary threat would be overcome. Unlike previous military interventions, especially the February 28th post-modern coup, the army seemed to be less assertive and more cautious this time. The preference on the timing of the e-memorandum was remarkable. Many commented that it was a midnight intervention to eliminate any negative impact on the financial markets. The generals were prudent enough not to be held responsible for any negative outcomes by the government. The response of the political elites to this military interference was exceptionally different. The AK Party's firm stance against such external pressure on politics had significant implications for the party and Turkish democracy. The quick reaction of the then party spokesman Cemil Çiçek directly addressing the military was considered heroic and one which tipped the scales in favour of the AK Party. This reaction started to build the moral superiority of the party in the eyes of many. Hence, the April 27th e-memorandum paved the way for the popularisation of the argument presenting the parliamentary system of government with the applied instruments in Türkiye as an obstacle to the realisation of the democratic will of the people. The elected civilian executive was under the pressure of a tutelary regime.

Before the referendum, the July 22nd general elections had been held. The AK Party increased its vote-based support by about 12%. The result was proof of Erdoğan's powers of persuasion over the electorate in his fight against tutelage. The AK Party succeeded in widening its electorate and getting Gül elected as the 11th President by the new Parliament. The Nationalist Action Party (MHP) deputies participated in the third round of the session. The MHP had its presidential candidate and it did not ally with the CHP in its resort to embracing the idea of the formula of a required 367 participant deputies. Instead, it indirectly played a facilitatory role in the election of Gül. This position, along with the MHP's generous

support for the AK Party to adopt constitutional changes, required to shift to a presidential system later in 2016 can be considered the seeds of the current People's (*Cumhur*) alliance. The AK Party vociferously articulated the idea to change the system of government from a parliamentary to a presidential one in this political atmosphere. In fact, this prompted many people to appraise the meaning of such a system change widely. This culminated in the result of the October 21st referendum wherein 69.1% of voters accepted electing the President by popular vote. It shows the extent of the AK Party's success in popularising system change. No political actor before had had that chance and capacity to open the discussion with such concrete support. Erdoğan managed to familiarise the concept of system change and attracted the masses' attention to its vitality and inevitability. This is a significant first step towards realising system change in government.

The Narrativisation of the Issue of System Change

Although the 2007 referendum constitutionalised the president's election by popular vote, it did complicate the process. There were arguments that constitutional changes may pave the way to legal uncertainty on some issues. The first discussion was about Gül's presidential term. Since presidential terms are limited to five years with the possibility of re-election for a second five-year term, in the minds of some, Gül's term should have ended in 2012. Others argued that the Parliament elected him before the constitutional changes had taken effect, hence his term would end in 2014.

From 2007 onwards, the AK Party continued to argue publicly that changing the system to a presidential one was necessary. Additionally, creating a new constitution was put on top of its agenda. Yet changing the system from a parliamentary to a presidential model would not be easy. Popularising the issue was a good start, but somewhat insufficient to realise change. Those voting in favour of a popularly-elected president in the referendum were loosely tied to the issue as part of an emotional and context-bounded reaction. The critical challenge is to assist people in making sense of what is happening and guide their actions in a certain way by creating a limited repertoire of competing narratives. Having the upper hand over the opponents of a more extensive change of government system could be possible through narrativising the issue. This process includes, on one side, mostly bad and worrisome memories of the past and, on the other, mostly good and desirable expectations about the future. If this dual strategy functions well, then a dominant narrative could

be formulated. Telling past stories about the tutelary understanding that inhibited the fulfilment of national will, the dual executive, and troubled coalition periods which ended up with political instability and the crisis of government are important for the negative component of narrativising. Conversely, boosting high morale for a better projection is the positive component. This was done by depicting a well-functioning and effective government under the President as the sole, executive figure. Stability, faster decision-making, and a powerful state have become the frequently-stated terms in this narrativisation process (Esen, Gümüşçü, 2017).

After the 2011 parliamentary elections, the Constitution Conciliation Commission was formed in the Parliament. It comprised three representatives from each political party, and the commission held the meetings for two years. Shifting to a presidential system of government was a central issue of the new constitution for the governing AK Party. The main opposition party in the form of the CHP objected to that proposal and insisted on strengthening the parliamentary system. From the very beginning, the two opposing sides approached their proposals within the brackets not of a system of government, but a regime change. The conciliation commission's two years of work was not enough to reach an agreement on the principles of a new constitution. And so, the commission was dissolved in 2013.

The August 10th 2014 presidential election went on to become a historic election. It marked the beginning of a new era of the first popularly-elected Turkish president. The two main opposition parties of that period, the CHP and MHP, agreed to name the former President of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu as their joint presidential candidate. The other powerful opposition party, the HDP, proposed its leader Selahattin Demirtaş as its candidate. It is essential to follow the efforts of the opposition parties, mainly the former two, to find a unifying name against Erdoğan. The MHP's strong criticism of and fierce opposition towards Erdoğan completely reversed within two years. Surprisingly, the MHP led the process of changing the system. It triggered the AK Party's move to constitutionalise the change with a referendum. In that sense, arguing that Erdoğan's presidential term marked the beginning of an irreversible process towards system change helped narrativise the issue.

The Securitisation of the Issue of System Change

The first two phases, popularisation and narrativisation, promoted and facilitated the system change. Yet obviously, without the third phase, namely, the securitisation of the issue, the shift to a presidential government system would not be fully achieved. The result of the June

2015 parliamentary elections was alarming for the AK Party; it was the first time since 2002 that they did not reach the required majority in the Parliament to set up a single-party government. The bilateral meetings between the AK Party and the other opposition parties (the CHP, MHP, and Felicity Party (SP) respectively) bore no results. Due to the failure of establishing a coalition government, in his constitutional capacity, President Erdoğan announced his decision to take the country to snap elections. The Supreme Election Council (YSK) ruled for holding the snap elections on November 1st, 2015. The result of the elections was a relief for the AK Party. Once again, it reached a sufficient number of seats in the Parliament to continue its single-party rule. That said, this was the beginning of a new period. The AK Party associates encountered the actuality that the tide may quickly turn.

The July 15th, 2016 failed coup attempt has become an important milestone in returning to the notorious securitising discourses of the old Turkey that the AK Party, under Erdoğan's leadership, claimed to counteract since the establishment of the party. This was not synthetic and groundless, though. Indeed, it was not the first time that an elected government had become a target to be toppled by non-elected state elites in Turkish political history. However, what made the July 15th incident unprecedented was its actors' allegiance to a religious cleric by the name of Fethullah Gülen under the guise of army officers who had the prevailing reputation of being guards of the secular republican regime. This duplicitous nature was quite surprising but not as much as the putschist army officers' ordering the Turkish soldiers to bomb their Parliament, interior ministry, and police headquarters pitilessly, taking their chief of general staff hostage and opening fire on their fellow, unarmed citizens. It was an assault not only on President Erdoğan and the governing AK Party, but on Türkiye as a state, its institutions, and people. That said, the infiltration of Gülenists into the army was only the tip of the iceberg. The July 15th failed coup attempt revealed the extent of the danger targeting the Turkish state. An octopus-like structure in the form of the Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation (FETÖ) has manifested itself not only in state institutions such as the military, bureaucracy, the judiciary, security forces, and the education sector but also in the media, commercial activities, the banking system, and civil societal mechanisms such as business associations and NGOs. This has become the real challenge for the government to continue combating the FETÖ menace after the successful, popular resistance thwarted the putsch. The level of parallel state structuring necessitated tight measures and large-scale purges from state posts. Therein lies the rationale behind the return to securitisation.

The ultimate aim of the heinous coup attempt was the elimination of Erdoğan. Although he, at that time, was on holiday in Marmaris and in a hotel with his family, Erdoğan reached the masses rapidly and rallied them to thwart the coup plotters on the very same night. The people's resistance was heroic. For the first time in Turkish history, people neither remained indifferent nor idle to the intervention, nor did they hesitate to martyr themselves to protect the nation's will and democratic state. The post-July 15th pro-democracy vigils of Turkish people continued for 27 days in 81 provinces. These were popular manifestations of a widespread embracing of democracy as an essential principle and loyalty to the democratic regime. It should be noted that these vigils did not only include AK Party supporters.

The inclusive nature of the democracy vigils is essential so as to grasp the follow-up process it initiated, reminding the politicians of the significance of moderation, conciliation, and consensus (Çağlıyan İçener, 2016, p. 122). This desire culminated in the Yenikapı meeting, the biggest meeting ever in Türkiye, with the participation of the governing AK Party and two main opposition parties, the CHP and MHP, on August 7th, 2016. It had an importance beyond symbolism. This growing enthusiasm of the people served to suppress the polarising discourses of the political parties that had dominated the political arena before July 15th. It could have been “a historic opportunity for creating a plural and democratic New Turkey” (Çağlıyan İçener, 2016, p. 124) had consensual politics supplemented the conflict-driven, polarising style of politics. Unfortunately, the Yenikapı spirit in politics did not last particularly long. The declaration of a state of emergency cast doubts about the sincerity of the AK Party's allegiance to steer Türkiye towards being an ‘advanced democracy’. The shift towards ruling the country with presidential decrees has been used to substantiate the arguments that the political system in Türkiye continues its drift towards authoritarianism.⁴ Erdoğan was depicted, by the opposing elites, as a man who was consolidating his one-man rule benefiting from the bringing-the-state's-security-back-in approach. For them, Erdoğan's *de facto* presidentialism has emerged as the most crucial obstacle to Turkish democracy. The MHP, which has long been an advocate of a presidential system, came to the scene and pushed the AK Party to shift the system

⁴ The authoritarian turn of the AK Party's rule has become one of the major themes discussed in academic circles since 2009 onwards. Various definitions are used: “electoral authoritarianism” and “democratic backsliding” (Özbudun, 2014), “rising authoritarianism” (Öniş, 2015), “competitive authoritarianism” (Özbudun, 2015; Kalaycıoğlu, 2015; Sayarı, 2016; Esen, Gümüşçü, 2016; 2018), and “authoritarian retreat” (Esen, Gümüşçü, 2016).

from a *de facto* presidentialism to *de jure* presidentialism with the promise of supporting a draft of constitutional amendments in Parliament. This could be considered the beginning of the ongoing alliance between the AK Party and the MHP. The number of deputies of the two parties was insufficient to realise change through the parliamentary mechanism. Still, the result cleared the way for a referendum. The April 2017 referendum was held under this atmosphere wherein the securitising language patronised the debates of the two coalition camps. The 'yes' camp (*Cumhur İttifakı*) labelled the 'no' camp (*Millet ittifakı*) as an alliance of contempt (*zillet ittifakı*). In the eyes of the former, the latter was collaborating with the 'enemies' of the nation and that was a matter of the state's survival (Esen, Gümüşçü, 2019, p. 324). There was a continuation of the state of emergency declared after the 2016 failed coup attempt. This strengthened Erdoğan's hand in creating 'a false sense of urgency' for augmenting the powers of the president so as to return to political stability (Çınar, 2021, p. 320).

Party Politics in a Presidential Government System

A History of Coalition Formation in Türkiye

It is a well-known practice in Turkish parliamentary politics to establish coalition governments when the number of seats of an individual political party in the Parliament is not enough to set up a single-party government after an election. Votes of confidence and the 10% national threshold are also among the difficulties the political parties have experienced in coalition formation in the parliamentary system. These mechanisms could negatively influence the formation process or the survival of coalition governments.

Political fronts are other types of coalition-like formations observed in certain periods of Turkish politics. Unlike the connotation that 'coalition' as a term evoked, the word 'front' is mainly associated with the word 'polarization' in the Turkish people's political lexicon. The *Vatan* Front of the late 1950s was a primary and decisive demonstration of such usage. It became an ideological move of a political party in government (the Democrat Party – (DP)), targeting the opposition and the particular segments of the social coalition that had taken the party to government before but later severed its ties at a faster pace. Hence it was argued to be implemented by the DP's leadership as a tool for political polarisation (Kahraman, 2010, p. 334). Another famous political front was the two Nationalist Front governments of the second half of the 1970s. It reflected the ideological polarisation of the era on the continuum of communism

and anti-communism. The fragmented structure of the Parliament made it difficult to form a stable government. The ideological polarisation also increased the political tension and therefore decreased the probability of cooperation among the political parties enjoying stronger electoral support. The absence of motivation for and experience in forming coalition governments prioritising cooperation and the conciliation of differences is directly linked with the dominance of the majoritarian democracy understanding in Turkish political culture. Hence what was seen in the 1970s were unstable, fragile, short-term coalition governments as conjectural formations.

In Turkish political memory, the 1970s and 1990s are the signifiers of the idea of coalition. However, the first coalition government was formed just after the 1960 military coup. Tracing back to the roots of coalition formation is vital to follow the trajectory of the understanding of democracy in Türkiye. The forerunners of coalition governments were set up under the premiership of İsmet İnönü as the leader of the CHP in the post-1960 coup era. The CHP and the Justice Party (AP), established after the coup and which quickly gained a reputation as an heir to the DP, agreed on a coalition protocol and twice received a vote of confidence in the Parliament. The first iteration ruled between 20.11.1961 and 25.06.1962 and the second between 25.06.1962 and 25.12.1963. The military's relatively quick transfer of political power to civilians after the restoration of the democratic regime opened a new era with many changes in the system. The simple plurality system with multi-member constituencies by party lists was replaced with a d'Hondt version of proportional representation system. The objective was to avoid a single-party government in a system without separation of powers nor a functioning checks and balance mechanism as observed during the DP government. The October 15th general elections in 1961 were the first time the proportional representation system was introduced. As a result, none of the political parties received the required majority to form a government. The CHP-AP coalition government was formed to overcome this situation. Instead of the word *koalisyon* (borrowed from French and which became the term used to this day), the newly-formed government was named a "mixed government" (*karma hükümet*) in this first-time usage.

How this new political formation was presented could give us a idea about the conception of the coalition as a phenomenon in Turkish democracy. The then Prime Minister İnönü, in his speech in the National Assembly (TBMM) while introducing the government program, drew attention to the brand new nature of the coalition government in the Turkish political system. He presented it as an example of political maturity, an outcome

of a common belief in the necessity of replacing political enmity with a civilised political style and a means of a democratic regime (Neziroğlu, Yılmaz, 2015, p. 6). This was an excellent commencement on the way to building up the concept of the coalition. Unfortunately, it did not root itself in line with this content in the follow-up perceptions and applications regarding coalition formation. In fact, it is possible to associate this situation with the Turkish party system's long-time suffering from the three maladies known as fragmentation, polarisation, and volatility (Özbudun, 2000, p. 74).

The beginning of the series of coalition governments in the 1970s was an anomaly. President Fahri Korutürk assigned the duty of forming a government to Senator Naim Talu. The AP, the Republican Reliance Party (CGP), and independent deputies set up a coalition government (15.04.1973–26.01.1974) that was entitled to take the country to the new elections. The government was not born out of the will of the people, but was rather a by-product of the 1971 military intervention. Subsequently, the Talu government emerged as a deviation from coalition understanding in democratic regimes. It was engineered for a particular purpose, and therefore there was no motivation behind the formation of a coalition for conciliation and cooperation among coalition partners.

Another distinctive example of coalition formation presented itself in the 10-month long coalition government of Ecevit's leftist CHP and Erbakan's Islamic-oriented National Salvation Party (MSP). This was an unexpected move due to the polarised nature of the era limiting the actors' preferences and activities from the dimension of left/right discourse. The determinants of the left/right spectrum in Türkiye never resembled the European equivalent focusing on economic policies more as the decisive factor. Instead, religion was given an essential place in defining what the left and right was in Türkiye. Thus, although the CHP and the MSP had shared a similar anti-imperialist stance, the ideological distance between the two political parties was said to be so large that it was a great surprise to see them under the same roof of a coalition government. Yet that coalition experience was a step toward overcoming this perception. It was valued for its potential for opening a new and pleasant era for the Turkish people in the coalition protocol (Neziroğlu, Yılmaz, 2015, p. 591). Ecevit, as the prime minister, in a speech delivered to the Parliament, suggested that this coalition period would be an era of tranquillity where differing views were discussed and coexisted peacefully (Neziroğlu, Yılmaz, 2015, p. 593). Social justice and societal peace were referred to as two shared principles of the coalition partners. It is striking that differences are mentioned more than commonalities. How they

approach coalitions was stated in the coalition protocol. It was emphasised that forming coalitions among the political parties necessitates certain concessions in that each political party should abandon some of its views and policies. This meant that no one should expect the CHP and the MSP to fully implement their party programs during the coalition government period (Neziroğlu, Yılmaz, 2015, p. 580).

The Nationalist Front coalition governments succeeded the CHP-AP coalition government in the second half of the 1970s. The new 1982 Constitution brought dramatic changes to the system. All political parties were outlawed, and their leaders were arrested. New political parties were required to get the military regime's approval to be opened. The parliamentary system was weakened to benefit the President with discretionary appointive powers. The 10% election threshold was introduced to eliminate the instability of coalition governments. Until the 1990s, a military-backed interim government (1980–1983), and then a single-party ANAP government ruled the country. However, within 10 years, coalition governments returned to Turkish politics. Throughout the 1990s, seven coalition governments were formed and not one of them lasted more than two years. This was more than the number of coalition governments (four in total) set up in the 1970s. Governmental instability, combined with other severe economic and social problems, exacerbated the political situation in the 1990s. That is why coalitions are still equated to past periods of terror, financial crises, corruption, and incompetence. The revival of debates on system change in the 2000s brought back these memories. And as stated above, the AK Party refreshed these memories in the minds of the people to narrativise the issue.

Political Parties, Bloc Politics, and System Debate in Today's Türkiye

In contemporary Türkiye, coalition governments are no longer an option under the presidential government system. For the proponents of the presidential system, this is a desired outcome of the system change. Coalitions are said to be the reason behind weakness and instability (Kuzu, 2011, p. 85). In the new system, the candidate receiving the absolute majority of the votes shall be elected President. The plurality systems have generally led to two-party systems. In this early period of change, it did not cause a decrease in the numbers of the political parties in Türkiye. Instead, the outcome was the formation of blocs. Forming new political parties continues to be popular, with the idea and ideal of changing the system towards a strengthened parliamentary system currently at the centre of political debate. Indeed, it is the fundamental issue behind rising

bloc politics. The hope for immediate change is shaping relations among the opposition parties. The polarising language of politics has long been a feature of government/opposition relations in Türkiye. So far, polarisation has worked for the benefit of the AK Party. However, a novel feature has established itself in intra-opposition relations. The unification factor has become the aim of changing the system again. Hence, unlike the previous short-term and fragile coalitions, the six opposition parties eagerly sit together around the table for a common purpose.

The predecessor of this situation was the emergence of two alliance formations resembling blocs. Alliances concretely manifested themselves after Erdoğan was popularly elected the President. The system needs to be modified to overcome the ambiguous position of such a powerful and partisan president. The AK Party needed arithmetic support for constitutional change, and the MHP was ready to provide it for the sake of introducing a presidential system. The latter wanted to steer government policies towards a more nationalist and statist leaning. Two parties allied and called themselves People's (*Cumhur*) Alliance. (In Turkish, *cumhur* means people. The words *cumhuriyet* (republic) and *cumhurbaşkanı* (President – the leader of the people) are derived from the word *cumhur*). Some of the opponents of system change came together and decided to close ranks before the 2018 general election. This alliance's founding political parties are the CHP, the İYİ Party, the SP, and the Democrat Party (DP). They chose the name *Millet* (nation) for their alliance rival to *Cumhur*. The deputies in the new system are elected by a proportional representation with a 7% threshold. Thus, to become effective in the legislative mechanism *vis-à-vis* the all-powerful executive under the president's leadership, that kind of cooperation is vitally important for the four opposition parties stated above. Even though coalitions are eliminated as desired in the presidential government system, blocs have replaced them. Compared to the loosely organised, temporary, and unstable structures of coalitions, blocs are more dedicated to collaborating for a relatively long time and focusing on the common shared goals of prioritising conciliation and consensus.

Alliances among political parties are put into practice from time to time. Small parties deemed it necessary to ally with others in the post-1980 era to overcome the injustice of representation resulting from the 10% threshold. In that sense, these alliances were temporary and pragmatic. Setting this aside, the political parties resorted to forming alliances with various social groups, i.e., intellectuals, bureaucrats, the bourgeoisie, and working class to extend their electorate (Kahraman, 2010, p. 334–336).

The short-term motivations of People's and Nation's alliances fit into the above examples. Yet, in such a polarised political atmosphere where

system debate dominated the agenda, the bloc politics emerged as a feature of this new system. Bloc politics mainly indicate “a bloc of left/right wing parties using its parliamentary majority to pass legislation without broad support in parliament” (Green-Pedersen, Thomsen, 2005, p. 154). In Türkiye, leftist/rightist political parties cannot be easily classified unlike in other European countries in terms of the approaches to socioeconomic issues. What we therefore see in contemporary Turkish politics in bloc formation is beyond the left/right divide.⁵ As opposed to the People’s alliance, another formation evolved starting from February 28th 2022. Labelled as the “Table for Six” (*altılı masa*), the CHP, the İYİ Party, the Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA), the SP, the Future Party (GP), and the DP signed a memorandum of agreement on system change favouring a strengthened parliamentary system. Since it came to power in 2002, the AK Party has swept away all the political actors who once dominated centre politics. This is a move towards empowering the centre of politics. It is welcomed as an antidote to the current polarisation in politics.

The religious/secular divide of the late 1990s triggered the rise of the AK Party to its potential to curb the effects of polarising discourse. The people were fed up with the confrontational and conflict-ridden political lexicon and quickly valued the unifying, conciliatory language of the AK Party. Gaining the upper hand over the old style of politics, the AK Party preserved a steady increase in electoral success until 2018. However, from 2007, the AK party gradually abandoned the conciliatory style. Particularly, July 15th, 2016 brought a security dimension more than ever to Erdoğan’s policies. The AK Party were faced with a dilemma: to continue mobilising its electoral base with the help of controversial issues for not losing its entrenched support in the election periods, or to reinstate a conciliatory tone to lower the mounting tension that once became the party’s distinctive character and made it a true success story. Going with the first option has resulted in disengagement and splits from the AK party. The establishment of DEVA and the GP can exemplify this trend. They were among the actors longing for the AK Party’s unifying discourse. As later, being a partner of the Table for Six, the two parties mentioned above realised that only a joint initiative could increase the possibility of playing a remarkable role in changing the system.

Lijphart’s classification of democracies in a majoritarian-consensual continuum can be useful in examining how democracy is conceived in Türkiye and its reflection over recent debates. Analysing system debate by referring to these two contrasting models may even inspire future

⁵ It is also referred to as a democratic-authoritarian cleavage (Schafer, 2022, p. 19).

prospects for Turkish democracy. Lijphart starts his analysis with a definition of democracy as “government by and for the people” (Lijphart, 2012, p. 1). He further suggests that this definition brings about a dilemma; “Who will do the governing and to whose interests should the government be responsive when the people are in disagreement and have divergent preferences?” (Lijphart, 2012, p. 2). One possible answer is the majority of the people who, as Lijphart underlines, are “the essence of the majoritarian model of democracy”. “The crux of the consensus model”, on the other hand, lies in the answer “as many people as possible” (Lijphart, 2012, p. 2). Majority rule is required, but not considered satisfactory in this model. The consensus model aims to ensure broad participation in government and broad agreement on government policies.

Lijphart suggests two critical differences between these two models. One of them is about the locus of power. The majoritarian model demonstrates “the concentration of power in the hands of the majority”. Conversely, the consensus model is interested in the “sharing, limiting or dispersal of power” (Lijphart, 2012, p. 2). The second difference is about the closely-related concepts with the models. The majoritarian model can be identified as exclusive, adversarial, and competitive, whereas inclusiveness, bargaining, and compromising are valued in the consensus model (Lijphart, 2012, p. 2). Lijphart looks at different variables as part of a two-dimensional pattern. One is “the executives-parties dimension”, and the other is “the federal-unity dimension”. Institutional differences matter at this point. Relevant to change in the institutional capacity of countries, Lijphart puts forward that proportional representation in a parliamentary system of government may fuel fears of creating “weak and unstable cabinets and ineffective policy-making” (Lijphart, 2012, p. 298). Actually, what matters more for Lijphart is the fine-tuning of parliamentarism and proportional representation. Another critical point Lijphart draws attention to is the two-way relationship between consensual political culture and consensual institutions. As he argues, a consensual culture may increase the likelihood of adopting consensus institutions. Yet, these institutions may influence culture. For example, suppose a particular culture is adversarial in its nature; in that case, consensus institutions may play a role in turning it into a less adversarial and more consensual culture (Lijphart, 2012, p. 301). Lijphart concludes that the support of the consensual political culture is essential for consensus democracy to flourish (Lijphart, 2012, p. 3).

The relatively unavailing efforts of coalition formation in Turkish politics have been analysed above. To reiterate, although the combination of parliamentary government and proportional representation were in use

until the system changed in 2018, the very high 10% threshold created a problem in ensuring fair representation. Hence, no pattern coming close to the consensus government model has ever been observed in the majoritarian-consensual continuum. The impact of a dominant majoritarian understanding of democracy and a lack of consensual political culture is also significant in the Turkish context.⁶ Recently, as part of system debate, the support for shifting to a strengthened parliamentary system is growing among the people complaining about the Erdoğan government's performance. The Table for Six embodies this tendency in the political arena. The six political parties affirm that they prioritise bringing the concepts of consultation, negotiation, and conciliation back to a now polarised political atmosphere (*Güçlendirilmiş Parlamenter Sistem Mutabakat Metni*, 2022). This has always been an example of a type of discourse that has the potential to appeal a large audience.

On the other hand, there are serious challenges the Table for Six has faced and will face. The biggest threat to its existence would be the presidential elections in the very near future. The issue of agreeing on a joint candidate risks the functionality and sustainability of the Table for Six. Another factor would be the Kurdish issue and the relationship of the Table for Six with one of the other opposition parties in the form of the HDP. The HDP has a significant electoral base. There is, however, no consensus on how to approach this issue among the six parties. Besides these differences, their commitment to system change would be the most important motivation to continue this common platform. The plan for shifting to a strengthened parliamentary system and the way it would be practiced can provide a significantly potent experience for reminding us of the constructive dimension of moderation and conciliation in politics. Putting this into words, the memorandum of understanding signed by the participants of the Table for Six has emphasised that they are suggesting a system of parliamentary government different from the older version. Referring to plural, participatory, and deliberative democracy, grounding this new model on the rule of law and separation of powers, and empowering democratic politics through achieving fair representation and political stability are highlighted as essential pillars of this novelty. The electoral threshold is promised to be decreased to 3% (*Güçlendirilmiş Parlamenter Sistem Mutabakat Metni*, 2022). This new model has the potential to be very meaningful for Turkish democracy if only it does not mean a return to the practice of the same old parliamentary system in deeds as well.

⁶ For an extensive discussion on the absence/weaknesses of consensus-based mechanisms and relations in Turkish politics, see (McLaren, Cop, 2011; Somer, 2014; 2016).

Conclusions

The system of government in Türkiye shifted from a parliamentary model to a presidential model with the 2017 referendum. However, debate on the system has raged on. Indeed, the system's change is perceived as more than a mere change of the governmental system. For both the proponents and the opponents of the change, it has an encompassing content influencing the nature of the democratic regime. The former presented it as a move towards an 'advanced democracy' while the latter as a move towards authoritarian rule. As these views are stark contrasts of each other, the issue of system change has continued to be a source of polarisation in Türkiye.

The 1982 Constitution of the military coup weakened parliamentarism by strengthening the President's executive capacity at the expense of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers. The lack of trust in elected political elites by the military regime was behind the logic of creating a strong and active President who was made politically non-liable at the same time. The office of presidency was designed as the locus of a secular state and the safety valve of the republican regime. The President was set to be elected by the parliamentary majority guaranteeing his above-politics status. The President's already-strengthened role within the system led to crises for different circles in different circumstances. The considerable executive powers of the President from time to time put some obstacles in front of political elites, as seen in Ahmet Necdet Sezer's presidential term. On another occasion, when a political party, if it was particularly perceived as a threat to secular regime, had the majority in the Parliament sufficient to elect its presidential candidate then, it created a crisis again, as seen in the political developments following the declaration of Abdullah Gül's presidential candidacy by the AK Party. Hence it is clear that change is inevitable. It is not a matter of *if*, but *when* and *how*.

Starting from the 1970s, shifting to a presidential model was occasionally proposed by the political elites. The times of political crises set suitable ground for such favourable arguments. Thus, there are many studies on the history of controversies over system change in Türkiye. It is mainly analysed from the perspectives of constitutional law or comparative politics. Studying political leaders and/or political parties proposing a shift to a presidential system in Türkiye is a common theme. Other studies concentrate on the appropriateness of presidentialism for Türkiye and the positive/negative scenarios regarding the system change.

This article focuses mainly on the realisation of the system change under Erdoğan's leadership. It argues that the three-phase strategy of the

AK Party has made its political dreams come true. An issue is first popularised, then narrativised, and finally securitised. The previous system-change proposals managed to complete the first phase. The issue could be popularised in other instances to some extent thanks to crises. However, the other phases did not succeed the phase of popularisation in the past. The process then did not go anywhere. It has become a political achievement of Erdoğan and his party to combine the popularisation of the issue of system change with the other two successive phases. The starting point was the 2007 presidential election. Gül's candidacy, the April 27th e-memorandum, and the 367 decision were critical events in terms of creating emotional and context-bound reactions of the people. This eased the process of popularisation. Formulating a dominant narrative was the second phase which was comparatively difficult. The dual strategy of bringing up bad memories and boosting morale with good expectations about the future helped the AK Party fulfil this task. Erdoğan became the first popularly-elected Turkish president ever in the 2014 presidential election. Thus, it marked the beginning of an irreversible process towards system change and helped narrativise the issue. The July 15th, 2016 failed coup attempt brought about the last phase of securitisation without which the process of system change could not have been realised.

The article's second objective was to analyse the implications of ongoing system-based debate over Turkish democracy by referring to its impact on party politics. The mounting tension between government/opposition relations and polarising political discourse has gradually begun to disturb more people. There is a cyclical pattern in Turkish politics wherein too much polarisation results in the disengagement of electorates from the actors held responsible for that tense atmosphere. The emergence of the AK Party's single-party era was one manifestation of this pattern. The AK Party's unifying and conciliatory tone was appreciated by the people and went on to receive extensive support. Recently, there appeared other political parties defending the same old vocabulary of the AK Party. The Table for Six embodies this growing tendency. The six political parties refer to the concepts of consultation, negotiation, and conciliation. This article has critically examined this novel dimension of party politics in Turkey in terms of alliance and bloc formation that evolved after the shift to a presidential government system. It questions how these new representations of party politics would be functional and sustainable on the way to consensual politics.

The history of coalition formation in Turkish politics demonstrates that the system has never come closer to a consensus model, borrowing from Arend Lijphart's classification of democracies in the

majoritarian-consensual continuum. The majoritarian understanding of democracy has dominated the system and influenced political culture in the Turkish context. That said, the efforts to replace it with a plural, deliberative, and participatory democracy understanding have not been non-existent. The Table for Six has presented a plan for shifting to a strengthened parliamentary system as a demonstration of similar efforts. This intra-opposition alliance that is beyond the customary ways of alliance formation in Turkish politics may provide invaluable experience as regards emphasising the constructive dimension of moderation and conciliation in political language. This is likely to have significant implications for the future of Turkish democracy.

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Security in Turkish Politics: An Analysis of the Political Discourse of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Abstract

The goal of this paper is to investigate two presidential terms in Türkiye in order to compare the place of security in the political discourse of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in particular, and in Turkish politics at this time in general. The mixed methodological approach has been taken in the article. The MAXQDA software program has been used to collect and analyse data from more than 850 of President Erdoğan's speeches. The key research questions are as follows: how important are the security issues in the political rhetoric of the President? Are there any differences in this regard between Erdoğan's first and second presidency? Did the state of emergency and introduction of the presidential system make any difference in this regard? What are the reasons for the place of security, as identified in the analysis, in Turkish political discourse and politics?

Keywords: Political Discourse, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Securitisation, Turkish Politics, Türkiye, Turkey

Introduction

Security issues – not only with reference to “hard security”, but also to other dimensions of the phenomenon – have always been an important part of Turkish politics as the army is a key element of the political system of the state. As Mustafa Aydın put it, Türkiye “is a securitised country where ‘security’, in its wider definition, reigns supreme in societal and political development, and overrides most other considerations” (Aydın, 2003, p. 163).

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It has a lot to do with the process of the securitisation of politics – both domestic and international – which, in general terms, means transforming a political issue into a matter of security within a particular process, one that starts from presenting the issue as a threat that usually requires taking emergency measures, resulting in substantial political and social effects (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998, pp. 23–25). A political issue can be securitised objectively (when a real security threat exists and is directly related to a political issue) but the core of securitisation is its subjective dimension – in the case of a successful presentation of an issue as a substantial security threat, even if the latter is not directly connected with a political issue (Arcudi, 2006).

The securitisation of politics has different agents, defined threats (securitised subjects), objects which must be protected, and an audience to be persuaded that something is a threat. This is also the case of securitisation of Turkish politics. The agents of securitisation in Türkiye are, first of all, incumbents, but are also the opposition; non-governing elites representing, e.g., the army, judiciary or education sectors (Polat, 2009) as well as society (Erdoğan, 2020). The existing literature on the contemporary political history of the country focuses on various Turkish actors and issues that are securitised and associated with security threats – both domestic, e.g., minorities – the Kurds, the Alevis, etc. (Polat, 2008; Geri, 2016; Yılmaz and Barry, 2020), refugees (Erdoğan, 2020), parties (Yılmaz, Shipoli, Demir, 2021), opposition (Yılmaz, Shipoli, 2021), elections (Kurgan, 2018) or identity (Aydındağ, Işıksal, 2021) and those of an international nature, e.g., relations with international partners (Balci, Kardaş, 2011) or conflicts (Aghaie Joobani, Can Adısönmez, 2018). The protected groups and audience to be convinced about the security threat is, on the macroscale, the entirety of the Turkish society/nation/electorate and, on the microscale, merely a part of society.

An important characteristic of securitisation is its dynamics and lack of linearity. In Türkiye's case, it means that the process of securitisation is changing all the time; going into different directions in different periods. We have observed periods of a clear, intense securitisation of politics in contemporary Turkish political history – particularly at the time of coups, emergency rule as well as domestic and international conflicts (as, for example, at the beginning of the 1980s and in the 1990s) but also periods of de-securitisation – when favourable determinants emerged, such as the EU pre-accession process and the related democratisation of the political regime and the Europeanisation of foreign policy. The latter case refers to nearly the entirety of the first decade of the 21st century, including the period of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) ruling, which began at the end of 2002 (Aras, Polat, 2008; Açıkmeşe, 2013).

The goal of this article is to investigate a more current period, i.e., two presidential terms in Türkiye, focusing on the years 2015–2021 (only full years can be covered due to the comparability of data), in order to compare the place of security in Turkish politics during the period of 2015 until mid-2018 and mid-2018 until 2021 as well as to identify the securitisation process and its change (or continuity) at this time. This period of AKP rule, within which the leader of the party, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, held the presidential office, has not been studied sufficiently in terms of security nor the discourse related to it. It must be also underlined that the author of the article does not have any ambition to compare the period of Erdoğan's presidencies with previous periods of the AKP's rule. It would require a much more extensive and complex analysis, particularly if we consider the choice of its type.

The main research method is namely the content analysis of official speeches made by the President. The MAXQDA software has been used to collect and analyse data from more than 850 of President Erdoğan's speeches. According to the main representatives of the Copenhagen School of security studies (to which most scholars working on the securitisation of politics in Türkiye refer) (Bilgin, 2011), an investigation of the securitisation of politics does not require indicators. It is possible to study it directly through the investigation of the political discourse and narrative reflected in the discourse because securitisation takes place through the discourse, being "a speech act" (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998, p. 26). Although the discourse does not create securitisation itself, it plays an important role in its development. It can lead to the securitisation of a particular subject if a presented security threat is argued successfully, i.e., is accepted by the audience and gives legitimacy for incumbents to take extraordinary measures (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998, p. 25). Besides, political discourse usually reflects the most important issues which are subjects of politics.

The key research questions posed in the article are as follows: how important are the security issues in the political rhetoric of the current Turkish President? Are there any differences in this regard between Erdoğan's first and second presidency? Did such factors as the state of emergency in 2016-2018 and the introduction of the presidential system, implemented during the second presidency of Erdoğan, make any difference in this regard? And what are the reasons for the place of security, identified in the analysis, in the political discourse and politics in Türkiye?

These research questions will help to verify the main hypothesis that security has constantly been the most important issue in Turkish politics during both of Erdoğan's Presidencies – as a result of the presence of

a combination of long-term objective (historical and geopolitical) and short-term subjective, tactical (electoral) factors – the latter being at the core of the securitisation of politics.

This article consists of two main parts and a conclusion. The presentation of the main assumptions of the content analysis and its results is followed by a discussion part in which the author explains the results of the analysis, while at the same time giving the reasons for the identified place of security in Turkish political discourse and politics generally.

Content Analysis

The author conducted a two-stage content analysis of the speeches given by President Erdoğan in the years 2015–2021. As mentioned above, it was aimed at identifying the place of security in Turkish political discourse and politics as well as the process of securitisation. The author analysed a total of 857 verbatim texts (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, n.d.). The dataset includes Erdoğan's speeches from the presidential website. The author of the paper has only excluded those foreign speeches whose target was not the domestic audience and the narrative was, in those cases, completely different from the one presented in the national discourse. Even though the selected speeches come from different events – e.g., meetings with AKP officials, local authorities or particular social and economic groups, they are comparable because the President treats them all as good opportunities to present a relevant political narrative.

At the first stage, the author ran a frequency analysis. 27 keywords related to security (both in a general and a Turkish context) were selected together with other 27 keywords related to political and social life (concerning *inter alia* the political and economic system, opposition, parties etc.) as well as political ideologies and religion (e.g., conservative values, nationalism, Islam etc.). It is, obviously, not an exhaustive list of the keywords. The author of the article made his selection based on his assessment of the place of the issues in the political agenda in Türkiye in the analysed period. On the one hand, we have such words and abbreviations as: “atak” (attack), “beka” (survival), “darbe” (coup), “dış güçler/odaklar” (external powers), “düşman” (enemy), “Esed” (Asad), “FETÖ” (Fethullah Terrorist Organization), “güvenlik” (security), “istikrar” (stability), “istila” (invasion), “katil” (killer), “lobi” (lobby), “mücadele” (struggle), “mülteci” (refugee), “operasyon” (operation), “PKK” (Kurdistan Workers' Party), “S-400”, “saldırı” (attack), “savaş” (war), “şiddet” (violence), “Suriye” (Syria), “terör” (terrorism), “terörist” (terrorist), “tezkere” (permission to use military forces),

“yaptırım” (sanction), “yardakçı” (stooge) and “YPG” (People’s Defense Units). On the other hand, the following keywords have been selected: “aile” (family), “baş örtüsü” (headscarf), “CHP” (Republican People’s Party – main opposition party), “cumhur ittifakı” (People’s Alliance), “demokrasi” (democracy), “enflasyon” (inflation), “Eski Türkiye” (Old Türkiye), “faiz” (interest (rate)), “Gezi” (Gezi - Protests), “HDP” (People’s Democratic Party), “inançlı” (believer), “islam”, “İslamofobi” (Islamophobia), “kalkınma” (development), “Kılıçdaroğlu” (leader of CHP), “kriz” (crisis), “millet ittifakı” (Nation’s Alliance), “milli çıkar” (national interest), “milli irade” (national will), “milli menfaat” (national interest), “milliyet” (nation), “muhafazakar” (conservative), “muhalafet” (opposition), “Müslüman” (Muslim), “mütedeyyin” (religious), “tek parti” (one-party), and “Yeni Türkiye” (New Türkiye).

They were compared with MAXQDA software (the MaxDictio tool specifically) in terms of the question of how often they are used by Erdoğan in his speeches. In the tables below there are results of the frequency analysis. The most frequent 20 keywords used in the presidential speeches are presented in the subsequent years of Erdoğan’s two presidencies.

The results clearly show that security played a constant, and irrespective of the circumstances, key if not dominant role in Turkish political discourse and politics during Erdoğan’s two presidencies. Firstly, in the years analysed, the majority of the top 20 keywords refer to security (from 11 to 13 words). A particularly interesting observation is that although we can see a tiny difference between the first and second presidency in this regard (13 security words in the years 2015–2017, 11 or 12 security words in the 2018–2021 period), there is no regularity when it comes to the order among the top ten keywords. Surprisingly, in 2015, when clashes with PKK intensified on Turkish territory, there are three non-security issues after the four top security words in the group of ten most frequently used words. It differs from the 2016–2018 period when we see the domination of security issues for obvious reasons (a failed coup attempt in July 2016 and emergency rule until 2018). However, although emergency rule ended in 2018, during the second presidency, we also notice the years with a wealth of security keywords. First of all, the six most frequently used words in 2020 concern security. Secondly, except for the year 2021, in all the analysed years, the first three keywords are security issues – with “terör” (terrorism) and “mücadele” (struggle) regularly taking the first two places, in most cases with much more frequent use than all other keywords.

Of course, it would be irrational to expect that, in Turkish political discourse after 2019, the President would not refer to the critical economic

Table 1. Frequency Analysis – The 20 Most Frequent Keywords in Speeches Given by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2015–2021

No.	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	725 terör	1219 terör	275 terör	617 terör	999 terör	868 mücadele	702 mücadele
2	531 mücadele	574 mücadele	186 mücadele	359 mücadele	678 mücadele	495 terör	447 terör
3	357 savaş	388 Suriye	89 saldırı	358 Suriye	565 Suriye	390 Suriye	210 kalkınma
4	315 Suriye	352 darbe	86 darbe	200 terörist	321 CHP	308 saldırı	209 demokrasi
5	269 demokrasi	239 terörist	79 demokrasi	178 darbe	306 demokrasi	302 darbe	195 darbe
6	213 Müslüman	216 saldırı	79 Suriye	161 savaş	293 terörist	203 FETÖ	189 aile
7	207 Yeni Türkiye	184 güvenlik	65 FETÖ	155 Müslüman	281 saldırı	199 demokrasi	163 güvenlik
8	175 darbe	182 savaş	61 kriz	146 operasyon	210 aile	192 güvenlik	157 kriz
9	153 aile	171 demokrasi	60 savaş	142 FETÖ	202 darbe	182 CHP	145 saldırı
10	149 güvenlik	165 PKK	59 güvenlik	135 demokrasi	201 güvenlik	163 aile	142 istikrar
11	149 saldırı	158 operasyon	55 terörist	118 CHP	149 Müslüman	158 düşman	135 faiz
12	131 istikrar	134 Müslüman	48 istikrar	117 saldırı	147 savaş	153 kriz	123 enflasyon
13	131 muhalefet	128 FETÖ	45 Müslüman	108 güvenlik	143 PKK	149 Müslüman	119 düşman
14	129 kriz	113 kriz	37 operasyon	92 düşman	130 faiz	136 atak	114 Suriye
15	121 terörist	96 düşman	35 kalkınma	84 muhalefet	130 FETÖ	135 savaş	108 savaş
16	116 düşman	94 mülteci	33 PKK	72 PKK	109 düşman	124 savaş	83 Müslüman
17	106 şiddet	91 aile	30 muhalefet	67 kriz	106 milli irade	106 terörist	77 terörist
18	101 faiz	88 YPG	28 düşman	66 aile	94 enflasyon	104 muhalefet	74 atak
19	98 operasyon	52 muhalefet	19 aile	58 kalkınma	89 kalkınma	97 faiz	70 muhalefet
20	86 kalkınma	51 faiz	15 CHP	49 istikrar	89 YPG	69 istikrar	68 CHP

Grey keywords – related to security

Black keywords – related to other areas

2015 – Erdoğan's 1st presidency

2019 – Erdoğan's 2nd presidency

Source: *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, n.d.

situation – that is why such keywords as “kriz” (crisis), “kalkınma” (development), “faiz” [interest (rate)] or “enflasyon” (inflation) are quite frequently used. However, even in such a difficult economic situation, the security issues still dominate.

Moreover, even issues which are not directly related to security are often securitised in Turkish political discourse, confirming the dominant position of security in the politics of the country. The further stage of the content analysis proves it, helping to identify the securitisation of politics, i.e., the transformation of political topics into a matter of security, putting aside the question of how successful this process finally is in particular cases (it is not particularly relevant for the main research goal of this article).

Within the second stage, the author ran a ‘keyword in context’ analysis. In general terms, it helps to go beyond identifying the frequency of using particular keywords and to check in which context (and how often) they were used. He chose the words concerning the opposition (first of all, “CHP” and “muhalafet”), present in the discourse and among the top 20 keywords as the first case to study. Then he checked the context in which they are used (15 words before and after the terms related to the opposition), taking into consideration the security keywords. The goal was to find out whether important political issues were combined (and if so, how often) with security topics, identifying, at the same time, any attempts at the securitisation of political subjects. The results are below in Tables 2 and 3.

Tables 2 and 3 clearly show that political issues were securitised in Turkish politics in the analysed period. The keywords related to the opposition were often mentioned in a less or more noticeable security context – more during the second than the first presidency. The author found that “CHP” was mostly associated with “terör” (terrorism), “mücadele” (struggle), “darbe” (coup), “FETÖ” and “saldırı” (attack) – first of all during the second presidency. The exception is the year 2021, in which “CHP” appeared much less frequently in Erdoğan’s speeches – probably due to the emergence of two new oppositional parties in the forms of the Future Party and Democracy and Progress Party and only the term “terör” (terrorism) was mentioned relatively frequently together with CHP at that time. However, “CHP” was also mentioned sometimes in connection with other security terms such as “güvenlik” (security) in both Presidencies as well as PKK, and “savaş” (war) in the second presidency.

As for the word “muhalafet” (opposition), Erdoğan would associate it with “terör” (terrorism) in the whole analysed period. It is also combined to some extent with “mücadele” (struggle) and “PKK” as well as “saldırı”

Table 2. Keyword in Context for “CHP”

KEYWORD/ YEAR	2015 (CHPx19)	2016 (x7)	2017 (x15)	2018 (x118)	2019 (x321)	2020 (x182)	2021 (x68)
terör (terörist incl.)	3	0	0	13	14	17	6
mücadele	1	0	0	2	11	25	0
darbe	1	2	1	8	14	18	1
saldırı	0	1	0	2	4	8	0
güvenlik	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
savaş	0	0	0	1	1	4	0
FETÖ	0	0	0	2	11	42	0
PKK	0	0	0	1	4	3	2

Source: *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, n.d.

Table 3. Keyword in Context for “muhalafet”

KEYWORD/ YEAR	2015 (muhalafet x131)	2016 (x52)	2017 (x30)	2018 (x84)	2019 (x67)	2020 (x104)	2021 (x70)
terör (terörist incl.)	5	12	1	12	2	3	4
mücadele	2	2	1	5	7	16	5
darbe	1	1	1	0	1	6	0
saldırı	3	0	0	0	0	1	0
güvenlik	2	1	0	0	2	1	0
savaş	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
FETÖ	0	1	0	1	7	3	1
PKK	1	3	0	1	1	0	2

– most frequent security words as a context (5 or more times)

– security words as a context

Source: *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, n.d.

(attack), “darbe” (coup) and “güvenlik” (security) in the early stages of the time span this analysis covers (the first presidency), whereas the trend slowly moved towards “FETÖ” and yet again, “mücadele” (struggle) and “darbe” (coup), during the second presidency.

A content analysis (the keyword in context option) of Erdoğan’s speeches shows that even the frequently used term “demokrasi” (democracy) is very often used in a security context, proving again its securitisation. Table 4 below indicates that “demokrasi” is, first of all, combined in the speeches with such words as “terör” (terrorism), “mücadele” (struggle), “darbe” (coup), “saldırı” (attack) and “güvenlik” (security), irrespective of the presidency. The term in question is mentioned then both in

Table 4. Keywords in Context for “demokrasi”

KEYWORD/ YEAR	2015 (demokrasi x269)	2016 (x171)	2017 (x79)	2018 (x135)	2019 (x306)	2020 (x199)	2021 (x209)
terör (terörist incl.)	28	30	5	15	37	9	11
mücadele	31	18	9	9	45	38	48
darbe	13	43	3	10	28	26	21
saldırı	0	6	2	5	17	10	9
güvenlik	3	5	1	3	8	6	6
savaş	2	1	0	2	0	2	0
FETÖ	0	2	0	2	13	4	1
PKK	1	1	0	0	5	1	0

11 – most frequent security words as a context (5 or more times)

2 – security words as a context

Source: *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, n.d.

a very general security context but also with reference to the failed coup (sometimes also through the use of the “FETÖ” term).

Discussion

The key question in this regard is why security issues constantly dominated in Turkish political discourse and politics in the analysed period. We can talk both about objective and subjective factors.

Long-term objective factors (being valid irrespective of the period of Turkish contemporary history) are very well presented by Aydın. The Turkish scholar singles out the role of history and related position of the army in the political system of the country as well as geopolitics. All of them contribute to perceiving security in a comprehensive way, and, as a result, it is an intrinsic part of Turkish political discourse and politics, including the analysed period. These factors are related at the same time to a particular Turkish “security culture”, which is based on an “insecurity complex” and a “national security syndrome” (Aydın, 2003, p. 164).

Turkish security is traditionally defined as the “condition of being protected from or being not exposed to danger” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2001). In general terms, it focuses on self-preservation and includes three main components: the survival of the population, the preservation of the territorial integrity, and the identity of the nation (Aydın, 2003, p. 164). A particular perception of threats to which these components are exposed led to a broad, formal definition of security. According

to Art. 2a of the Law 2945 on the National Security Council, “national security means the defence and protection of the state against every kind of external and internal threat to the constitutional order, national existence, unity, and to all its interests and contractual rights in the international arena including in the political, social, cultural, and economic spheres” (Jenkins, 2001, p. 46).

This definition is based on a broad understanding of security threats. It is not surprising, then, that many political issues are securitised in Turkish political discourse and presented as security issues, even though at the first glance they are not directly connected with security.

The broad perception of security threats has its roots in the aforementioned historical and geopolitical factors, creating a ‘culture of insecurity’. As for the history of the Turkish Republic, its establishment was already preceded with a difficult period of the First World War ending with the highly disadvantageous Sevres Treaty and, later, the War of Independence, which are the roots of the so-called ‘Sevres Syndrome’, meaning, in general terms, the feeling of being threatened and encircled by different enemies whose policy is aimed at destroying Türkiye, taking part of its territory, etc. (Gökçek, 2011, pp. 98–184). The Turkish Republic, as a new modern nation state, had to give priority to security in all of its dimensions. It was not only about protecting its sovereignty and integrity against potential external threats, but also to preserve the new national identity that was developing as an important pillar of the Turkish state and as a model of the society. The protection of the new country against external and domestic threats belonged (and still belongs) to the state elites, the first of which being the army, whose position in the political system of Türkiye is still strong (even if weakened slightly since 2008) – both in the formal and informal dimensions (Szymański, 2015, pp. 19–27). That is why the Turkish army traditionally intervened not only in foreign policy but also domestic politics, including the military coups. It had to do so because of the unstable political situation in the country in subsequent decades post WWII and the constant threats to Turkish stability and identity being related, since the 1980s, to the development of the Kurdish issue and the increasingly complex problem of terrorism. All of these elements of Turkish contemporary history have contributed to the development of the culture of insecurity and securitisation not only of the Turkish state, but also society and, as a consequence, politics.

The culture of insecurity as well as securitisation also have their roots in the geopolitical position of Türkiye, obviously related to historical factors. The country is located in an unstable neighbourhood, the said instability connected to a large extent to the Middle East, and is exposed

to different security threats coming from its neighbouring countries, due to those countries' unstable political and economic situations, the presence of numerous conflicts, and the development of the activities of radical groups as well as in bilateral disputes between Türkiye and its neighbours. It is particularly conspicuous in the last decade, covered by this article, in which Türkiye faced different external security threats (often related to similar domestic threats), coming particularly from Syria and Iraq. The unstable political situation and conflict there have created a fertile breeding ground for the development of the nefarious activities of various terrorist organisations (the PKK, YPG) and radical Islamist groups – gathered under the umbrella of the so-called Islamic State as well as for the massive migration to Türkiye (Demir, Yılmaz, 2020). Moreover, various security repercussions have emerged in recent years in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea (particularly related to the war in Ukraine) (Hess, 2022). When we take all these issues into consideration and add FETÖ's activities, including the failed coup attempt as well as a change of global world order resulting in an increasing role of power politics in the Turkish foreign policy (Szymański, 2019), it is not surprising that the culture of insecurity is consolidated in the Turkish state and society, leading to the securitisation of the Turkish political discourse and politics in the analysed period.

Apart from the key objective factors having an impact on the dominating position of security in Turkish political discourse and politics, there are also subjective, short to medium-term factors, having a similar effect. They are usually not directly related to security threats but are rather an effect of presenting some political issues as security matters. This is the mechanism which is at the core of the securitisation process taking place through the discourse and presentation of particular political narratives. However, in Türkiye's case, even the presentation of some issues as security questions refers to the objective premises and presence of real security threats. The subjective factors then have a secondary position vis-à-vis the aforementioned objective reasons.

It is in the case of subjective factors, first of all, to use a particular tactic as a tool in the almost constant political struggle and electoral competition to enhance one's own support and weaken the position of political adversaries. For instance, the Turkish President was talking about the opposition in a security context, first of all securitising CHP and presenting the party as the source of a security threat, even if only in an indirect way. The opposition, particularly CHP, was portrayed by Erdoğan as being in the same camp as the terrorists, primarily PKK (sometimes also the HDP, presented as the political wing of PKK). According to one of

the President's speeches, CHP was acting together with PKK by not accepting the suggested state budget, "carrying them" into the parliament, opening fire on the police, bombing various places, entering a mosque with beer bottles and so on (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2018). The goal of the securitisation of the main opposition party was to discredit it in the eyes of the electorate. There was no coincidence in the intensification of referring to CHP and simultaneously building connections with security issues, particularly concerning terrorism, in the 2018–2019 period. It was election time; the parliamentary and presidential elections were held in June 2018, and the local elections in March 2019.

Another short-term goal of the securitisation of political topics may refer to drawing the attention of the electorate and getting its support for a particular political position or project. This aspect was observable in the speeches in which the Turkish President was talking (quite often) about democracy in a security context. Securitising democracy was aimed at convincing the people that the incumbents are the protectors of democracy against the many threats it faces, and security measures serve the purpose of defending democracy. In the case of this political narrative, general security terminology was used to emphasise the role of the incumbents as the defenders of democracy. Because of this, words such as "mücadele" (struggle) or "güvenlik" (security) were so very frequently used by the Turkish President.

Two examples of Erdoğan's speeches clearly reflect all these aspects. In one of them he said with reference to an idea to change the law on social media as follows: "social media, which, when first appeared, had been regarded as the symbol of freedom, has turned nowadays into one of the main sources of threat for contemporary democracy. At this stage, disinformation has become a global problem of security, let alone a national security issue." (T. C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı. İletişim Başkanlığı, 2021). This is a clear example of how the President attempts to convince the people that security is needed for the proper working of democracy. In another speech, already in 2022, he emphasised the role of the defence industry in protecting democracy, saying that "We have paid a special attention to our defence industry in our act for democracy and development. We have taken action in order to create a powerful defence ecosystem which would equip our Turkish Armed Forces in line with the needs of today." (T. C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2022)

Just as often, Erdoğan made reference to more concrete security issues, firstly to the coup attempt in July 2016, frequently using the words "darbe" (coup) and "terör"/"terörist" (terrorism/terrorist). He combined them with the term "democracy" in order to underline all the efforts

made so as to defend democracy against the plotters, including the heroic acts of citizens who came to the streets to stop the tanks. An increasingly stronger connection between democracy and security terminology was meant to make the people accept the project of *Yeni Türkiye* as promoted by Erdoğan as the Turkish President, particularly after the failed military coup as well as the new government system, which was not accepted by a substantial part of the electorate (Çandar, 2016).

Conclusions

Taking into consideration solely the observation of the domestic and international political events in Türkiye during the two presidencies of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the initial assumption could be that security issues should have dominated more in the period of 2015-mid-2018 (the first presidency) then afterwards (the second presidency). The second half of 2015 was marked by an escalation of the conflict with PKK and a coup attempt which took place in July 2016, resulting in the introduction of emergency rule which remained in force until 2018. At the same time, Türkiye faced many security threats in its neighbourhood during the first presidency.

However, the findings of the content analysis have allowed the author of this article to prove that security was consistently the most important issue in Turkish politics in the analysed period. The Turkish political discourse which reflects political life in Türkiye was dominated by security topics and revealed the securitisation of political issues. The period of the presidency is, then, not so relevant. Moreover, contrary to the most probable assumption, the securitisation of politics was in some cases even more noticeable during the second, slightly more 'stable' presidency.

As the Discussion part of the article shows, the reasons for the dominant position of security in Turkish political discourse and politics in the analysed period are the combination of long-term objective (historical and geopolitical) factors, and short-term subjective (tactical) measures – being in the latter case at the core of the securitisation of politics. In this way, the main hypothesis formulated in this article has been positively verified.

On the one hand, we can observe the continuous presence of a 'culture of insecurity' in Türkiye. It is shaped, firstly, by difficult historical events and processes (making, for example, the military an important part of the political system), which raise doubts about the reliability of and trust in different political actors (external and domestic) and, secondly, by the country's unstable neighbourhood. These factors determine the broad

understanding of security (in both the formal and informal dimensions). It is a consequence of the recognition of many threats for the Turkish state and Turks (including their identity). The presence of the culture of insecurity therefore explains the dominating position of security in the Turkish political discourse and politics of the analysed period.

On the other hand, some subjective factors determine this dominating position of security, leading in the analysed period to a further securitisation of political issues (re-securitisation if we compare it with the earlier period of the AKP's rule in the first decade of the 21st century characterised by de-securitisation). The second part of the content analysis (the investigation of political keywords in the context of security) shows this perfectly. The Turkish President talks about political issues in a security context in order to reach some short term goals, first of all to keep the support of the electorate – either through reference to political adversaries or through attempts to find the acceptance of his position and political narrative in the audience. This can also explain why the securitisation of some political issues is sometimes even more noticeable during the second presidency. It is a time when Erdoğan must further consolidate the presidential system and his electorate – in increasingly difficult times, also in terms of the economic situation.

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*Erhan İçener**

Surviving a Coma? Türkiye-EU Relations in Times of Crises (2005–2022)

Abstract

Türkiye's EU membership negotiation process has been comatose since its early years. Now, in 2022, the seventeenth year of negotiations, the final destination of Türkiye's EU journey is still far from certain. And recent debates on Türkiye-EU relations focus on *whether* Türkiye should be an EU member rather than *why* or *when*. There has been increasing criticism directed at each other and waning interest in Türkiye's EU integration while the EU and Türkiye have faced major crises in the last two decades. This article aims to analyse key factors and issues influencing Türkiye's EU accession process on the road to the current stalemate since the beginning of accession negotiations in 2005: (a) the Europeanisation of the Cyprus issue (the role of EU Member States and conditionality), (b) de-Europeanisation in Türkiye (the role of conditionality), (c) the return of geopolitics (the role of security considerations and contextual changes), and (d) the July 15th failed coup attempt (the role of conditionality and contextual changes). It finally explores the EU's commitment to enlargement and debates on its alternatives (the role of Member States, and EU institutions and narratives).

Keywords: Türkiye, Turkey, European Union, Enlargement, Cyprus

Introduction

Türkiye's EU membership negotiation process has been comatose since its early years. Türkiye-EU relations and European integration *per se* have faced several crises since Türkiye began accession negotiations in

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2005. Those of note are the Cyprus-issue-related crises in the enlargement process and the Eastern Mediterranean, the Eurozone crisis, Brexit, the Syrian refugee crisis, the July 15th failed coup attempt in Türkiye, “backsliding” regarding Türkiye’s alignment with Copenhagen political criteria, Covid-19, and the rise of far-right/populism in European politics. Indeed, these were existential crises. All have impacted Türkiye–EU relations and the EU’s enlargement policy to a certain extent. As of June 2022, 16 of the 35 negotiating chapters have been opened and only one chapter has, provisionally, been closed. In 2018, the Council of the European Union (2018, point 35) noted that Türkiye has been “moving away” from the EU; hence, accession negotiations “effectively come to a standstill” and “no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing”. The EU has since reiterated this position. As a response, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2018) accused the EU of not being “fair and honest” with Türkiye and stated that the EU’s allegations are “hypocritical and inconsistent”. Thus, the dominant mood between the parties is one of mutual distrust, and Türkiye’s prospects of joining the EU are gloomy. The final destination of Türkiye’s EU journey, seventeen years after its beginning, is still far from certain.

Türkiye is a unique case with its history and experience in the EU enlargement process. The EU mostly singled out Türkiye as a +1 country among the 12 other candidates in the eastern enlargement narrative. Although a merit-based approach is the norm in the ongoing enlargement process and discourse, the EU again singles out Türkiye as a +1 country among the 6 other Western Balkan countries. Countries that were part of the eastern enlargement round joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. Croatia, which had begun accession negotiations on the same night as Türkiye, joined the EU in 2013. And it will not be surprising to see the other Western Balkan countries joining the EU before Türkiye. The recent debates on Türkiye–EU relations focus on *whether* Türkiye should be an EU member rather than *why* and *when*. There has been increasing criticism directed at each other and waning interest in Türkiye’s integration with the EU. Both Türkiye and the EU bear responsibility for reaching the current impasse. However, Türkiye officially remains part of the EU accession process, and neither side has pulled the plug.

This paper focuses on Türkiye–EU relations beginning with accession negotiations in October 2005. It bases its analysis on the variables influencing applicants’ progress on the way to membership (İçener, 2009; İçener, Phinnemore and Papadimitriou, 2010; Phinnemore and İçener, 2016). And it looks at the key factors shaping Türkiye’s EU negotiation process on the road to the current stalemate, namely: (a) the Europeanisation

of the Cyprus issue [the role of EU Member States and conditionality], (b) de-Europeanisation in Türkiye (the role of conditionality), (c) the return of geopolitics (the role of security considerations and contextual changes), and (d) the July 15th failed coup attempt (the role of conditionality and contextual changes). It finally explores the EU's commitment to enlargement and debates on its alternatives (the role of Member States, and EU institutions and narratives).

The years 2004 and 2005 witnessed very lively debates on Türkiye's eligibility for EU membership, alternatives to Türkiye's EU membership and the potential wording/content of the negotiation framework for Türkiye. These debates and the experienced difficulty in reaching a consensus on the negotiation framework for Türkiye on the night of October 3, 2005, signalled that EU accession negotiations for Türkiye would not be problem-free. Considering what Türkiye needs to do to transform itself into an EU Member State and the opposition to Türkiye's EU membership and enlargement in certain EU Member States, one expects Türkiye's accession negotiations to be protracted and politically problematic both in Türkiye and the EU. That said, there was also a limited hope for progress based on what Türkiye had achieved between 1999 and 2004 in order to meet the Copenhagen political criteria (Müftüler-Baç, 2005). These hopes were raised by assuming that conditionality is crucial for progress in accession negotiations and that Türkiye is committed to joining the EU. But the increasing "nationalization" of enlargement policy (Hillion, 2010), with Member States' established veto power and growing interest in using the enlargement process to solve their bilateral problems with negotiating countries, further politicised accession negotiations. Accordingly, the use of the carrot of membership to solve international conflicts between an EU Member State and a negotiating country preceded the EU's classical and natural requirement to harmonise with the EU *acquis* to progress towards membership. In the case of Türkiye's negotiation process, it was the consequences of the EU's acceptance of the Greek-Cypriot-led Republic of Cyprus as an EU member without a solution as regards the island that put Türkiye-EU relations into a coma (İçener, 2018).

The Europeanisation of the Cyprus Issue

Since the Cypriot accession to the EU in 2004, Türkiye has been in a position that does not recognise one of the members of the Union that it is trying to join. And that EU member has a right to veto Türkiye's progress in the negotiations and membership. The EU's attempt to play

a catalyst role in solving the Cyprus problem by offering EU membership to Cyprus did not work. On the contrary, Cyprus's EU membership without a solution further complicated the dynamics of Türkiye's EU accession process and the Cyprus talks. Since their application for EU membership in 1990, the Greek Cypriot side aimed to Europeanise the Cyprus problem. And the EU Member State of Greece supported this policy. Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriot side underlined that the Cyprus issue is a problem that needs to be negotiated and solved under the aegis of the UN. However, the Helsinki European Council's declaration stating that settlement on the Cyprus issue would not be a precondition for the accession of the Republic of Cyprus (Council of the European Union, 1999, point 9(b)) made it a *de facto* condition for Türkiye's EU membership process. This conditionality was formally experienced in practice since the Greek-Cypriot-led Republic of Cyprus joined the EU on May 1st, 2004 despite the Greek Cypriot rejection of the EU-backed UN-brokered Annan plan. With their accession to the EU, Greek Cypriots gained leverage to use against Türkiye and officially made the EU a party to the conflict.

The impact of the Cyprus issue was felt just after the beginning of negotiations with the EU's response to Türkiye's non-compliance with the obligation to implement the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement to open its ports and airports to Cyprus. The European Council, in December 2006, decided that no decisions would take place on opening eight chapters, and no chapters would be closed in negotiations until Türkiye fulfils its commitments related to the Additional Protocol (Council of the European Union, 2006, pp. 7–8). The European Council considered the areas covered by these eight chapters related to Türkiye's non-compliance with the Additional Protocol.¹ And linking the closure of negotiations with compliance with Türkiye's commitments related to the Additional Protocol in practice means that Türkiye cannot join the EU until the settlement of the Cyprus issue. In December 2009, the Cypriot government decided to block six more chapters.² This group of chapters is of particular importance as negotiations in these chapters are crucial for the Europeanisation of Türkiye (Chapter 23 on judiciary and fundamental

¹ These chapters are: Chapter 1: the free movement of goods, Chapter 3: the right of establishment and freedom to provide service, Chapter 9: financial services, Chapter 11: agriculture and rural development, Chapter 13: fisheries, Chapter 14: transport policy, Chapter 29: customs union, and Chapter 30: external relations.

² These chapters are: Chapter 2: the freedom of movement for workers, Chapter 15: energy, Chapter 23: judiciary and fundamental rights, Chapter 24: justice, freedom, and security, Chapter 26: education and culture, and Chapter 31: foreign, security and defence Policy.

rights and Chapter 24 on justice, freedom, and security) and cooperation to deal with common challenges for the EU and Türkiye (Chapter 15 on energy, and Chapter 31 on foreign, security and defence policy). The research on CEEC enlargement shows that when there is no credible accession perspective and conditionality, the candidate countries are less likely to keep reform momentum for Europeanisation (Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier, 2008; Börzel et al., 2015). Therefore, blocking so many key chapters in accession negotiations cancels out the role of conditionality in Türkiye's accession negotiations.

Another Cyprus-related issue impacting Türkiye's accession negotiations has been the discovery of hydrocarbons offshore of the island of Cyprus. The discovery caused tensions over maritime boundaries and exclusive economic zones in the Eastern Mediterranean. It also added a new dimension to disputes between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot sides; Greece and Türkiye in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea. Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Qatar, Lebanon, Libya, and international oil/energy companies are also part of the issue. The EU membership process was a missed opportunity for a peaceful settling of the conflict in Cyprus. But sharing hydrocarbons could act as a catalyst to solve the Cyprus issue and create a common peaceful future in the Eastern Mediterranean (Gürel, Mullen, 2014; Olgun, 2019). However, the unilateralism of the Greek Cypriot side to prove their sovereignty over the island and maritime zones, and the consequent challenge of the Turkish Cypriot side to such unilateral actions with the support of Türkiye dashed such hopes. The EU has been criticising Türkiye regarding its drilling activities and political moves concerning the conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean. As Türkiye did not shy away from its drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, the EU agreed to suspend the meetings of the Association Council and high-level dialogue with Türkiye in July 2019 (Council of the European Union, 2019, point 4). The EU stood "in full solidarity" with the Greek-Cypriot-led Republic of Cyprus and Greece and condemned Türkiye for its "illegal activities" and "violation of international law" (Council of the European Union, 2020). Solidarity is an EU value. But as noted, the EU became part of the international conflict by accepting a divided Cyprus as an EU member. This policy increased the asymmetrical relationship between the Greek and Turkish-Cypriot sides (İçener, 2018) and between the EU and Türkiye.

All sides, naturally, are trying to defend their national interests. The Greek Cypriots and Greece, as EU members, use Türkiye's accession process to strengthen their positions and maximise their interests in their bilateral problems with Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriots. Their veto power offers them this opportunity. Türkiye evaluates the EU's

approach as “biased” and “illegal” and expects the EU to act as “an honest broker” (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). As long as the Cyprus issue and the Greek-Turkish bilateral problems continue, the EU’s and Türkiye’s expectations of each other seem unrealistic. The cost of all this is the diminishing prospect of Türkiye’s EU membership. And the lack of a credible and realistic membership perspective results in alienation and frustration among Turkish political actors and public opinion. What Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriot side have been experiencing regarding the Cyprus issue despite their active support to the EU-backed Annan Plan is a bitter disappointment and strengthens the arguments of Eurosceptic actors in Türkiye. Repeating the same positions over the years caused a feeling of “exhaustion” as former Turkish Cypriot Minister of Foreign Affairs and the negotiator for the Cyprus problem Kudret Özersay (2012) argued concerning the Cyprus talks. Indeed, the Europeanisation of the disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean contributed to this feeling of exhaustion in the long-lasting Cyprus talks and Türkiye’s journey to EU membership. Subsequently, Türkiye has hardened its position on the Cyprus issue, and EU membership requirements are no longer a priority for Turkish domestic policy and foreign policy choices.

De-Europeanisation in Türkiye

The negotiation framework for Türkiye states that the negotiations will be guided by Türkiye’s progress particularly in the Copenhagen criteria, its commitment to good neighbourly relations and determination to solve any border disputes, support for the solution of the Cyprus problem and normalisation of bilateral relations with all EU Member States (Council of the European Union, 2005, point 6). As shown above, the disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean with the Greek Cypriots and Greece blocked negotiations. Hence, the role of the Copenhagen criteria and conditionality in guiding the progress of Türkiye’s negotiation process became rather obsolete. Türkiye’s accession process lost its carrot and stick mechanism. During domestic and international crises, the AK Party was left to its own devices to speed up or slow down the reform process or Türkiye’s Europeanisation. Öniş (2015) classifies the AK Party rule into three sub-periods: (a) 2002–2007: the party’s golden age (b) 2007–2011: a period of stagnation and (c) 2011 – present: a period of decline. And he observes “a real change of mindset” – a shift towards “conservative globalism via the Asian route” with “an overriding emphasis on rapid economic development in the context of a rather minimalistic understanding of democratic rights and institutions” (Öniş, 2015, p. 24). In recent years,

Turkey's "quest for strategic autonomy" in foreign policy has followed this mindset change by loosening ties with its western partners and getting closer to authoritarian, non-western powers (Kutlay, Öniş, 2021).

There has been a visible loss of momentum and backsliding in the AK Party's record in meeting the democratic standards of the EU since the beginning of accession negotiations. Indeed, domestic troubles such as the closure case about the party in the Constitutional Court, the military's e-coup attempt against the party, the Gezi Park protests, and the internal political fight with the Gülen movement – later officially named the Fethullahist Terror Organization, FETO, by the Turkish authorities – made the AK Party and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan enter into a struggle for survival. Thus, the AK Party showed statist tendencies to consolidate its power as opposed to its earlier zeal for the democratisation of Türkiye. The observers of Turkish politics termed the backsliding in the democratic nature of Türkiye as an "authoritarian turn" (Çınar, 2018), an "illiberal turn" (Bechev, 2014), and a "drift toward competitive authoritarianism" (Özbudun, 2015). Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber (2016, p. 5) argue that Türkiye has been experiencing a process of "de-Europeanisation" since 2005, "a loss or weakening of the EU/Europe as a normative/political context and as a reference point in domestic settings and national public debates". Significant points of criticism are Erdoğan's reactions to the Gezi Park protests, his majoritarian understanding of democracy, issues regarding freedom of the press, an imposition of a ban on social media sites like Twitter and YouTube, issues concerning separation of powers, problems in the rule of law, and a failure to deliver the promise of a new civilian and democratic constitution. Indeed, the AK Party and Erdoğan's struggle for survival became an actual question of survival due to a coup attempt on July 15th, 2016. The AK Party further developed nationalist and statist discourse and policies in the post-July 15th period in partnership with the Nationalist Action Party (MHP). The governing alliance of the AK Party and the MHP portrayed the constitutional move to a Turkish-style presidential system under the strong leadership of Erdoğan as a necessity to deal with internal and external threats to the Turkish state and democracy. These developments were initially evaluated as a form of stagnation and, later, a retreat in the Europeanisation of Türkiye.

In its 2021 Türkiye report, the European Commission (2021) identified "deficiencies" in the functioning of democratic institutions and the presidential system in Türkiye. Key issues that the European Commission criticised were: the centralisation of power, the lack of effective separation of powers, the weakening of local democracy, backsliding

in the judicial system since 2016 with an emphasis on the lack of the judiciary's independence, the deterioration of human and fundamental rights, the judiciary's loyalty to international and European standards, the accountability and transparency of public institutions, and Türkiye's low alignment with the EU's common foreign, security and defence policies or its priorities. Türkiye rejected the European Commission's assessment on the political criteria, the judiciary, and fundamental rights arguing that they are "unjust", "unfounded", and "disproportionate", "disregarding the challenges faced by Turkey and the threats posed by terrorist organisations" and "not taking into consideration the specific conditions of Turkey" (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). During its early years in power, the AK Party, with its commitment to meet the Copenhagen political criteria, was a potent challenger to the national security understanding that acted as a stumbling block to democratisation and reforms in Türkiye. However, following the Gezi Park protests, the July 15th coup attempt, and international security risks associated with terrorist activities and conflicts in the Middle East, this time, the AK Party deployed arguments securitising the EU's expectations about membership requirements. The AK Party's perception of a lack of EU support and understanding towards Türkiye when facing domestic and international crises threatening its survival is one factor that alienates Türkiye from its European journey. Clearly, Türkiye not only lost its motivation for Europeanisation without a credible enlargement process, but also returned to the national security syndrome of the 1990s "framing the need for Turkey to be a 'strong unitary nation state' as a *fait accompli* of Turkey's geography" (Bilgin, 2007, p. 753), and seeing the reforms needed to meet EU membership criteria clashing with Türkiye's national interests and security.

The lessons learnt from eastern enlargement, especially the rule of law crises in Hungary and Poland, led the EU to strongly emphasise issues concerning the judiciary and fundamental rights (Soyaltin-Colella, 2022). That is why the EU's revised enlargement strategy prioritises these issues for the Western Balkan countries and Türkiye. If the negotiations were opened in Chapter 23 on the judiciary and fundamental rights and Chapter 24 on justice, freedom, and security, the EU would have effective mechanisms to encourage and accelerate reforms in these areas. However, this is not possible due to the veto of the Republic of Cyprus. This position leads Türkiye, rightly or wrongly, to question the sincerity of the EU in its constant criticisms of the judiciary, the rule of law, democracy, and fundamental rights. And Eurosceptic actors in Türkiye use the EU's handling of Türkiye to promote anti-Western/European public opinion when it faces domestic

and international crises with increasing securitisation of all contested issues between Türkiye and the EU.

The Return of Geopolitics

Türkiye's accession negotiations have been problematic due to the Cyprus issue and Türkiye's problems concerning EU membership conditionality. Despite the European Parliament's recommendation to suspend accession negotiations with Türkiye, the accession process and the prospect of Türkiye's EU membership are still alive (European Parliament, 2019). Türkiye–EU relations are in a state of suspended animation, but the EU truly keeps Türkiye on continued life support in times of crisis. Here, security considerations and geopolitics play a key role in keeping channels of dialogue and influence open. This rationale behind the EU's approach toward Türkiye can be traced back to the Commission's Opinion on Türkiye's application for membership in 1989. In its Opinion, the Commission emphasised the EU's interests in "pursuing its cooperation" and "intensifying its relations" with Türkiye by referring to its "strategically important geopolitical position" (European Commission, 1989, point 12). The EU sees a strategic interest in keeping Türkiye associated with itself and not losing it even if Türkiye moves away from the EU or when there is no political will to progress on either side. One example was the EU's Positive Agenda initiative launched in May 2012. The Commission stated that "building on joint achievements and joint strategic interests", the Positive Agenda aimed to "bring fresh dynamics and new momentum", "find the way back to re-energised European–Turkish dynamism" and to put the accession process "back on track after a period of stagnation" (European Commission, 2012). Clearly, the Commission tried to find an innovative way to continue the alignment process on eight unopened or blocked chapters.³ Another important example of security considerations to give impetus to Türkiye's accession process is the refugee crisis. The European Council, in October 2015, recognised the need to "re-energise" Türkiye's accession process to ensure its cooperation for tackling the refugee crisis (Council of the European Union, 2015a, point 2a). The first EU–Türkiye Summit was held in November 2015. In a letter to the then Turkish Prime Minister

³ These eight chapters are: Chapter 3: the right of establishment and freedom to provide services, Chapter 6: company law, Chapter 10: information society and media, Chapter 18: statistics, Chapter 23: judiciary and fundamental rights, Chapter 24: justice, freedom, and security, Chapter 28: consumer and health protection, and Chapter 32: financial control.

Ahmet Davutoğlu, Commission President Jean Claude Juncker (2015) stated that this summit would be “putting new and fresh energy into the accession process”.

In the tenth year of negotiations, the rise of international terrorism and the refugee crisis, originating from areas bordering Türkiye, led the EU to engage with Türkiye to get its support to deal with threats to the EU. Moreover, these security considerations gave the accession process and Türkiye–EU relations the kiss of life. The EU agreed to hold regular high-level summits with Türkiye to discuss cooperation issues such as foreign and security policy, counter-terrorism, trade, economy, and energy. It pledged to open Chapter 17 on economic and monetary policy. The European Commission committed itself to work for preparations to open negotiations on five chapters: Chapter 15 on energy, Chapter 23 on the judiciary and fundamental rights, Chapter 24 on justice, freedom, and security, Chapter 26 on education and culture, and Chapter 31 on foreign, security and defence policy. A statement following the EU–Türkiye summit in November 2015 noted this preparatory work and indicated the EU’s readiness to open further chapters in the first quarter of 2016 (Council of the European Union 2015b, point 4). The EU declared its intention to lift visa requirements for Turkish citizens by October 2016 when Türkiye met the criteria for visa liberalisation. Chapter 17 on economic and monetary policy and Chapter 33 on financial and budgetary provisions were opened in December 2015 and June 2016, respectively. Despite the problems in Türkiye–EU relations, security considerations and the need to cooperate with Türkiye to deal with challenges stemming from the Middle East led the EU to agree on a refugee deal and activated the accession process. However, this honeymoon period did not last long.

The July 15th Failed Coup Attempt

On July 15th, 2016, Türkiye experienced a failed coup attempt. Türkiye is no stranger to military coups, but considering the evolution of democracy in Türkiye and following the substantial reforms on civil-military relations required to meet the Copenhagen political criteria, there was a general feeling that the period of coups was over. The events of July 15th proved that that feeling had been rather naïve. That said, the same experience and emotions led the Turkish people to be out on the streets to defend the elected government (Çağlıyan İçener, 2016). Certainly, July 15th, 2016 was a turning point in the recent history of Türkiye–EU relations (İçener, 2016). One profound impact is the rise of anti-Westernism and Euroscepticism in Türkiye following the failed coup attempt. This rise

is mainly related to the EU's weak gesture of solidarity with the elected Turkish government. Political declarations of support to the elected government were not followed by high-level visits from EU institutions and Member States to Türkiye. And more importantly, certain EU countries provided a haven for the coup plotters and the people investigated by the Turkish judiciary for their role in the coup attempt.

To fight against the coup plotters, Türkiye, as expected, adopted emergency measures. And in a short period, the EU's focus turned to the Turkish government's post-coup policies. The Turkish people prevented the coup and protected the democratic regime on the night of July 15th, 2016. But in the eyes of the EU, Türkiye was still a candidate country that needed to act in line with membership criteria. The quality of the regime was as critical as its nature. Therefore, all statements of coup condemnation coming from the EU institutions and key figures were followed by the calls to return to the rule of law, respect democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, the right to a fair trial, and the separation of powers (Council of the European Union, 2016; European Parliament, 2016; EU Monitor, 2016). As noted above, for the Turkish government, the issue at stake was its survival and Türkiye's independence. Subsequently, the Turkish government dismissed the EU's criticisms over backsliding and deficiencies in Turkish democracy for not considering the realities of Türkiye. The lack of membership perspective resulted in the loss of the EU as a normative reference point for Türkiye. Türkiye's independent foreign policy clashing with the EU's foreign policy priorities exacerbated this situation. Türkiye's further de-Europeanisation eliminated the hopes for re-energising accession negotiations and opening more chapters. The relations between Türkiye and the EU evolved from the context of integration via membership to cooperation via partnership.

Commitment to Enlargement and Debates on Its Alternatives

Since the eastern enlargement, enlargement policy is not a priority on the EU's agenda. The EU's enlargement fatigue and reservations about its integration capacity are constantly highlighted. There is also the crisis haunting the policy of enlargement and European integration itself; the rise of populism and the far-right. The impact of eastern enlargement on the EU and potential Turkish membership played a crucial role in discussions to shape the referendums on the Constitutional Treaty, the Lisbon Treaty, and Brexit. The Eurozone crisis, the Syrian refugee crisis, and finally, the impact of the COVID-19 empowered nationalist and Eurosceptic arguments.

Anti-immigrant and Islamophobic feelings influenced public opinion. All of these informed the preferences of EU Member States. Hence, we see a more reserved approach to EU enlargement from the Member States.

Considering the rise of China and Russia, there is more emphasis and interest in geopolitical considerations in the EU's foreign and security policy and its enlargement policy at the institutional level in recent years. Both President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi underlined the geopolitical and geostrategic importance of Western Balkans during the discussions on opening accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia (European Commission, 2020a). Petrovic and Tzifakis (2021) argued that this institutional geopolitical thinking did not deliver actual results as the EU Member States do not share the same enthusiasm for enlargement and use the accession process for their national interests. The preferences of France, Greece, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Bulgaria on the Western Balkan countries can be given as examples. Evidently, there is no consensus among the EU Member States on the EU's commitment to the accession of Western Balkan countries, let alone Türkiye. In the case of Türkiye's accession process, in addition to the positions of Cyprus and Greece, France's position should be noted. France declared, in 2007, that they vetoed the opening of accession negotiations in five chapters with Türkiye.⁴ It later lifted its veto in two of these five chapters.⁵ France also opposed opening accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in June 2018 and October 2019 (Peel and Hopkins, 2019). It highlighted the importance of the EU's integration capacity and also triggered the debate on a reformed, more demanding, and rigorous approach to EU enlargement.

In the revised methodology of enlargement announced in 2020, the European Commission (2020b; 2020c) only targets the Western Balkans and underlines the central role of the rule of law and fundamentals of functioning of democratic institutions. The documents aiming to enhance the accession process and methodology of enlargement do not even mention Türkiye. And the EU has no political will to open Chapters 23 and 24 that can induce Türkiye to accelerate reforms in the rule of law and fundamental rights. In the current context, when accession

⁴ The five chapters are: Chapter 11: agriculture and rural development; Chapter 17: economic and monetary policy; Chapter 22: regional policy and coordination of structural instruments; Chapter 33: financial and budgetary provisions, and Chapter 34: institutions.

⁵ These two chapters are: Chapter 17: economic and monetary policy (opened in December 2015), and Chapter 33: financial and budgetary provisions (opened in June 2016).

negotiations are not active, EU leaders deal with the issues of the rule of law and fundamental rights as part of the *dialogue* between the EU and Türkiye (European Commission, 2021, 119).⁶ Furthermore, since 2016, the European Commission's progress reports on Türkiye start with the same sentence describing the current context of the relationship: "Turkey remains a key *partner* for the European Union" (European Commission, 2016; 2018; 2019; 2020d; 2021).⁷ The EU–Türkiye Statement of November 2015 highlighted the need for strategic cooperation through high-level dialogue on areas of common interest to "explore the vast potential of Turkey–EU relations, which has not been realised fully yet" (Council of the European Union, 2015b, point 3). Indeed, the developments following the July 15th coup attempt interrupted the potential impact of geopolitical and security considerations to re-energise Türkiye's accession process. Instead, the result was a functional relationship and cooperation based on strategic partnership and bypassing conditionality requirements for membership (Saatçioğlu, 2020).

Recent years have witnessed an increase in academic studies focusing on the future of Türkiye's integration with the EU and alternatives to membership. There is also developing literature discussing internal and external differentiated integration and the privileged partnerships with third countries in the context of debates on the future of European integration and enlargement (İçener, 2007; Schimmelfennig et al., 2015; Müftüler-Baç, 2017; Gstöhl, Phinnemore, 2019; Saatçioğlu, 2020; Tekin, 2021).

Those who support calling a halt to enlargement followed the discussions on Brexit and the consequences of the deal between the United Kingdom and the EU very closely. Despite the opposition of certain EU Member States and the criticisms of the European Commission and the European Parliament concerning Türkiye's de-Europeanisation, EU–Türkiye relations are still – at least officially – on the accession track. That is why it is better to classify the relationship status as being 'in a coma' rather than 'dead'. Similarly, Türkiye is still committed to its membership target, although the EU's handling of its accession process provoked strident criticism from the Turkish government.

As noted above, the EU recognises the strategic importance of Türkiye and is unlikely to risk losing Türkiye. Then, the crucial issue for the future of Türkiye–EU relations will be the nature of the relationship. The most likely scenario for progress in Türkiye–EU relations seems to be the modernisation of the Customs Union agreement between Türkiye and

⁶ Author's own emphasis.

⁷ Author's own emphasis.

the EU should the political problems blocking such a move are solved. Both sides accept the need to upgrade the Customs Union agreement, and this should be considered not an alternative to EU membership, but rather a stepping stone. More importantly, it is viewed as “an insurance policy against the very threat of Turkey becoming totally unanchored from Europe” (Ülgen, 2017, p. 18). In the current, pessimistic state of relations, research on alternatives to Türkiye’s EU membership have grown. Differentiated integration as a concept is evaluated as “a way out of the dead-end accession track” (Tekin, 2021, p. 174). Clearly, this kind of relationship will perpetuate or deepen the existing functional relationship based on common areas of interest. As highlighted by Saatçioğlu (2020, pp. 180–182), the politicisation of differentiated integration models in Türkiye is the biggest challenge to putting them into practice as a permanent form of relationship. If Türkiye were to be integrated with the EU on selected policy areas as a form of alternative to membership, the relationship would inevitably be asymmetrical. As voting rights on integration issues are privileges of EU membership, the EU cannot treat Türkiye as a partner equal to all other EU Member States. Considering Turkish criticism over the EU’s “double standards” in the existing relationship and the salience of sovereignty in Turkish political culture, it is almost impossible to convince Turkish political actors and public opinion of the benefits of any form of integration with the EU other than the one having voting and veto rights (İçener, 2007, pp. 427–430). How innovative the EU can be in designing the future of integration and its relations with third countries remains to be seen.

Conclusions

This article has examined why Türkiye’s EU accession negotiations have reached the current impasse. Questions over the EU’s commitment and fairness haunt the negotiations after a long period of relations. And mutual distrust and the lack of hope for changing the status quo poison the efforts to improve the relations. More depressingly for the supporters of Türkiye’s EU membership and future enlargement, efforts to design alternatives to EU membership have increased. Some of them aim to complement the negotiation process as there is no political will to go ahead now. Some of them are plans for the future of EU enlargement and integration as the perennial dilemma between deepening and widening the EU continues. Indeed, enlargement has been the EU’s most successful foreign policy tool. And removing the membership perspective or making it an elusive target runs the risk of the irrelevance of the EU

as a transformative or normative power in applicant countries. Or, in Türkiye's case, losing it is a serious possibility. The signs of such an impact are already visible. Domestic factors and political actors play a significant role in Türkiye's recent de-Europeanisation. But the EU's blurring of membership perspective is also responsible for removing the EU anchor/carrot that motivates the political actors to reverse de-Europeanisation or offer alternative policy options to return to the EU reform agenda.

The paper showed that the Europeanisation of the Cyprus problem is the main stumbling block to progress in Türkiye's EU negotiation process. No country can join the EU without meeting the inherent accession criteria. Hence, the issues concerning meeting the Copenhagen political criteria are a genuine concern. And the Turkish government has a responsibility here. Enlargement experience shows us that there are ups and downs in the track record of Europeanisation of the candidate countries. Türkiye may return to a reform agenda to Europeanise Türkiye. Geopolitical considerations and contextual changes allow a flexible application of conditionality and motivate applicant countries to speed up their efforts. But by accepting the Greek Cypriots as EU members, the EU allowed them to use the enlargement/negotiation process to improve their national interests and use their EU membership to strengthen their positions/policies asymmetrically on the solution of the Cyprus issue. This situation leads Türkiye to choose between EU membership and protecting the rights of Turkish Cypriots, which is a national cause. Turkish feelings of unfair treatment towards the Turkish Cypriots following the Annan plan also prevent Türkiye from being more flexible and trusting the EU on the Cyprus issue. All decreases the likelihood of Türkiye attaining their membership target.

At the time of writing this paper, war in Ukraine has broken out. Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia have applied for EU membership. These applications and the Russian threat to European security and its neighbourhood made the enlargement policy regain the popularity it had in the years of eastern enlargement. Not surprisingly, there is no great enthusiasm among the EU Member States. Alternatives to EU enlargement are discussed as much as the possibility of offering a membership perspective to Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia and granting them candidacy status. Security considerations and arguments for a geopolitical Europe are influential. Reluctance for enlargement amid many crises challenging European integration's existence and future is also not surprising. That said, there is also the question of whether the EU will respond to the calls to prove this is "the hour of Europe". The inclusion of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia has a great potential to refresh the strategic thinking about

enlargement policy. This will force the EU to rethink how to integrate the countries of wider Europe into the EU. The EU is bound to do this effectively without compromising EU norms and values. One can expect that the inclusion of new countries in the enlargement process and the rise of the Russian threat will increase the pressure on the EU to upgrade and secure Türkiye's status and encourage all parties to solve the Cyprus issue. If the EU does not deliver the expected, Türkiye will likely stick to its traditional balance of power policy and cement an uneasy alliance with Russia. Such political choices will inevitably affect the quality of Turkish democracy as the basis for the comparison shifts from Europe to Asia. Türkiye–EU relations would come out of their coma if all sides had the will and intention to achieve peace in the EU and its neighbourhood. This needs an act of political courage and is not an easy task.

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NATO-Türkiye Relations: From Irreplaceable Partner to Questionable Ally

Abstract

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February 2022, Türkiye's role in NATO has once again become a topic of intellectual discussion, with many observers arguing that a revival of Russian power would lead to Türkiye's return to the alliance as a good-standing member, while others questioned the likelihood of such a scenario due to the country's political transformation. This is not the first time Türkiye's role within the alliance has become a subject of debate. Türkiye is often described as a valuable and dedicated partner of NATO. Yet, since the beginning of its membership, the country's role in the alliance has been questioned more than that of any other member state. This article seeks to analyse NATO's relations with Türkiye and the country's role within the alliance from a historical perspective. It aims to understand the debates on Türkiye's role within NATO by focusing on the moments of transformation in relations. The main assumption of this article is that, from the beginning of Türkiye's membership process, Turkish-American relations have been the main determinant of Türkiye-NATO relations. Türkiye's role, defence, and identity have always been questioned by European members. But these debates on Türkiye had, until as recently as the 2010s, been directed and/or suppressed by the US in accordance with its own interests. The US had been the main supporter of Türkiye in the alliance against the opposition and criticism of Europeans in exchange for Türkiye's commitment to US policies. While differences on interests and values between the US and Türkiye became more visible after 2010, Türkiye failed to secure the support of the alliance's European members to fill the gap left by the waning US support. Indeed, the differences between them grew from security-based issues, to wider, more major identity issues.

Keywords: Turkey, Türkiye, NATO, United States, Transatlantic Security

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Introduction

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February 2022, Türkiye's role in NATO once again become a topic of intellectual discussion, with many observers arguing that a revival of Russian power would lead to Türkiye's return to the alliance as a good standing member, while others questioned the likelihood of such a scenario due to the country's political transformation. This is not the first time Türkiye's role within the alliance has become a subject of debate. Türkiye is often described as a valuable, dedicated partner of NATO, yet, since the beginning of its membership, the country's role in the alliance has been questioned more than that of any other member state.

This article seeks to analyse NATO's relations with Türkiye and the country's role within the alliance from a historical perspective. It aims to understand the debates on the role of Türkiye within NATO by focusing on the moments of transformation in relations. The main assumption of this article is that, from the beginning of Türkiye's membership process, Turkish-American relations have been the main determinant of Türkiye-NATO relations. Türkiye's role, defence, and identity have always been questioned by the European members. But these debates on Türkiye were directed and/or suppressed by the US in accordance with its own interests. The US had been the main supporter of Türkiye in the alliance against the opposition and criticism of Europeans in exchange for Türkiye's commitment to US policies. During the Cold War, Türkiye was an irreplaceable partner not only because of its location close to the Soviet Union, but also due to its utility in out-of-area operations towards the Middle East. After the end of the Cold War, Türkiye maintained its strategic importance as far as the US was concerned, but the differences in interests and values between the two allies became more visible after 2010. Türkiye failed to secure the support of the alliance's European members to fill the gap left by waning US support. Indeed, the differences between them grew from that of security issues to wider, more major identity issues. In the last decade, Türkiye turned into a more problematic and less reliable ally in the eyes of its NATO partners. In my article, I first discuss the impact of the US on the role of Türkiye in NATO during the Cold War years and why Türkiye was a unique and valuable partner in that period. Then I analyse how and why Türkiye maintains this position even after the disappearance of the Soviet threat, and finally I examine how Türkiye has turned into a problematic and questionable ally in the eyes of its allies in the last decade.

Transatlantic Bargain: The Türkiye Episode

In the late 1960's, American ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Harlan Cleveland (1970, p. 5) described the organisation as a 'transatlantic bargain' to emphasise the calculations of national self-interest on both sides of the Atlantic. According to Ellen Hallams (2013, p. ix) during the 21st century, this bargain had been based on an exchange between US commitment to European security in return for a position of leadership and dominance of NATO for America. Particularly in the first half of the Cold War, the US dominated almost the entirety of the policy-making process. Sometimes the political choices of the US made the European partners unhappy, yet in order to utilise the American aid and security umbrella, they had no choice but to approve America's decisions (Kaplan, 2012, p. 35). The admission of Türkiye into NATO was a good example of this unwilling acceptance. Although European partners had fears that the inclusion of Türkiye and Greece into NATO would result in a diversion of United States resources to these countries, the US found a way to convince them after Washington had described the admission of Türkiye and Greece as being in the best interests of the security of the North Atlantic area in 1951 (Joint Strategic Plans Committee, 1951).

The US administration was also against the membership of Türkiye within the alliance at the beginning, but American military officials had been aware of the strategic importance of the country since the Second World War (Bölme, 2012, pp. 149–156). In a memorandum of 1946 concerning the Straits, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1946) described Türkiye as “strategically the most important military factor in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, and the only nation possessing a firm resolution to oppose the apparent Soviet policy of expansion in the area”. However, both the American government and the army were determined not to undertake any security commitments in a wider geography unless they felt safe in Europe wherein they had just become involved (Policy Planning Staff, 1948a).

In 1948, the negotiations between the Brussels Treaty Powers and the United States & Canada gave Ankara some hope on the emerging security arrangements. However, neither the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and Department of Defense nor the Department of State were willing to support Türkiye's NATO membership. According to them, members of the organisation created under the North Atlantic Pact had to be “few, small in number and not duplicate instrumentalities created by the United Nations” (Foreign Assistance Correlation Committee, 1949). Partner countries also agreed on restricting the scope to countries of the North Atlantic region. It was made clear that Türkiye would not be included

in the new pact. On the other hand, military officials had been expecting to utilise the benefits of Türkiye's strategic location in the event of war (Policy Planning Staff, 1948b).

In September 1949, the detonation of the first Soviet atomic device ended the atomic superiority of the US and made strategic bombing bases around Soviet territory more important. This reality put Türkiye in a critical position; if Türkiye developed sufficient military strength that could deter Soviet aggression in the event of war, the Turkish army could control the Straits, operate in the Black Sea and control land approaches to the oil-bearing areas of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean (Foreign Assistance Correlation Committee, 1949). The US gradually increased military aid to Türkiye and a massive American building effort began in the spring of 1950 (Department of the Army Office of the Chief of Engineers, 1950). In 1947–1952, in accordance with the American Army's demands, The American Mission for Aid to Turkey constructed medium-bomber bases, military airfields and military facilities, established communication systems, and modernised, equipped, and trained Turkish forces. The aid was not entirely technical as it also included a reorganisation of the Turkish military establishment (Livingston, 1994).

Türkiye's Republican People's Party (CHP) government wanted to turn this rapprochement into a permanent security guarantee and, in the last days of their power, on May 11th, 1950, Ankara applied for membership to NATO. However, newly-established NATO members were reluctant to include countries extant outside the North Atlantic region, and the US administration believed that without having to give any extra guarantees, they could find a way to get Türkiye's permission to use the military facilities under the then current military aid program (Leffler, 1985, pp. 820–821; JCS, 1949). The NATO Council turned Türkiye down, but this disappointment did not stop the Turkish administration. The newly elected Democrat Party in Türkiye saw the Korean War as a new opportunity for NATO membership and, on August 1st, 1950, applied for a second time, just after the Turkish Grand Assembly approved the sending of troops to Korea. Although the Turkish troops' achievements in the war impressed the US administration (Joint Strategic Plans Committee, 1951) and NATO partners, it was not enough to change their positions regarding Türkiye. Indeed, during a meeting with President Celal Bayar, Assistant Secretary of State George C. McGhee used the Korean War, which created substantial new requirements and affected the security guarantee capacity of the US, as an excuse for not entering into security arrangements with Türkiye (Department of State, 1951b). As a result, Ankara's application was once again rejected.

However, after a Korean War that revealed the necessities of conventional war, the US administration decided to re-evaluate Türkiye's request. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were still against full membership and recommended giving Ankara an informal security guarantee with the UK and France against a Soviet attack and including Türkiye with Greece in NATO planning. According to military officials, the admission of Türkiye and Greece could be useful for military planning and actions in the Mediterranean and the Near and Middle East, but it could also adversely affect the progress of the American Army in the defence of the NATO area, which was the US' primary military commitment. Therefore, the inclusion of Türkiye could be considered after the defence of the member nations was assured. The Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff shared similar opinions. However, the Department of State worried more about disappointing Türkiye, yet believed that if the other members approved the joining of Türkiye and Greece into NATO's planning that it would mean opening 'Pandora's box' on the way to full membership (JCS, 1950; Department of State, 1951c).

At the beginning of 1951, in the US' policy planning, the security of Türkiye was identified as being vital to the security of the U.S. (Policy Planning Staff, 1951). Under the then current military aid & construction program, the American administration had already spent huge amounts of money and gone to great lengths to prepare Türkiye for a greater role in stopping Soviet expansion, yet there still was a serious problem. There was no long-term confirmation of the rights for American forces to utilise the facilities in Türkiye, therefore American officials had to find a way to guarantee access to all these facilities in the event that Türkiye was not at war while the US was. For the previous three years, Türkiye had been insisting on an assurance, in one form or another, that the US would come to their help in the event of an attack, adamantly refusing any other offers. On the Turkish side, there was huge disappointment. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff were still against any kind of commitment that implied sending US forces to the area in the event of hostilities, the State Department started to worry about causing a deep-seated and lasting resentment against the US. Besides, Türkiye was the first foreign country to get the US extended military assistance on that scale in the post-war period to build up its defensive capabilities, and after such a huge investment it was unthinkable not to help Türkiye in the event of a Soviet attack (Policy Planning Staff, 1951). The visit of Assistant Secretary of State George C. McGhee in February 1951 revealed the fact that NATO membership was the only option for the Turkish administration (Department of State, 1951b). Türkiye would veer towards a policy of neutralism, and

until a commitment was extended to Türkiye, there was no assurance that Türkiye would declare war unless it was attacked (Department of State, 1951a). During World War II, Türkiye had managed to pursue a policy of 'active neutralism' and not enter into war under the pressure of the Great Powers (Deringil, 1998). American diplomats had reason to believe that the Ankara government could do it again. As Churchill once said to Roosevelt, "There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that is fighting without them" (Harris, 1997).

On May 15th, 1951, the US formally broached the subject of Greek and Turkish NATO membership to allied countries as the best solution for security for the southern flank of the Western defence system. There followed four months of extensive debate (National Security Council, 1951). The other members were particularly worried about a potential cut in the American military aid that they were receiving. Denmark led the Scandinavian & Benelux bloc against the admission of Türkiye and Greece into NATO. According to them, a lack of mutual cultural ties, particularly with Türkiye, could damage NATO's character and open a way to admitting other nations that are farther away or undemocratic and totalitarian. There was also the possibility of provoking the Soviet Union that had concerns about encirclement, increasing the risk of war by extending the commitments into traditionally problematic regions such as the Balkans, the Dardanelles, and the Mediterranean, and dragging these countries into a conflict in which they had no interest. The United States, however, managed to convince these countries, except Denmark, of the military advantages of admitting Türkiye and Greece, and alleviate their security concerns. Although the Danish administration was determined to use its power of veto, it did not want to be the one to destroy the unity of NATO at the first challenge that the organisation was faced with and changed its decision (Wilkinson, 1956, p. 395). More important than all these objections, Britain, which positioned Türkiye in a regional Middle East Command under British control, was against the admission of the two (Athanasopoulou, 2013, p. 9). However, the US administration was determined not to permit any obstruction hindering the integration of Türkiye into NATO. Finally, Britain agreed to postpone the Middle East Command negotiations until Türkiye and Greece fully integrated into NATO's military arrangements. Washington dominated the entire decision process and, in one way or another, managed to convince all the allies. In September, the North Atlantic Council invited Türkiye and Greece into the alliance. Türkiye gained formal acceptance on February 15th, 1952 and, in a short while, turned into a solid logistical base and earned a key place in the NATO alliance, and all because the US had planned it so.

Türkiye's Role in 'Out-of-Area' Operations

During the Cold War, Türkiye was viewed as a barrier against Soviet expansion as a part of European security, but, from the very beginning, for the purposes of American and therefore NATO security planning, Türkiye played a critical role in the Middle East & Eastern Mediterranean (Joint Strategic Plans Committee, 1951). Türkiye's role in the Middle East & Eastern Mediterranean was a more complex issue than its role in European theatre. Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty (1949) defined the geographic scope that the allies agreed on collectively defending as 'the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America.' Although the security of the Middle East and Mediterranean regions was strategically important to the countries of Western Europe for oil supply and transportation, from the beginning, the allies chose to take limited responsibilities only in the Mediterranean (Martins, 2016). The Middle East was out of NATO's aim and scope. European partners did not see the region's security as a priority since they felt far from being sufficiently able to protect even their own territories. Under those circumstances, protecting the oil resources in the Middle East and preventing Soviet expansion in the region became the main issue for the US administration. Türkiye's potential utility in war not only in the North Atlantic region but also in the Middle East could have been the answer. Although the US adopted a policy of keeping the military base rights in Türkiye within NATO, it did not hesitate to depart from this policy when the Lebanon crisis broke out in 1958 (Department of State, 1958). In 1970, in order to support King Hussein against the Palestinian resistance in Jordan, the US once again utilised the Incirlik Air Base despite the fact that the base was assigned to US forces only for NATO purposes (Bölme, 2012, p. 276). In the first decade of the Cold War, because of military agreements with the US besides the North Atlantic Treaty, and due to Türkiye being heavily dependent on American aid, the distinction between the US and NATO was blurred in the minds of Turkish officials (Bölme, 2012, pp. 212–218). This allowed Washington to persuade Ankara to allow them to use the NATO facilities in Türkiye in 'out of area' operations and take advantage of military rights granted to US forces in accordance with the North Atlantic Treaty.

In the following years, however, a series of incidents — such as the unilateral withdrawal of Jupiter missiles from Türkiye by the US as a solution to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the 1964 Cyprus Crisis, and the Johnson Letter — launched a re-evaluation process in Türkiye's foreign policy. In his letter, penned in response to a possible Turkish

intervention in Cyprus, President Johnson made it clear that, in a scenario where Ankara was in an offensive position, there would be no guarantee that the NATO allies would defend Türkiye if it was attacked by the Soviets (Johnson, İnönü, 1966). This knowledge made Ankara more reluctant towards the future demands of Washington. During the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israel Wars, Ankara allowed Washington to utilise communication stations but refused to permit American forces to use military facilities assigned to NATO (Bölme, 2012, pp. 261–292). On 10th October 1973, the Turkish government declared that “US facilities in Turkey were for the security and defence of NATO territory, including the protection of Turkey, but would not be used in connection with conflict in the Middle East” (Winrow, 1993, p. 636). Türkiye was not alone. In the 1973 war, barring Portugal, all other NATO members declined American demands to use their facilities in out-of-area involvement.

Following the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, Türkiye found itself in an even more difficult position in NATO while tensions between the US and Soviet Union reached new heights. In 1979, the Carter Administration established a mobile military force capable of responding to worldwide crises under the name ‘Rapid Deployment Force’, which was specifically assigned to protect the Gulf region. In this new security environment, in the eyes of Pentagon strategists, Türkiye’s primary role as a potential base was not in Europe, but in the Persian Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean for ‘out-of-area’ operations (Athanassopoulou, 2013, p. 17). When Washington asked for military base access for its newly established force from Ankara, in the absence of any NATO security guarantees, the Turkish administration was unwilling to accept this request, which entailed serious risks. The European governments opposed Carter’s “ineffective and dangerously provocative” policy (Stork, 1980, p.6). According to many commentators, in a scenario where Ankara was to support non-NATO operations in the Middle East and Gulf region and cause Soviet aggression, European allies in particular would decline to protect Türkiye due to its provocative position (Winrow, 1993, p. 637). On the other hand, European allies were still lacking the ability to present a coordinated position that could balance US decisions, therefore Washington’s strategic choices, which the United Kingdom mostly supported, continued to dominate NATO’s plans.

In December 1979, in response to the Soviet SS-20 Saber missile systems in the Eastern Bloc, NATO adopted the ‘Dual Track’ policy. Under this policy, if negotiations on removing Soviet missiles were to fail, US intermediate-range nuclear missiles would be deployed by 1983.

Despite establishing a ‘Special Consultative Group’ within NATO, in 1983, the Reagan administration announced the Strategic Defence Initiative without prior consultation with allies (Aybet, 1997, pp. 142–143). Türkiye was striving to break out of the economic and politic isolation by the West after 1980’s military coup and accepted the deployment of Intermediate Range Nuclear Missiles in its territories in the name of the alliance. While the US administration was increasing economic and military aid to Türkiye, the renovation and modernisation of air bases for the new nuclear mission was begun. The Turkish military bases’ modernisation process raised questions about the role of these bases in the Middle East. Both the Turkish and the US administrations offered assurance that the obligations of Türkiye were only to NATO, and that the Rapid Deployment Force would not use these bases in any given situation (Bölme, 2012, pp. 314–315).

On the other hand, NATO’s changing perspective towards the developments outside the NATO area offered clues about Türkiye’s changing mission. In 1980, NATO Secretary-General Luns mentioned in an interview “a need to have strategic perception that is not confined narrowly to the region of the North Atlantic Treaty”. According to Luns, “Both Afghanistan and Iran, even though outside the geographical boundaries of NATO, are still nonetheless very much Alliance business” (Stork, 1980, p. 7). The statement of the Secretary-General became official with the Final Communiqué of the NATO Defence Planning Committee (1983): “...developments outside the NATO Treaty area might threaten the vital interests of members of the Alliance”. While the alliance members, particularly the US, became more interested in developments in the Gulf region, expectations from Türkiye to facilitate out-of-area operations were increased. However, Türkiye was not keen. There was no security guarantee from NATO allies in case of an attack from the region. Furthermore, Ankara did not want to be dragged into any conflict in the region that entailed serious risks with the potential to ruin its relations with the neighbouring countries. Hence, in the 1983 Lebanon Crisis, Ankara did not allow the US to use the Incirlik Airbase for the transportation nor the storage of non-military supplies (Bölme, 2012, pp. 316–317).

Security in the Middle East continued to be a dilemma for Türkiye throughout the rest of the Cold War years. While the region was becoming more important in NATO’s defence planning, the discord among the allies on out-of-area operations in the Middle East and their reluctance to defend Türkiye in the case of war created a difficult position for Turkish officials. This would not end with the end of the Cold War.

The Role of Türkiye After the Cold War: Security Questions of an Irreplaceable Partner

At the end of the Cold War, many observers had doubts about NATO's future in the absence of a Soviet threat and most of them were questioning Türkiye's role in the new security environment. In the first decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union, despite debates, the member states found a way of uniting different interests due to pressure from the US which wanted to continue its position as first among equals (Kamp, Volker, 2012). NATO modernised and reoriented itself to face the new challenges of the post-Cold-War era. While the NATO switched its strategy from 'collective defence' to 'collective security', the strategic focus of the alliance turned from a 'monolithic, massive, predominant threat,' to 'multi-faceted and multi-directional various risk factors.'

In this transformation process, Ankara had initially feared losing its strategic importance to the Western security community. The outbreak of the Gulf War in 1990, however, removed all doubt in people's minds and reinforced the opinion within the Pentagon that Türkiye's geographical location was still strategically important. Türkiye could maintain its role as a part of Gulf security; moreover, it could provide a cultural bridge between Europe and the Middle East as the only Muslim country in NATO (Kuniholm, 1991, pp. 34–39).

During the Gulf War, American forces used the Incirlik Airbase in Türkiye to strike targets in Iraq. Ankara, for the first time in the history of its relations, requested air defence from NATO against the threat posed by Saddam Hussein. In response to Türkiye's request, the US, Germany, and the Netherlands deployed batteries of Patriot missiles under the NATO flag (Townsend, Ellehuus, 2019). NATO sent 42 "somewhat outdated" combat jets from Germany, Italy, and Belgium to Malatya Erhaç Airbase (Kuniholm, 1991, p. 37). Türkiye's demands, however, opened the old discussion among the members on whether the North Atlantic Treaty defence guarantee towards Türkiye would apply if Türkiye found itself under attack because of its "provocative" position. This debate also included a question on whether eastern Türkiye was actually in-area or out-of-area (Winrow, 1993, pp. 637, 645). In the event of an attack, some of the members, including France, Germany, Denmark, Belgium, and Spain, were against the implementation of Article 5 of the Treaty, which stated that an attack on one member of NATO is an attack on all of its members. On the other hand, the US, supported by the UK, argued that Türkiye was not in a provocative action because the operation was based on a UN Security Council resolution and insisted on giving Türkiye

assurance. Finally, on January 25th, 1991, the NATO Defense Planning Committee declared that NATO would invoke Article 5 if Türkiye was attacked by Iraq (Bölme, 2012, pp. 341–342), but the reluctance of the allies created distrust in the minds of Turkish officials about NATO's credibility in the defence of Türkiye (Güvenç, Özel, 2012, p. 538).

The Gulf War proved that the competition over access to major energy sources was one of the main security issues in the post-Cold War era. At first glance, Turkish-American security interests overlapped in the 1990s. Türkiye, finding itself at or near major conflict areas from the Balkans to the Middle East and the Caucasus, had shared security concerns with the US on these regions. For the US administration, Türkiye, as the country on or near the crossroads of important energy corridors and the main conflict areas, had vital value. (Nişancı, Dufourcq, 2005). Since the early 1980s, US officials, who were deeply influenced by strategic analyst Albert J. Wohlstetter's views, believed that Türkiye was crucial in the protection of Persian Gulf oil fields not only because of its unique location with military bases but also its membership in NATO (Karaosmanoğlu, 1983, pp. 167–168). At that time, however, when the US administration offered to carry the Gulf defence under NATO's framework, the European allies opposed, since they did not want to follow “the US leadership” while pursuing their interests at least out-of-area (Aybet, 1997, pp. 153–155). The post-Cold-War security environment, indeed, strengthened their opinion. They were not eager to undertake more responsibilities ‘out-of-area’ just because of the US security priorities and they did not share the US’ idea on Türkiye's strategic value on the defence of the NATO area. According to them, although Turkish lands might be valuable just as a buffer zone between Europe and conflict areas, Türkiye's close proximity to all these conflict zones carried the risk of dragging European allies into new conflicts in which they had no vital interests. Critical base access during NATO's combat operations in the Balkans proved these members wrong on Türkiye's geographical value for the defence of Europe, but it did not end the differences on security issues and questions on Türkiye's defence, which was increasingly considered as a part of the Middle Eastern security architecture (Güvenç, Özel, 2012, p. 538; Oğuzlu, 2012, p. 154).

Reflection of a Shift in Turkish-American Relations: A Questionable Ally

Throughout the 1990s, discussions continued within NATO about the role the alliance would take after the disappearance of the Soviet threat. Although the new strategic concepts adopted in 1991 & 1999 (The

Alliance's New Strategic Concept, 1991; 1999) were responses to these debates, the diverging security priorities and threat perceptions among NATO members deepened during the 2000s, especially in the aftermath of the US-led war in Iraq. In this period, groupings over security priority, threat, and burden sharing increased within the alliance, giving rise to what has come to be known as the "transatlantic split". During this time, Türkiye could neither maintain its old relationship with the US nor build new, common ground with its European members.

After 9/11, Türkiye's strategic significance once again gained importance in the Middle East context. When NATO took over the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, Türkiye was one of the first NATO countries that agreed to send troops; however, in accordance with its foreign policy priorities, it did not accept any combat role so as not to be a part of any conflict in a Muslim country (Oğuzlu, 2013, p. 8). Despite its active military role in the alliance on a global scale, Ankara again faced the hesitation of some European allies when it requested the deployment of surveillance aircraft and missiles against possible attacks from Iraq prior to the war in Iraq in 2003. France, Germany, and Belgium were against any early defensive measures, claiming they could undermine efforts to find a peaceful solution. Due to their opposition, the NATO Council failed to reach an agreement. Finally, under pressure from the US, the decision to provide support to Türkiye was made by the Defence Planning Committee (NATO, 2022). Ankara was committed to maintaining its relations with NATO, but it was also becoming more sceptical about meeting every expectation of an alliance wherein members refrained from giving defence support to Türkiye unless their own security was at stake.

In the following years, Türkiye became less cooperative regarding issues that mattered most to the European members of NATO. Türkiye, for instance, treated with caution the efforts to develop coordination and cooperation between the EU and NATO as part of a larger project to establish a European security and defence structure under the EU. The Turkish General Staff interpreted these efforts as the prioritisation of Central Europe at the expense of Türkiye, which it perceived would lead to groupings in Europe and create a 'Western Curtain' instead of an 'Iron Curtain' in the medium term (Bilgin, 2003, p. 345). Türkiye nearly came to the point of rejecting the Berlin Plus Agreement¹ on EU-NATO cooperation (Vamvakas, 2009, p. 58). When Türkiye's accession was tied

¹ The Berlin Plus agreement is the short title for a comprehensive package of agreements between NATO and the EU based on the conclusions of the NATO Washington Summit (See: Vamvakas, 2008).

to the resolution of the Cyprus issue while Cyprus was accepted into the EU without any similar precondition in 2004, it created a deadlock in negotiations and Ankara used its veto power in NATO to block the inclusion of Cyprus in NATO-EU security cooperation (Açıkmese, Triantaphyllou, 2012). While Ankara faced various obstacles in its EU membership process, Türkiye's role in this redesigned Euro-Atlantic environment became even more problematic for European allies. The efforts of the European members to transform NATO for their own security priorities, their increasing questioning of Türkiye's role in this sense, the difficulties in the European Union process, and the neglect of Türkiye's security concerns by its Western allies have all strengthened the anti-Western discourse within Türkiye and further fuelled distrust towards the alliance. As the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, which has Islamist roots and rejects the old Western paradigm, consolidated its power in its second term and turned to a more autonomous foreign policy in an effort to become a regional leader, Turkish-Western relations became more confrontational.

At around the same period, Turkish-American relations saw one of its lowest points due to Türkiye's refusal to participate in the 2003 Iraq War coalition. Despite the support of the US in Türkiye's EU membership process and collaboration in Afghanistan under the NATO flag, the usual nature of Turkish-American relations entered a path of change. The transition of Türkiye's US relations from military aid to defence sales, conflicts on the Kurdish issue and Iraq policies, and ambitions of Türkiye to improve its relations within the neighbouring regions were some of the factors that affected the two countries' bilateral relations and their partnership in NATO. Since the end of the Cold War, Türkiye had seen more opportunities to become a regional power and had more confidence and manoeuvring capability to realise that. With AKP rising to power in 2002, Türkiye's regional power aspirations in the Middle East became more prominent (Gürsoy, Toygür, 2018, p. 2). Türkiye wanted to establish closer ties with countries from the Balkans to the Caucasus and the Middle East, casting itself as an alternative power to the West. (Davutoğlu, 2001; Kutlay, Öniş, 2021). In Türkiye's view, NATO should lead an operation only when there is a humanitarian crisis and with the authorisation of the UN Security Council (Oğuzlu, 2012, p. 156). There was a certain amount of common ground in how Türkiye and some major European powers approached the US. Both the Turks and Europeans viewed the unilateral actions of the United States with suspicion. The broader public in both countries increasingly came to believe that NATO had become a vehicle for US foreign policy in the post-cold-war period (Pertusot, 2011, p.

31). Among the European countries, Greece, Italy, and Germany had generally strong reservations about military campaigns abroad, while the others occasionally vetoed such policies (Sperling, Weber, 2009, p. 499). Although the US and Türkiye continued to share concerns with the divergent security orientations within Europe, Türkiye's point of view meant a split in the 'Atlanticist camp'. From the beginning of its membership, despite some bumps on the road, Türkiye had mostly acted in concert with the US, and had thus been considered a part of the Atlanticist camp in NATO, more so than the Europeans (Güvenç, Özel, 2012, p. 540). The US was once the main supporter of Türkiye in the alliance against the opposition and criticism of Europeans in exchange for Türkiye's commitment to US policies. While differences in interests and values between the US and Türkiye became more visible after 2010, Türkiye could not fill the gap left by the decreasing US support in the alliance with the support of the European members. It was, in fact, to the contrary; their differences grew from security-based issues to wider identity issues.

With the growing weight and number of European countries in NATO, Türkiye started to experience the same political and cultural objections and criteria that had hindered Türkiye's membership progress in the European Union (Vamvakas, 2009, p. 64). The Islamist roots of the ruling AKP in Türkiye and its anti-Western tendencies led to the framing of Türkiye-NATO relations in identity terms. (Güvenç, Özel, 2012, p. 534). Even though Türkiye helped to constitute and secure the 'Western identity' during the Cold War through its security policies and commitments to NATO (Bilgin, 2003, p. 348), since the beginning of its membership there had always been doubt among European members about Türkiye's alliance identity. On the other hand, this had never been an issue in Turkish-American relations until the second term of the AKP government. Türkiye's assertive foreign policy based on active engagement with all regions in the neighbourhood and AKP's motivation to make Türkiye a leader in the region and the Muslim World along with growing relations with Russia all started to raise questions in the US media on whether Türkiye was drifting away from a Western orientation towards an Eastern one (*The Economist*, 2010) (Cohen, 2010). In 2010, Ankara's mediation of a nuclear swap deal with Tehran, and Türkiye's 'no vote' on sanctions against Iran in the UN Security Council popularised the comments that claimed 'a shift of axis' in Turkish foreign policy. During NATO's Lisbon summit in December 2010, Türkiye's insistence on not naming Iran as a threat to the NATO missile shield, and its 'threat to veto' if that happened increased concerns in both Washington and Europe. Ivo H. Daalder, who was the U.S. ambassador to NATO between 2009 and 2013, summarises

the conflict between Türkiye and the rest of the members in that period thus: “In my four years there, it was quite often 27 against one” (Crowley, Enlanger, 2022). Türkiye denied all the claims that it was abandoning the West (Davutoğlu, 2012), yet it was evident that under an AKP government, NATO had lost its meaning as part of Türkiye’s Western identity and had turned into a “pure” defence organisation whose contribution to Türkiye’s defence was more doubtful (Oğuzlu, 2012, p. 153).

At the beginning of the Arab Uprisings, the chill between Washington and Ankara thawed for a short period. Türkiye’s significance rose once again as a “role model” for less democratic nations of the Middle East, and as a key regional partner in Syria where the US was reluctant to engage militarily. Türkiye’s eagerness to engage in the conflict could provide the US a sphere of influence in Syria. In the first years of the war, the two old allies managed to build close cooperation. Hence, following the downing of a Turkish aircraft by Syrian forces in June 2012, the NATO Council announced its solidarity with Türkiye, and the US, Germany, and the Netherlands deployed Patriot missile batteries against the threat posed by Syria’s ballistic missiles (NATO, 2013). However, when Russia intervened in Syria in 2015, disagreement appeared between the US and Türkiye on how to address that. Political and military support of the US to PKK-affiliated entities in Syria, such as the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its military wing, the People’s Protection Units (YPG), heightened tensions in US-Turkish relations. The crisis deepened with the West accusing the AKP government of being reluctant to fight against Jihadist groups (Schanzer, 2014). The withdrawal of the Patriots first by Germany, then the Netherlands, and finally the US at a time when Russia was violating the Turkish air space angered Ankara and raised significant question marks regarding the reliability of its NATO partners (Bekdil, 2015). While NATO announced its intention to improve Turkish air defences following the downing of a Russian jet by Türkiye in November 2015 (Emmott, 2015), the escalation of Russian military activities in the Baltic Sea in the same period increased the demands among allies to move NATO back to its founding mission: blocking Russian (Soviet) expansion into Europe (Bölme, 2016, p. 137). Given the revival of the importance of Europe’s defence, the European allies did not want to be dragged into war due to Türkiye’s own engagements in Syria.

The prolonged crisis between Türkiye and NATO entered a new phase when Ankara announced in December 2017 that it would acquire Russian-made S-400 missile systems to renew its air defence. NATO allies were stunned by this decision. Due to the lack of an effective air defence system, whenever Türkiye was under threat of missile attacks from the

East, it had to bring a request for protection to the NATO Council, and often, such requests from Türkiye were accepted only partially or unwillingly by its allies after much debate. Besides, only a few members had this capacity, and deployments of missile defence systems were hard to sustain and expensive to maintain over a long period of time (Townsend, Ellehuus, 2019). Although the ‘Missile Shield’ of NATO was on the way, Türkiye’s airspace would be unprotected until the project became fully operational, which meant at least a decade. Moreover, large parts of Türkiye’s eastern and south-eastern districts would not be covered by NATO’s shield (Kibaroglu, 2019, pp. 167–168).

After Türkiye’s attempts to collaborate with the allies on missile systems failed, Ankara started negotiations with Russia. Buying this kind of system from Russia, which had been considered a growing threat since the 2008 Russia-Georgian War, was perceived as being in conflict with the Euro-Atlantic security and defence architecture by the allies (Kibaroglu, 2019, pp. 161–163). After the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO suspended all civilian and military cooperation with Russia, and Russia’s aggression and intimidation towards its neighbours was described as a ‘threat’ that challenged the international order and NATO’s democratic values for the first time since the end of the Cold War (Stoltenberg, 2015). According to US and NATO officials, buying a defence system worth billions of dollars from Russia was unacceptable and might not only cause Turkish dependency on Russia, but also would pose a risk of a leaking of sensitive information about NATO assets (U.S. Department of Defense, 2018). Washington’s reaction to Ankara’s decision was harsh; it first suspended Turkish participation in the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Program, then imposed sanctions under CAATSA 231 to the Turkish Defence Industry in 2020 (Pompeo, 2020).

Since July 15th, 2016’s coup attempt in Türkiye, the relations of Ankara had been strained with both sides of the Atlantic. America’s and Europe’s slow response in condemning the coup, and Türkiye’s belief that Washington was reluctant to extradite Gulen, the cleric accused of being the mastermind behind the coup attempt, increased tensions. Also, criticisms of some Western countries about democratic backsliding further strained relations (Gürsoy, Toygür, 2018). While Türkiye has accused the allies of ignoring or even supporting the groups it considers terrorists, such as the Gülenist movement, PKK, and PYD/YPG, Western allies have sharply criticised the Erdoğan administration for leading away from the founding values of NATO, such as the safeguarding of freedom, the principles of liberal democracy and individual liberties, and the rule of law (BBC, 2017b; Hill, 2017). Feeling left alone, the AKP government

adopted an “eye for an eye” policy based on using its veto power as political leverage to force its allies into changing their policies on Türkiye’s security concerns and regional priorities, at the risk of a complete rupture of Türkiye’s relations with the West. Türkiye’s growing deployment of military force for its security interests also decreased the relevance of NATO for Turkish security in the minds of Turkish elites. On the one hand, Türkiye sought to build its security outside of NATO at the expense of conflict with alliance members. On the other, it turned the alliance into a political bargaining platform on which to impose its security concerns. In 2017, Türkiye vetoed NATO’s cooperation with Austria, which had criticised Türkiye’s domestic policy after the coup attempt and announced its intention to block Türkiye’s bid to join the EU (BBC, 2017a). In 2019, during a NATO Summit, Ankara rejected NATO’s military plan for defending Poland and the Baltic states in the event of a Russian attack unless NATO allies recognised PYD/YPG in Syria as a terrorist organisation (Dimitrova, 2019, p. 1). Finally, in May 2022, following the US’ decision to lift sanctions on YPG/PKK-held territories in Syria (Aydoğan, 2022), President Erdoğan announced that Türkiye would veto Finland’s and Sweden’s bids to join the NATO after Russia invaded Ukraine unless the two Nordic nations stopped supporting PKK and the Gülenist movement and harbouring their members (Lukov, Murphy, 2022). This last move of Türkiye demonstrated how threat perception and the security priorities of Türkiye significantly differ from all the allies even when the Russian threat glued the ‘transatlantic split’ and united both sides of the Atlantic. Türkiye’s value for the alliance once again became the subject of debate in Western countries.

Conclusions

In her article published in 1989, Diana Johnstone describes NATO as “ostensibly multilateral, often merely the framework for bilateral relations in which the United States is the commanding partner” (Johnstone, 1989). This description also fits the nature of Türkiye’s relations with NATO. In the aftermath of the Second World War, NATO had provided a platform for Türkiye on which it institutionalised its relations with the US, which it considered a key actor in shaping Türkiye’s Western identity and guaranteeing its security. The military nature of US-Turkish strategic relations had determined Türkiye’s role in the alliance during the Cold War years, and the questions some European allies had raised in relation to Türkiye’s identity and the defence of Turkish territories had been suppressed by the US unless Ankara challenged US policy, as was the case in the 1964 Cyprus Crisis.

During the Cold War years, Türkiye's role as a barrier against Soviet expansion and its military strength in the Middle East & the Mediterranean made Türkiye an irreplaceable member of the NATO in accordance with US military planning. However, with the dissolution of the Soviet threat, disagreement emerged among the members on the role of Türkiye in the new security environment, causing fears on the Turkish side about losing its strategic importance in the eyes of the Western security community. In spite of that, Türkiye maintained its role as a valuable ally to the US in the 1990s, especially in the Middle East. Given that the US dominated much of the post-Cold war transformation of the alliance, this meant an influential role for Türkiye. On the other hand, the questions of European allies on Türkiye's value in Western defence and their hesitation to respond to Türkiye's security demands created distrust in the minds of Turkish officials about NATO's credibility. Furthermore, Türkiye's status as an indispensable partner of NATO, which is maintained through its strategic and military alliance with the US, was shaken after the 2003 Iraq War. While differences in interests and values between the US and Türkiye became more visible in the 2010s, Türkiye failed to secure the support of the alliance's European members to fill the gap left by waning US support.

The crisis between Türkiye and other NATO members in the last decade stemmed partly from a lack of consensus within NATO on a "common threat" and "collective security." Although allies tried to mitigate these problems via concept papers during the 1990s, debates over NATO's aim, commitments, use of force, and burden-sharing caused a split between the two sides of the Atlantic, creating sub-groups consisting of members with similar national interests. While Türkiye distanced itself from Europe in this process, it could not maintain its traditional strategic military partnership with the US due to conflicting security and foreign policy priorities. The disagreements in Turkish-American relations peaked with the Syrian War followed by the coup attempt in 2016, and Türkiye felt abandoned by its allies in dealing with the emerging national security issues. Under the rule of the AKP, which rejected the Kemalist westernisation paradigm and did not see NATO as part of Türkiye's identity, the alliance also lost its traditional meaning in Türkiye's defence community and turned into a political bargaining platform to prevent Türkiye's isolation on security and foreign policy issues. While Ankara's "veto policy" made Türkiye more problematic and a less reliable ally in the eyes of its NATO partners, it meant the end of Türkiye's long-time policy of obtaining security in return for being a staunch and credible member of the alliance. Türkiye no longer strives

hard to be a reliable ally, yet it continues to rely on two assets that still make it valuable to the alliance: its strategic location, and its strong army against the rising threat of Russia (Kelly, Chalfant, 2022). It means that Türkiye will continue to be the subject of debate in near future.

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A Strategic Base in the Global Supply Chain: Türkiye

Abstract

Türkiye is becoming a new base in the global supply chain due to its geopolitical position and the cost advantages it provides. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, logistics problems, especially production and transportation costs, have further strengthened Türkiye's position in this context. Türkiye's strategic location, strong logistics infrastructure, cost-effective and qualified workforce, along with a liberal investment climate, offer a suitable environment for international companies. Türkiye ranks well in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index, which evaluates countries' logistics performance in customs, transportation, and infrastructure. Türkiye has served as a bridge between the east and west since historical times. During the Seljuk period, caravanserais and other infrastructure and service areas were established in Anatolia to support commercial activities. The Silk Road, which had an important place until a certain period of the Ottoman Empire, lost its importance due to other developments.

The "One Belt One Road Project" initiated by China, still in progress and planned to be completed in 2049, will make Türkiye even more important in terms of the global supply chain in the next 10 years. İpekyolu follows the northern and southern routes in Anatolia. With China's "One Belt One Road Project", the Silk Road will regain its former importance as the "Modern Silk Road".

Chinese President Xi Jinping first mentioned the Land and Sea Silk Road project in one of his speeches in 2013. It has been decided to name these two projects as the "Belt and Road Initiative-BRI" or the "One Belt One Road-OBOR" project. The word belt constitutes the land route of the project, which includes highways, railways, oil and natural gas pipelines, and infrastructure investments. The word road includes the sea routes

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covered by the project. The routes of these corridors are provided by multi-dimensional corridors in the direction of Asia-Europe instead of a single route. Within the scope of this project, many infrastructure investments are made in Türkiye as well. In this study, the cost advantages that Türkiye will provide to the global supply chain will be evaluated due to both its cost and geographical location and the infrastructure investments made.

Keywords: Silk Road, One Belt One Road Project, Logistics, Logistics Centres, Logistics Base, Türkiye, Turkey

Introduction

“The world is truly getting smaller and the marketplace is getting bigger. Global logistics can help bridge the gap between service and efficiency, but it is not easy” (PWC, 2022).

According to mercantilists, economies should encourage exports and restrict imports as much as possible. For this, it is foreseen to encourage imperialism and colonialism. On the one hand, they argue that it would be appropriate to achieve this goal with customs duties and subsidies. Adam Smith, on the other hand, opposes this in his work “The Wealth of Nations”, written in 1776, and advocates mutual trade between economies. Thus, he believes that all countries that trade with each other will win. To do this, he argues that each country produces the products which it is absolutely superior at producing, at a lower cost than another country, and buys other products at a relatively lower cost from other countries that produce them.

When Henry Ford founded his Michigan automobile factory in 1919, he had a goal of producing 100% American cars under one roof. By the 1960s, he had achieved that goal. However, by issuing a memorandum which stated, “we do not have to produce everything ourselves to be competitive from now on. Wherever we can find at cheaper cost, we should buy from there”, he showed that producing 100% American cars was no longer his philosophy (Catero et al., 1987). In this context, logistics becomes more important.

Today, this understanding has dominated the globalising world economy. For this reason, western companies have directed their production to China. In this way, China has become a critical economy. Due to its surplus production and production capacity, China has adopted the policy of turning to foreign markets. The One Belt One Road Project (OBOR), which is widely covered in this study, and the “Middle Corridor” which includes Türkiye, should also be evaluated in this context. Because along

with the production of products, keeping them at the desired place and time is one of the parameters that will provide a competitive advantage.

MIT professor Paul Krugman also emphasises that trade deepens between regions and cities rather than between nations. In this context, Türkiye is located in a highly geographically important region. Türkiye can reach a population of 1.6 billion and half of the global market within a 4-hour flight. 70% of the energy resources are located in the surrounding regions. Türkiye's location gives it the potential to be a logistics base that will provide it with a strategic advantage, considering the other advantages described in detail below. Being aware of this geographical location advantage, Türkiye has also made intense efforts to become a logistics base. In this context, on the one hand, the country focuses on infrastructure works in the field of transportation, and on the other, it has started attempts to establish logistics bases.

The Focus of Trade Throughout History: Anatolia

Türkiye, which connects three continents and has a very important geostrategic location, is located in the west of the east and the east of the west and is simultaneously a European, Asian, Balkan, Caucasian, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, and Black Sea country. With this position, Türkiye will assume the role of a natural bridge for the Caspian and Central Asian resources to reach the west in the future.

Emphasis is placed on the words 'location, location, location' as the three basic elements of success in retail trade. Throughout history, the geographical location of all countries have been influential in the strength or weakness of the states established on them. In this context, the states established in Anatolian geography have always been important and powerful.

Anatolia has been both a strategic bridge and a focal point throughout history. What is meant by the focal point is that it is a production and consumption centre. We find evidence that dark-coloured Camkaya, which was extracted from the volcanic mountains of Anatolia in the Stone Age and whose composition is similar to granite, was exported to the Balkans and Mesopotamia to be used in the making of arrows and knives. With the invention of rafts made of inflated animal skins, the transports that had previously been made only by road were transported to lower Mesopotamia more safely, quickly, and economically on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. With the development of settled agriculture in that region six or seven thousand years ago, so began grain shipments to Anatolia. The copper obtained from the Ergani mines and

the mining products extracted and refined in Anatolia were transported to Uruk and other large cities in southern Iraq via the Euphrates River. As the bronze obtained by mixing the copper extracted in Anatolia with tin, which is thought to be imported from northern Europe, was much more durable, it began to be used in weapons, agricultural tools, ceremonial tools, and kitchen materials and increased the dimensions of interregional trade (Kozlu, 2008).

The main factor for the Sumerians, Akats, Assyrians, and Babylonians living in Mesopotamia to establish great civilizations was that they sold the agricultural surplus they produced thanks to artificial intensive irrigation systems to other regions and imported stone and marble products to be used in strategic mines and forest products and constructions in return. Trade between regions became easier as the Lydian Emperor Croesus (595–547 BC) in Western Anatolia minted gold coins in standard sizes for the first time. In the continuation of this process, we know that live animals, wool, dried fish, and timber were shipped to Greece from the ports in the Black Sea. Grain was also imported from Ukraine and Russia. The straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, through which this type of transportation passed, were also the most important points of world trade (Kozlu, 2008). Later, spices and silk gained importance in trade, and the historical Silk Road gained importance for this trade.

The Historical Silk Road and Its Importance

Silk extracted from silkworm cocoons was first produced in China. Scholars date the first silkworm production to the third century BC. Some believe that this corresponds to the Shang Dynasty (145–1050 BC), while others assume up to a thousand years BC (Bozkurt, 2022).

The German geographer and researcher Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen used the term “Silk Road” for the first time in 1877, based on the historical heritage of the region (Kafkassam, 2018).

The Silk Road is neither a single road nor even a real road. The term instead refers to a network of routes used by traders for over 1,500 years, and it is a term which also serves as a metaphor for the exchange of goods and ideas between different cultures (National Geographic, 2022).

The Silk Road, as the name suggests, emerged in relation to the production and trading of silk. In China, silk could only be taken out of the country in the forms of yarn and fabric. It was forbidden to take silkworms out of the country, and the penalty for those who violated that ban was death. The Silk Road reached Egypt, Turkistan, and India during the conquests of Alexander towards the east in the first half of the 4th century BC, and created a common market spreading over a wide geography. The

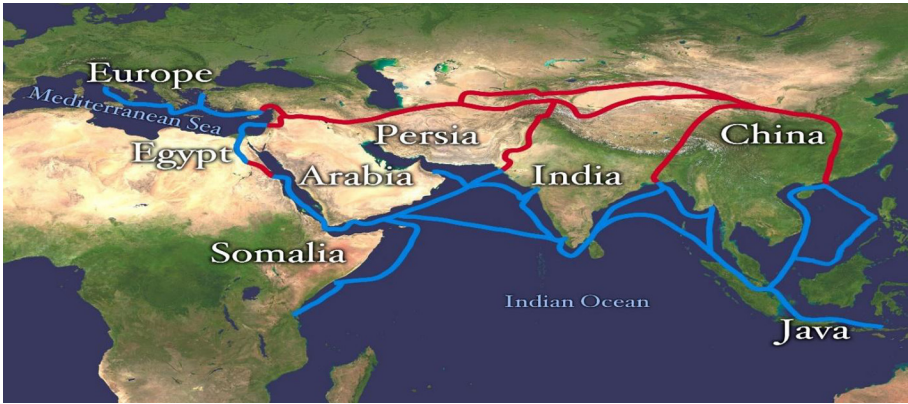


Figure 1. The Ancient Silk Road, Roman Period

Source: Khan Academy, 2022.

Silk Road, which has been used since ancient times, included Arabia, India, Anatolia, and the Mediterranean regions (Günay et al., 2022; Atar et al., 2018).

The main route of the Silk Road was the land road that started from China, continued through Iran to Mesopotamia, and then connected it to the ports of Antakya and Sur on the Mediterranean coast. However, this road has been reshaped depending on the developing political and economic conditions over time and has become an international trade network. The Silk Road is divided into two branches in the forms the North Road and the South Road. The North Road stretched from the Caucasus to the Black Sea, and from there to coastal points such as Azov and Crimea, and then from southern Russia, the Ural region, Southern Siberia, and Altai steppes to China. The Southern Silk Road, on the other hand, started from the capital of China and continued to the Eastern Mediterranean via Central Asia and the Iranian plateau and from there to the interior of Europe via ships (Işıktaş et al., 2017).

If we look at the history of societies from the first societies in noted history to the present time, we find that roads built for commercial or military purposes influence economic, political, and social change. One of the traces left by the civilised societies of the time, such as the Romans and the Ottomans, are the roads they opened or protected (Gunay et al., 2022).

The Sovereign (King) road, which was the main trade route used by ancient societies, was used by the Seljuks and Ottomans in the middle ages. The preservation of the historical silk road became one of the aims

of Ottoman economic policy, and these trade routes were supported by infrastructure (Günay et al., 2022).

Since the Seljuk period, an extensive postal system with inns and caravanserais was established in Anatolia along the historic Silk Road route. The Ottoman Turkish state was also established in the areas through which the historical trade route (Silk Road) between East and West passed. This geographical location and wide commercial investments have made Anatolia a transportation and trader country. Controlling the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the ports of Syria, and the caravan routes passing through Anatolia, the Ottoman Empire benefited extensively from the international transit trade provided by the historical spice and silk routes. In this context, all kinds of taxes, duties, and charges collected from transit products were an important source of state revenues. On the other hand, people in these commercial centres became rich by participating in the active commercial life and offering many services, such as inn-keepers offering shelter, and others offering brokerage services, saddlery, and kitchen utensil sales (Avcioğlu, 1971).

Recognising the importance of trade, the Turkic states have built an excellent trade organisation. The Derbent organisation is a good example of this. The Derbent Organisation not only kept the roads and bridges in good condition, but also ensured the safety of the lives and property of the merchants.

The Derbentists promised that no one would come to any harm in their places and that if they did, the organisation would pay for the damage/injuries caused (Orhonlu, 1967; Avcioğlu, 1971).

During the period when the historic Silk Road was actively used, the state, on the one hand, and the trade centres along this route on the other hand, provided significant revenues and profits for the people.

The most important piece of evidence that reveals the importance of the historical Silk Road is that along with the geographical discoveries and the discovery of new trade routes, there was a great transformation that started in favour of the west, which was noticed with the decline of the east and the west's rise. 15th century Western Europe, which remained out of the world trade system in a passive state due to the fact that the world trade routes were under the control of the east until today, embarked on a journey through these new trade routes, which would have the opportunity to establish hegemonic power over the world economy by joining the world trade system after the Geographical Discoveries and even coming to control it (Günay et al., 2022).

The Modern Silk Road, “One Belt One Road Project”

Chinese President Xi Jinping mentioned the Land and Sea Silk Road projects in his speeches in 2013, first in Kazakhstan and then in Indonesia. It was decided to name both projects the “Belt and Road Initiative or One Belt One Road” project. (Belt and Road Initiative-BRI or One Belt One Road-OBOR) The word generation forms the land route of the project, which includes highways, railways, oil, and natural gas pipelines, and infrastructure investments. The word route includes the sea routes of the project (Yılmaz, 2019).

The Modern or New Silk Road is shown in Figure 2 below (Başbüyük, 2020).

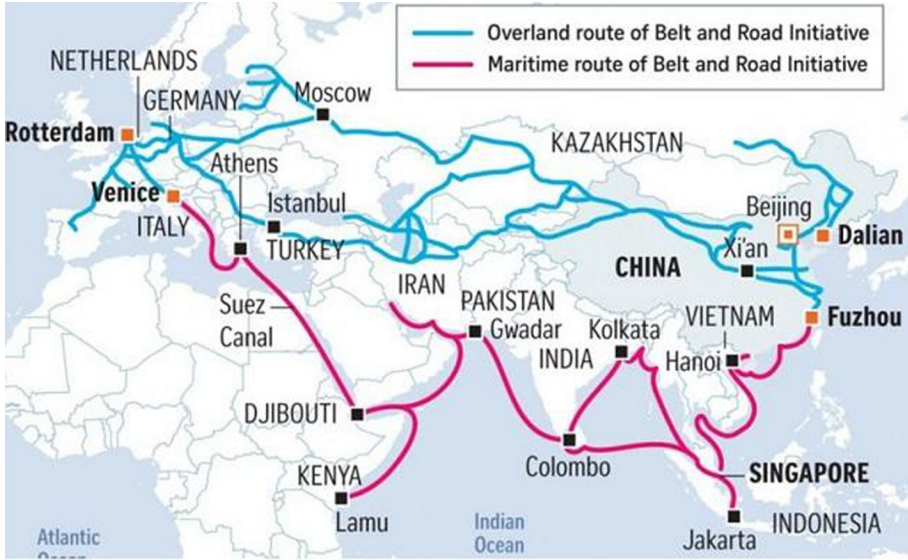


Figure 2. The New Silk Road

The transit routes of these corridors are provided by multi-dimensional corridors in the direction of Asia-Europe instead of a single route. There are six corridors on the land route. These are: the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor (Türkiye is located in this corridor), the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor, the New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor, the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and, finally, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The project is intended to be a maritime economic corridor linking not only the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) but also the economies of South Asia, West Asia,

North Africa, and Europe. In this context, the Belt-Road Initiative is an economic belt that includes the South China Sea, the Pacific Ocean, and the Indian Ocean (Yılmaz, 2019).

The project emerged when China adopted a new strategy. In the early 1980s, China decided to change its strategy, and this decision predicted a change and transformation. This new strategy was based on “combining the universal truth of Marxism with the original reality of China”. The strategy envisioned China’s opening up by adopting a market economy. In this context, investment incentives and the cheap, local labour prompted Western industrialists to direct their investments there. The industrialised countries used these approaches and went on to make China one of the largest economies in the world (Tanrıdağlı, 2020).

With the effect of rapid growth in the 2000s, China had a large production capacity and surplus. By 2010, serious overproduction began to appear in China. It was faced with the problem of transporting this production capability abroad. It started to make serious infrastructure investments to solve this problem. This is one of the main reasons that helped to create the One Belt One Road Project (OBOR) (Tanrıdağlı, 2020).

The OBOR project is one that connects three-quarters of the world’s population and 40 percent of the world’s gross domestic product, directly or indirectly affecting 130 countries. The main objectives of the project are: to ensure political coordination by developing common development strategies between countries; to remove barriers to trade by improving transportation, infrastructure, and communication opportunities; to develop financial opportunities to remove these barriers; to establish a large trade network from Asia to Europe; and to ensure communication between the peoples of the countries involved in the project, facilitating travel and sharing information (Yılmaz, 2019).

China announced that it envisaged a budget of 8 trillion dollars in 2016 to develop the middle corridor, which it plans to integrate with Europe. In this context, the Chinese government, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Türkiye, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Belgium, and France are planning high-speed train connections to the UK. The project, which is estimated to cost 150 billion dollars, is expected to be completed between 2020 and 2025. Again, with regard to the Turkish leg of this project, a total budget of 40 billion dollars and an average annual expenditure of 750 million dollars were envisaged. In this context, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Türkiye and China during the G20 Summit held in Antalya on 14th November 2015 (Başbüyük, 2022).

Online sales are increasing rapidly in the world. China is one of the largest investing countries in this field. Today, a product you buy online in China can be delivered to your home within 1 week at the latest. The Chinese company Alibaba has made serious investments so as to reduce this period to 3 days. In the future, China plans to reduce this time to 1 day worldwide. When the One Belt One Road Project is completed with various logistics centres, a product you order online will be at your door the next day in Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa (Başbüyük, 2022).

The China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor and the Importance of Türkiye

As mentioned above, the Silk Road has been a trade route that served as a bridge between China and the Roman Empire for years. The OBOR project emerges as the fruit of an idea based on the idea of reviving the ancient Silk Road trade route. In this context, the new project covers not only the trade route but also the works related to infrastructure strengthening. The China-Central and West Asian Corridor represents an ambitious route in terms of size and scope. The Middle Corridor is mostly the scene of projects aimed at strengthening international transportation infrastructure. Once the Middle Corridor is fully activated, it will reduce the transportation transfer time between Türkiye and China from 30 days to 10 days (Yılmaz, 2019).

Within the scope of the OBOR project, there have been many studies carried out and more planned to be carried out in partnership with Türkiye. After Türkiye became involved in the OBOR project, it also included some of the existing studies in OBOR. It also plans to integrate new projects in order to make better use of the Middle Corridor route. The main ones are (Yılmaz, 2019):

- The Ankara-Istanbul high-speed train line, which started in 2005 and was completed in 2014,
- The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway (BTK),
- Marmaray,
- The Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge,
- The Eurasia Tunnel,
- Istanbul Airport,
- Osmangazi Bridge,
- The 1915 Çanakkale Bridge.

Türkiye's Geopolitical, Geostrategic, and Ecostrategic Importance

TASAM-Turkish Center for Asian Strategic Studies states that Türkiye is an important country in terms of geopolitical, geostrategic, and ecostrategic aspects (Tasam, 2022). According to this:

- Türkiye is a world state that ranks 16th among 185 world countries in terms of population, 32nd in terms of land size, and among the top 20 in terms of economic power.
- Türkiye is located in the Middle East and the Caspian Basin, which has the most important oil reserves in the world,
- Türkiye is also located in the Mediterranean, where important sea routes cross,
- Türkiye is located in the centre of the Black Sea Basin and the Turkish Straits, which have always maintained their importance throughout history.
- Türkiye is in an effective position in the Balkans, which underwent structural changes due to the disintegration of USSR and Yugoslavia,
- Türkiye is also located in the centre of the Caucasus, which is rich in mineral resources, and furthermore in Central Asia, where there are, unfortunately, ethnic conflicts,
- Ethnic conflicts aside, it is in an effective position in the middle of the geography formed by the Caucasus, which has rich natural resources, and beyond that in Central Asia.

Türkiye, which connects three continents and has a very important geostrategic location, is simultaneously a European, Balkan, Caucasian, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, and Black Sea country. In this context, Türkiye is a Eurasian country. Other features that reinforce Türkiye's geostrategic importance are:

- As a country that is democratic, secular, has a social state of law, and has accepted a market economy, it implements western systems and has adopted integration with all western institutions,
- Its historical-cultural unity and the fact that it has developed positive relations with the Balkans, Middle East, Caucasus, and Central Asian countries, which have witnessed great changes since the 1990s,
- It includes one of the most important routes destined for the transportation of oil and natural gas from the Caucasus and Central Asia to the West,
- Türkiye plays the role of a natural bridge for Caspian and Central Asian natural resources to reach the west. 70% of the world's natural

energy resources are clustered around Türkiye. The Baku-Ceyhan project, which envisages the transport of Caspian oil to the west and has received great support from the international community, offers the most stable and safe environment in terms of oil transportation routes and carries the least risk in terms of environmental protection,

- Considering the exploitation of the rich natural resources in the region and their transportation to the west as a golden opportunity to increase regional cooperation and prosperity, Türkiye supports the use of multiple lines to transfer these resources to world markets and demonstrates its political will in this direction.

Globalisation and Logistics

Globalisation is a process that transcends the borders of capital, goods, services, cultural assets, scientific and technological possibilities, as well as being a process that can never predict today what kind of results it will have in the areas it affects and how it will be affected by the results that will arise or suggest a collection of processes (Aydın, 2002).

There is no universally accepted nor widely used definition of globalisation. Globalisation has economic, social, political, legal, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Scientists make a series of definitions and descriptions of the concept of globalisation by prioritising the elements that fall within their field of expertise regarding these fields.

The phenomenon of globalisation, which has emerged as a result of developments in the field of communication and transportation, foresees the free movement of goods and services all over the world. Today, many business transactions can be done electronically. However, an alternative solution has not yet been found for the physical transportation of products from one place to another. In other words, transportation maintains its importance to an increasing degree. Countries continue their search for sustainable and efficient logistics. In this context, the concept of a logistics base and its applications have become important in recent years.

Logistics is a tool for providing resources such as products, services, and people when and where they are needed. It is very difficult for any marketing or production organisation to succeed without logistical support (Ahi, 2015).

The economic growth in Russia and Asian countries, especially China and India's development, creates new opportunities for the transportation and logistics sector. The sustainable transportation system, which aims to reduce the economic, social, and environmental costs created by the said growth, supports the development of logistics systems and the

development of intermodal transportation by creating new opportunities in logistics (Zeynep, 2007).

With the effect of globalisation, the intensity of competition between companies and countries is getting tougher day by day. Organisations can have the power to compete; it depends on the extent to which they adapt to the rapid development experienced economically, socially, and technologically. Today, competitive conditions force providers of goods and services to achieve the fastest delivery and highest quality. Therefore, customers and companies position themselves according to the quality of the products they buy and how quickly they can receive them. As a matter of fact, logistics is one of the elements that enable customers to have products quickly and safely. This situation causes logistics to be seen among the activities that will create a competitive advantage in terms of businesses and is considered a process that needs to be constantly improved (Pınar et al., 2020).

The globalisation of the economy, together with a consumer-oriented economy, internet-based information systems, the substantial reductions in trade barriers, tariffs, and transportation costs, and the European Traffic Policy have all increased the amount of goods flow to be moved around the globe. This has generated growing demand for transport and logistics activities, which, since the 1950s, have changed greatly in order to respond to customers' needs (Mariotti, 2015).

The Concept of a Logistics Base/Centre and Logistics Bases in the World

According to the definition made by the European Association of Freight Villages (Europlatforms), a "Logistics Center"; is an area where operations related to transportation, logistics, and distribution of cargo are carried out by different companies/operators for both national and international transit (Ahi, 2015).

The effects of transformation and new formations in world trade with globalisation are also seen in the logistics sector. In this context, the importance of the logistics industry and logistics activities are increasing day by day. Today, the concept of logistics has become known with concepts such as resource planning, globalisation, supply chain management, and optimisation. With the globalising world trade and the new economic understanding, logistics activities have attained a different structure. The aforementioned differences encountered in the sector and practices have been reflected in the types and operations of logistics, and the necessity of performing these operations at the lowest possible cost, quickly, with

high quality, in a manner that benefits from the economies of scale and integrated with each other, has led to the formation of logistics villages in a sense. Since customs operations are different in each country, different names such as “Logistics Base”, “Transport Center”, “Logistical Park”, and “Logistics Center” are used for logistics villages in different countries (Örs et al., 2016).

The term “logistics centre” was first used in the development of industry in the United States. In Japan, this concept is also known to be used for activities such as avoiding traffic congestion, reducing energy and labour costs, and the reduction of environmental costs. The first examples of this practise, subsequently seen in Western Europe, emerged in France (Paris region; Garanor and Sogoris-Rungis). In the United States, the concept of a logistics centre/logistics base is called an inland port. Here, logistics-centre structuring has been implemented for two purposes: revitalising old industrial areas that have not grown much and establishing formations called “unit development”, planned for freight purposes. Specially planned and established areas for carrying out logistics activities are called logistics centres. A logistics centre is a region where all logistics activities related to commercial national and international transportation are carried out by different service providers. In Türkiye, this concept is expressed with terms such as “logistics village”, “freight village”, and “logistics base” (Şahin et al., 2015).

Table 1. Major Logistics Bases in Europe

Country	Number of Logistics Bases	Country	Number of Logistics Bases
Germany	35	Austria	5
Spain	33	Finland	5
France	26	Croatia	4
Italy	21	Luxembourg	4
Holland	15	Ireland	4
Czech Republic	11	Lithuania	3
Sweden	10	Estonia	3
United Kingdom	9	South Cyprus	3
Denmark	7	Greece	2
Belgium	7	Slovenia	2
Hungary	7	Latvia	2
Portugal	6	Malta	2
Poland	6	Romania	1
Slovakia	6	Bulgaria	1

Source: Europlatform, 2015.

On the one hand, the United States of America, which hosts the majority of logistics service providers, is one of the leading countries in this field. On the European continent, it is known that countries such as Germany and France are preferred globally for logistics activities. On the other hand, in addition to China, which has great power on a global scale, countries such as Japan and Singapore stand out as the countries of the Asian continent that have helped themselves to large slices of the logistics cake. It is also thought that Asian, Eastern Europe, and Middle Eastern countries will gain significant momentum in terms of logistics activities in the future, compared to the increasing costs of the Americas and Western European regions (Süzer, 2005).

On the other hand, the fact that 7 of the 10 busiest ports in the world are in China is a sign of China's important position both in global trade and the global supply chain (Utikad, 2020).

An Overview of Türkiye's Logistics Sector

Türkiye went through a reorganisation within the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure at the beginning of 2020 in order to increase efficiency and productivity in the logistics sector. With this reorganisation, the general directorates regulating road, rail, and combined transport activities were combined, and the two general directorates regulating maritime transport activities were merged.

All types of sea, rail, road, and air transportation and combined transportation can be used in transportation activities carried to all parts of the world, including those European, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries that are geographically close to Türkiye. Located on historically important trade and transportation corridors, where three continents converge, Türkiye's convenient location for transportation activities allows the use of different transportation modes and diverse transportation routes in the country's imports and exports. Recent investments in the improvement of logistics infrastructure include Istanbul Airport, Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, Marmaray, ports, logistics centres, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Line, etc., stand out. When the public investments made in the last 5 years are examined, it is clear that the Transportation and Communications sector had the largest share of the total investment plan in 2020. According to the 2020 Investment Program, approximately one-third of the total investments were allocated for use in projects in the Transport and Communications sector (Utikad, 2020).

Considering the value of the goods transported to the types of transportation in Türkiye in terms of the last 10-year period, we can see that

maritime transport has had the largest share in terms of both imports and exports. In this context, road transport ranks second, air transport ranks third, and rail transport ranks fourth.

Rail Freight

Railway transportation, which is one of the two types of transportation carried out over land, is a more environmentally friendly, safe, and economical type of transportation compared to road transportation. Türkiye has placed more importance on road transport in the last 70 years. For this reason, the share of railways in freight transport is quite low. The total rail network in the USA is 250,000 kilometres long and 80% of those lines are used for freight; China follows the USA with a 100,000-kilometre-long rail line, and by 2050, China's rail network is planned to exceed 270,000 kilometres; Russia's 85,000-kilometre-long railway network comes in third place. The current railway network in Türkiye is 12,803 kilometres (Utikad, 2020). The share of railways in freight transport in Türkiye is quite low.

However, in recent times, investments in this field have been focused on taking railway transportation to the forefront. There is an aim to increase the total railway line length to 17,527 kilometres in 2023, and to 23,627 kilometres between 2023 and 2035 (T.C. Ulaştırma ve Altyapı Bakanlığı, 2020). As can be seen, the aim is to double the railway networks over the next 10 years.

Türkiye's railway connections to the outside world include Kapıkule (Bulgaria), Uzunköprü (Greece), Canbaz (Georgia), Doğukapı (Armenia), Kapıköy (Iran), Islahiye, Nusaybin and Çobanbey (Syria) gates, whereas the Doğukapı, Islahiye, Nusaybin and Çobanbey gates are not currently in service (TCDD, 2022).

Türkiye's 13 ports in total have railway connections and these ports are: Haydarpaşa, Derince, İzmir, Bandırma, Mersin, Samsun, İskenderun, Tekirdağ, Zonguldak, Yılport, Evyap, DP World and Nemport (T.C. Ulaştırma ve Altyapı Bakanlığı, 2020).

With investments and projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line, Marmaray Tube Pass, and the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge railway crossing being carried out in recent years, Türkiye's load share on international rail corridors could increase, and ports are being expanded with the development of intermodal transport as well as rail transport on the east-west axis, and highway connections could strengthen Türkiye's position in international rail freight.

Highway Transports

Located at a crossroads where Europe, Asia, and Africa approach each other, Türkiye is located on important corridors in terms of east-west axis transportation activities and therefore on international road routes. In addition to the east-west axis road movements, these corridors pass through Türkiye with the ports located in the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Aegean Sea, as well as the integration of highways and maritime transport (Utikad, 2020).

Table 2. International Road Corridors

Name of Corridor	Length (km)
Trans-European North-South Motorway (TEM)	6,940
European Agreement for E-Roads Main Traffic Routes (UN/ECE/AGR)	9,353
Black Sea Economic Cooperation – BSEC (BSEC)	4,472
Economic Cooperation Organization – ECO (ECO)	9,914
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN/ESCAP)	5,268
Europe, Caucasus and Asia Transport Corridor (TRACECA)	11,582
Eurasian Road Links (EATL)	5,663
Trans Europe (TEN-T) Comprehensive Road Network	16,779
Trans Europe (TEN-T) Core Road Network	9,212

Source: T.C. Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Ulaşan ve Erişen Türkiye 2020, p. 197.

In international land transportation, Türkiye has land borders with Bulgaria (Kapikule, Hamzabeyli and Dereköy), Georgia (Sarp, Türkgözü and Aktaş), Iraq (Habur and Üzümlü), Iran (Gürbulak, Kapıköy and Esendere), Nahçıvan (Dilucu), Syria (border gates of Karkamış, Cilvegözü, Yayladağı, Nusaybin, Öncüpınar and Akçakale are located there), and Greece (Pazarkule and İpsala). Due to political and security reasons, Armenia and some Syrian road border crossings are not actually used (Utikad, 2020).

Air Freight

Air freight is generally used for the transportation of products with high unit prices. Air transport is also preferred for cargoes with high time sensitivity, especially technological products. Air transport has a significant impact on increasing the pace of global trade, as it enables long distances to be covered in a short time. Due to its geographical location,

Türkiye is only 4 hours' flying time from countries where a combined 1.59 billion people live, with a GDP of 39.3 trillion US dollars and a trading volume of 7.6 trillion US dollars. Although air transport has a relatively small share in Türkiye's foreign trade in terms of weight compared to the other three modes of transport, it ranks third after sea and road transport due to the value of the cargoes transported (DHMI, 2019).

Turkish Airlines is the airline that flies to the most countries and destinations in the world; 116 cities in 43 countries in Europe; 60 cities in 39 countries in Africa; 35 and cities in 13 countries in the Middle East. It also flies to 19 cities in 9 countries in the USA, 39 cities in 22 countries in the Far East, and 50 cities domestically (Utikad, 2020).

Maritime Transportation

Maritime transport, which plays a leading and important role in the globalisation of trade, is generally preferred for the transportation of cargoes with large volumes, low unit price, and time sensitivity. Along with containerisation, maritime transport also contributes to the development of combined transport. Although Türkiye, which is a peninsula in terms of geography, is located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, there are areas of development, especially in terms of transit transportation activities, in front of maritime transportation, which has an important share in Türkiye's foreign trade. The fact that 84% of the cargoes transported all over the world were transported by sea in 2019 and that the volume of sea transport has increased by 20 times in the last half-century demonstrates the importance of global maritime transport (Utikad, 2020).

When compared with other types of transportation, this mode of transportation has the advantage of being 14 times less expensive compared to air transportation, 3.5 times less compared to rail transportation, and 7 times less than the rate of road transportation (Tübitak, 2021). In Türkiye, maritime freight transportation ranks first among other transportation types.

Logistics Bases in Türkiye

Transportation and communication investments directly or indirectly affect every aspect of life. The level of development and the development of countries is directly proportional to the robustness and sustainability of their transportation and communication infrastructures. With the performance put forward in recent years, human, load, and data mobility has increased significantly. This increasing mobility has led to an increase

in logistic needs. As the logistic needs increase, it creates the need for more digitalisation. For this reason, it is imperative to implement more environmentally friendly, technological, and innovative projects. The motto determined for Türkiye's 2035 and 2053 vision is "Maximum digitalization in every field, healthy and comfortable mobility, logistics base Türkiye" (Tübitak, 2021).

In many sectors, from production to consumption, energy is the most important input. If we include the Russian Federation, 70% of the world's energy resources are located around Türkiye. Türkiye's proximity to energy sources is a great advantage for the logistics industry. Indeed, it is clear that Türkiye plays an important role in transporting energy supplies to other countries and will take on an even bigger role in the future.

The disruption of the supply chain has allowed global corporations to turn to Türkiye. Factors such as its strategic location, investment climate, manufacturing infrastructure, and skilled workforce offer attractive opportunities to companies. Supply chain disruptions that recently sent inflation in Europe to its highest level in 13 years and led to production disruptions in the U.S. and China, prompted global companies to look to Türkiye. Türkiye, which has attracted significant interest from European investors due to recent global increases in shipping prices, stands out for its geographic location, transportation network, demographic structure, and the amenities it offers investors. The exponential increase in long-distance transportation costs along with the epidemic turns Türkiye, which offers location and cost advantages for many foreign international companies, into an attractive investment and production centre (Sabah, 2021).

With globalisation, the products transported are increasing in volume. Existing transportation and logistics services, on the other hand, are in intense need of non-renewable energy. Therefore, the development of logistics systems becomes important. The development of intermodal transportation is a necessity in terms of the efficiency of logistics systems. The basis of the European Union's common transportation policy is the intermodal transportation system. This model is based on using various modes of transportation together. Logistics bases are needed in intermodal transportation. In this model, logistics bases are almost a necessity. Products are collected at these logistics bases and transferred to transportation types such as road, rail, sea, and air. Logistics bases have a very important function in the world in terms of transportation. In recent years, the importance of logistics bases in Türkiye has been realised and intensive efforts have been made in this regard.

TCDD (Turkish Republic State Railways) has undertaken the planning and implementation mission of the logistics base project in Türkiye. TCDD initiated the project of establishing logistics centres in order to develop transportation routes in combined transportation and to establish an effective connection between transportation modes, in order to carry out activities such as storage, maintenance/repair, loading/unloading, and handling in a more economical way. In order to increase Türkiye's competitiveness and to make Türkiye the logistics base of its region, the construction of logistics centres in 25 different locations has been planned. When all of the logistics centres that will turn Türkiye into the logistics base of the region are put into service, the Turkish logistics industry will gain an additional transportation facility of 75.2 million tons, with an approximately 19.9 million m2 open area, stock area, container stock, and handling area.

The locations where the logistics centres that are established, are being established and are in the planning stage in Türkiye are shown on the map below. According to this, it is envisaged that a total of 23 logistics base centres will be put into service, 12 of which are currently in operation, 3 of which are under construction, 3 of whose projects have been completed, and 5 of which are in the survey and planning phase (TCDD, 2022).

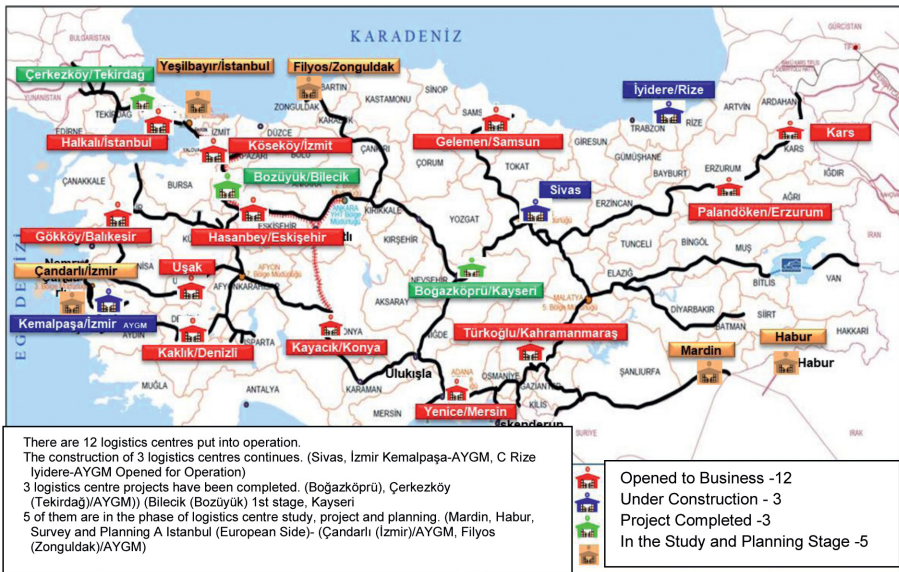


Figure 3. Logistics Centres Envisioned to be Built in Türkiye

Source: TCDD, <https://www.tcdd.gov.tr/kurumsal/lojistik-merkezler>.

The Logistics Capabilities of Countries by Level of Development

Logistics is a discipline that involves mental and behavioural change perfectly adaptable and applicable to all activities of daily living. The concept of logistics provides rules that allow management to follow, assess, prioritise, and control all the elements of supply and distribution that affect customer satisfaction, costs, and benefits (Song, Cheung, 2013).

Countries are evaluated in three categories in terms of logistics activities and standards. These are: developed countries, emerging countries, and third-world countries. Each of these countries has its own unique practices. It is possible to measure different levels of logistics achievement, despite differences in national accounting standards and practices. The Global Logistics Research Team at Michigan State University developed a model for firm-level logistical excellence and a set of standards by which to benchmark any firm's logistics performance. They measured strategies, organisational development, logistics performance, the use of information technology, and strategic alliances (Cateora et al., 1987).

However, it is much more difficult to measure a nation's logistics performance. Any firm's logistical performance will necessarily be limited by the political, social, and economic aspects of its national environment (Wood et al., 2002).

Countries have different standards of infrastructure and roads depending on their level of development. While developed countries have high standards of road and infrastructure, other countries have relatively lower road and infrastructure standards. This situation affects the logistics performance of both enterprises and the countries.

Business managers in developed countries want to benefit from the best logistics and transportation professionals, systems, and infrastructure in the world. In this context, they prefer advanced internet-based technologies, high capacity and standard road systems, broadband fibre-optic communication capabilities, uninterrupted multimodal transportation, modern port facilities, high-density air traffic control, and qualified staff. It may be possible to find such things in developed countries, but it is not possible to find many of these in underdeveloped countries.

A more informed perspective examines the differences among countries and evaluates each based on strengths and weaknesses, and the appropriateness of the logistical system to the business and cultural environment. Understanding different expectations for logistics performance may turn initial perceptions of inferiority into an appreciation for other ways of accomplishing logistics objectives (Wood et al., 2002).

A lack of transport infrastructures and regulatory barriers cause higher transport costs, negatively affecting economic development. This also brings with it delays that make supply chain management unreliable. A poor level of transport service can adversely affect the competitiveness and economic activity of regions and thus have a negative impact on regional added value, economic opportunities, and employment. Tools and measures are being developed to evaluate and compare the performance of national transport systems. The World Bank publishes the Logistics Performance Index, which ranks countries according to their logistics performance in certain periods (Notteboom et al., 2005).

The parameters used in the Logistics Performance Index are; timely delivery with customs, infrastructure, international shipments, the quality of services, tracking, and tracing.

Evaluation and Conclusions

Globalisation brings with it intense competition. In this intense competition, cost and time appear as important parameters for success. In other words, it is important that the products are produced at low cost and delivered to their target audiences in a short time. In order to achieve this, a conscientiously-planned logistics infrastructure is needed. The importance of this issue is now better understood thanks to COVID-19. In order to provide logistics services at the desired level and to provide an advantage, the geography, infrastructure, and technology investments made in that geography are important, as are other parameters.

MIT professor of economics Paul Krugman also emphasises the decisive role of geography, especially the distances between countries, on the efficiency and wealth of countries. From a geographical point of view, Türkiye is in a very important position connecting three continents. Türkiye, located in the westernmost part of the east and the easternmost of the west, is simultaneously a European, Asian, Balkan, Caucasian, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and Black Sea country. In this respect, Türkiye is able to play the role of a natural bridge. Throughout history, Anatolia has been both a strategic bridge and a centre of production and consumption.

Today, it will be able to fulfil this function with the modern Silk Road project. During the Seljuks and Ottomans, while inns and caravanserais were built on the historical Silk Road route, other services such as a postal system and security were also established. Due to this feature of the Anatolian geography, all the states established in this geography became powerful.

Considering its position on the world map, Türkiye is a natural logistics base for transportation activities in the region. Commercial activities between Asia and Europe or between the east and west are mostly carried out through Türkiye. Türkiye can reach a population of 1.6 billion and half of the global market within a 4-hour flight.

From a strategic point of view; Türkiye is a world state that ranks 16th among 185 countries in terms of population, 32nd in terms of land size, and among the top 20 in terms of economic power. The Middle East and Caspian Basin, which has the world's most important oil reserves, the Mediterranean Basin, which is at the junction of important maritime transport routes, the Black Sea Basin and the Turkish Straits, which have always maintained their importance in history, play the role of a natural bridge for the natural resources of Türkiye, Caspian and Central Asia to reach the west. 70% of the world's natural energy resources are clustered around Türkiye. The Baku-Ceyhan project, which envisages the transport of Caspian oil to the west and has received great support from the international community, offers the most stable and safe environment in terms of oil transportation routes and carries the least risk in terms of environmental protection.

On the other hand, the "One Belt One Road Project", which we can call the Modern Silk Road, strengthens Türkiye's position in this context. Within the scope of this project, the 'Middle Corridor', which includes Türkiye, will have special importance. If the Middle Corridor is fully activated, the transportation transfer time between Türkiye and China will be reduced from 30 days to 10 days. In order to take advantage of this natural location, there is a need to develop transportation and communication infrastructure. Being aware of this need, Türkiye has made significant investments in all modes in the fields of transportation and communication infrastructure in the last 10 years.

Türkiye, which wants to take advantage of the OBOR project along with its geographical location on the one hand, and wants to become a big logistics base on the other, has made many investments in this context. Some of these are; the Ankara-Istanbul high-speed train line, which was started in 2005 and completed in 2014, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway (BTK), the Northern Marmara Highway and the Third Bosphorus Bridge, the Marmaray and Gebze-Halkalı Suburban Line, the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, the Istanbul-İzmir Highway, the Eurasia Tunnel, Istanbul Airport, Osmangazi Bridge, and the 1915 Çanakkale Bridge, along with highway, tunnel and other infrastructure investments made throughout the country with the aim of developing transportation lines in the East-West and South-North directions.

In the last 10 years, Türkiye has focused on establishing logistics bases that started decades ago in countries such as the USA, Europe, and Japan, and has commissioned TCDD (Turkish Republic State Railways) so as to realise this mission. TCDD is an effective intermediary between the development of transportation routes and transportation modes in combined transportation and has initiated the project of establishing logistics centres in order to establish a connection, storage, maintenance/repair, loading/unloading, handling, etc. In this context, efforts to establish logistics centres in 25 different locations have been initiated in order to make Türkiye's region a logistics base. As can be seen from the map above, there are 23 logistics centres in Türkiye, of which 12 are in operation, 3 are under construction, 3 projects have just been completed and 5 are in the study and planning phase.

Considering the geography where Türkiye is located and the ancient history of this geography, the OBOR, which has come to the fore in recent years, and the 'Middle Corridor' in which Türkiye is included in this project, together with the infrastructure investments realised so far and the logistics centre construction works, is an important logistics base in Türkiye's region. It is clear that it has potential.

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*Mehmet Ali Özçobanlar**

Türkiye's Economic Diplomacy: Enhancing the Impact and Coherence of Türkiye's External Actions as an Emerging Strategy

Abstract

This article refers to the economic diplomacy of Türkiye and illustrates some changes during the history of the country's political and economic diplomacy. The background of the economic diplomacy process has been clarified and detailed information has been included. Bipolar and unipolar periods are analysed within the framework of economic and political diplomacies in their natural state. The development process of the Turkish economic diplomacy strategy is identified during particular periods in Turkish history. The structural transformation of Türkiye as regards its inward-oriented to outward-oriented economic policies has been evaluated. The mechanisms of Türkiye's multi-directional foreign policy, bilateral trade, and diplomatic relations between Türkiye, the EU and other countries are examined. The role of dependence and interdependence in economics are given in the context of economic globalisation. For this research, the historical methodology has been used. It is suggested that collaborative problem solving with all the institutions involved in economic and political decisions could lead to better outcomes for the country in the international arena.

Keywords: Economic Diplomacy, Diplomacy, Türkiye, Turkey, Foreign Policy, Trade, International Organisation

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Introduction

“Where are all kinds of necessary things sold?” This was the question addressed to Xenophon (ca. 430–354 BCE) by Socrates, a question to which he readily replied (Laertius, 1925). However, he was at loss to answer the next question about where goods or people acquired their qualities. “Then follow me and learn”, Socrates said, and henceforth Xenophon became a follower and friend of the philosopher. The answer, hidden in plain sight behind this dialogue, is “business activities”, a concern that does not pertain only to a part of society but has affected all human expression, relations, and activities for centuries.

The process towards a more interconnected world, or, in other words, the process of developing the world’s economy according to capitalist models, was defined by I. Wallerstein in world system theory as *globalisation*. The profits gained by business activities raised the importance of trade diffusion and trade agreements between interested parties, individuals, institutions, and countries (Wallerstein, 1974). The concept of business, hitherto undefined, appeared in its first form about 5000 years ago in the urban civilisation of Mesopotamia, in between the better-administrated Middle Eastern empires. One cannot also overlook the fact that ancient Greek philosophers contributed to shaping the perception of modernity in many aspects of life, from the context of current problems to deep thoughts about economics, and influenced the shaping of the business concept into an avant-garde economic model.

Key points for any business activity is the existence of an item to sell, or to exchange, between interested parties for mutual benefit. When all of these factors come together, business becomes important for a country’s economy and welfare. Business itself developed from the humble individual’s activity to the state’s concern, affecting each other and resulting in the benefit, or disadvantage, of both parties. Consequently, the state’s economic policy transformed the nature of business. It is no longer the simple exchange of goods and services or the selling of wares as it used to be, but is now something which has a significant effect on decision makers regarding the economic situation of a country and can even affect, or create, political conflict. It aims to find new markets, to multiply trade networks, and to enlarge not only geographical territory, but also to extend economical territories by increasing the capacity of economic power.

What is said in Ecclesiastes 1:9 is, “What is done at the current time, nay, or even contemporaneously, shall be done over again”, which can provide a good explanation about connections between historical

fact and a vision of the future (The Holy Bible: Ecclesiastes. 1:9). The Peloponnesian War of 431–404 BCE, between the Delian League and the Peloponnesian League offers a good example of how economic policies can be used as a tool even in warfare, for instance, for the partial or complete prohibition of commerce and trade, via the laying of embargoes, using discriminatory tariffs, conducting boycott campaigns, and ordering capital to be frozen. All of the above were used during the Peloponnesian war to prevent hostiles from passing through territories and to cut off each other's supply routes.

More recently, the use of such tools in economic warfare can be observed in the sanctions against Russia by Western allies including European Union Member States and the USA, because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The power of economic diplomacy, including acts in its name such as the use of embargoes, was one of the main reasons why Soviet Communism collapsed in the 1990s.

The application of new ideas regarding to the process of developing the concept of economic diplomacy is related to the current economic system. Kaiser (1980) illustrated that the western approaches of civic and economic advancement have been a greater matter and a foremost component in international relations in the history of Europe and, consequently, in the history of Eastern Europe. Imbert (2017) indicates that the formation of the European Recovery Program (ERP), also called the Marshall Plan, after the end of World War II, as well as the creation of the European Steel and Coal Community (ESCC), were certainly about economic interests.

The above shows that the economy became one of the principal, constituent parts of political ascendancy in foreign affairs, therefore the power of economic diplomacy should not be underestimated. Kunz (1997) argued that victory was indispensable for Americans during the Cold War, and that economic diplomacy was yet more important than military policy and domestic economic adjudications. It is apparent in this statement that economic diplomacy is the most important factor for achieving one's required goals. The Bretton Woods international monetary system, with the contribution of the enlargement of reciprocal trade and mutual interdependence, all within the framework of globalisation and foreign economic relations, are still powerful tools to impose one's will on other parties. These factors have constantly become more essential in international affairs from the post WWII era to this day.

Imbert Florence (2017) remarked that the economy, as a dominating factor of political influence in foreign affairs emerged in parallel with the concept of economic diplomacy following the end of the WWII. The

two World Wars were the deadliest military conflicts in world history, resulting in devastation, destruction, and the largest proportionate human losses. The imperative need to take prompt action to address the situation was understood by all and this subsequently led to successful diplomacy. Hence the United Nations was established in 1945 with the main goal of world peace and a more liveable world for everyone on Earth. To reach these basic goals, the UN and related institutions have made and continue to make great efforts to this very day. These peaceful, diplomatic efforts were further reinforced by the reciprocal relationship between economy and international politics. Countries with significant economic power have a geo-political influence and inevitably achieve a leading, influential role in global politics and economics. The economic incentives in international politics have an increasing significance on political diplomacy and foreign influence, as illustrated by the example of the economic sanctions placed on Cuba, Iran, and Russia (Florence, 2017).

Dependence and Interdependence in Economics

Economic globalisation dominates almost every single country's national economy (Shangquan, 2000). Even countries which stand geographically far from each other can easily establish relations for various reasons (those of the economic, political, cultural, artistic, etc.), but 'economic relations' can be considered as the most common form. In the economic history of the world there are several instances of global economic crises wherein the economic problem of one country spreads like a contagion to many other countries. The financial crisis of 2008, which was one of the worst after the great depression in the USA, made apparent the domino effect in economics and the fact that any crisis in one country can affect other countries to a greater or lesser extent. The global financial crisis that emerged in the 21st century was followed by the European debt crisis, which began with a deficit in Greece in late 2009, and which affected the whole world in a very short time. The Covid-19 epidemic that emerged in 2019 and, later, the Russian invasion of Ukraine are more recent examples of global effects in economies. Furthermore, since Russia and Ukraine are the key agricultural suppliers in the world, the ongoing war between these two countries could create a food shortage that could have worldwide repercussions, and cause an aggravation of the global food crisis.

In addition to such global crises, bilateral crises between the world's major economies can easily affect world economies. Crises involving the USA, China, Russia, and the European Union could turn the world economy upside down and cause greater or lesser turmoil to almost every

country in the world, according to their economic size and power. Even some events that seem to be merely internal problems of a given country can affect the whole world via the domino effect, primarily those countries which maintain close relationships.

Domestic economic, political, military, or social problems that arise due to national or international reasons can adversely affect any individual's life in a given country, especially as regards economic balance. In cases where such situations cannot be resolved by a country's administration via domestic means, the problem can be attempted to be solved through international relations. Since other countries can be easily affected by a problem in a given country, the seeking of solutions even for national problems in the international arena can sometimes be inevitable. Today's digital age allows information to flow rapidly all around the world, so even countries that are not geographically close to each other can be informed about national problems instantly, and may take decisive actions to resolve the problem without even notifying the country experiencing said issues. Moreover, countries that have a strong, diplomatic structure and try to progress by establishing close relations with many other countries can be more affected by problems arising in those countries to which they are linked. Türkiye can be considered as one such example of this. An efficient implementation and a constant augmentation in diplomatic activities have been established since the times of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Türkiye. He considered it of great importance and made it the precedent doctrine in the country's diplomatic ties and since then it remains an important foundation of Türkiye's economic and political power. The following statement made by him right after the war of independence, when he founded the Turkish Republic, demonstrates the above-mentioned; "It is necessary to be strong in terms of politics, administration, and economy in a way that will discourage all hopes of those who will have plans to invade our country" (Atatürk Ansiklopedisi, 2013).

It is indicated in the UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) Technology and Innovation Report 2018 that solutions to major global challenges could be found in new technology, along with advancements in science and technology in developed and even in the world's least developed countries. The fact that the global structure of production and trade is getting stronger day by day increases our awareness of diplomacy and shapes it into norms. Successes of diplomatic activities, especially economic diplomacy, make it easier to overcome problems in the global economic structure. Although it is a materialistic approach, the fundamental goal of societies acting in their own self-interest

is to achieve better living conditions and to increase life quality, and one must have a strong economy so as to achieve these goals. Therefore, successful economic diplomacy may also help to enhance collaboration between nations, to develop their economies, and to pave the way to growth (Hao, 2014). In this context, countries that carry out effective economic diplomacy and have a good position in the world's economic and political structure will be able to solve these problems easily, no matter how big these problems are and what those countries have to face.

However, it should be noted that diplomacy cannot be established on the unilateral basis of just 'gaining'. One also has to reciprocate or even to compromise in order to achieve a country's political and economic objectives. The bilateral relations between two nations have to be grounded on conventional morality wherein one must give in order to receive. In other words, diplomacy operates on the basis of the principles of 'reciprocity' or 'compromise'. This is also the main principle for achieving success in national and international economic and political policies. For instance, Türkiye's political decision to form an allegiance with the Western Bloc after World War II (MFA, 2022) and to have an active role in the Korean war that lasted between 1950 and 1953, resulted in Türkiye becoming a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, also referred to as "NATO", on February 18th, 1952 (Stephen, Brannen, 2009), thanks to strong U.S. backing. Shortly thereafter, this membership allowed Türkiye to take an important position in world politics, especially in the military field, in addition to the fact that the country gained significant diplomatic power.

Theoretical Principles of Diplomacy and Economic Diplomacy

Diplomacy emerged and developed when societies started to have social intercourse. Scholars highlighted the fact that the concept of diplomacy encompasses the social, political, cultural, and economic relations realised through an interconnected group of political actors in formal and informal domestic and systemic environments. Traditional diplomatic tools such as intelligence gathering, which influences the decision-making processes of politicians and representatives of economic diplomacy, are used to achieve desirable agreements through discussions and to further the economy and the foreign economic policies of the state (Lee, Hocking, 2010). Economic diplomacy has been used within political entities i.e., city-states, kingdoms, and empires with the goal of ameliorating the living conditions of their citizens (Zirovcic, 2016).

Diplomacy takes many different forms according to the circumstances. 'Economic diplomacy', as an important diplomacy practice, could also be and is frequently used as a sanction element for the elimination of injustices and lawlessness. When diplomatic efforts fail to prevent war between two or more countries, economic sanctions as tool of diplomacy can be and are used to target an opponent country's trade, companies, financial sectors, and even individuals so as to impede that country's access to the global economy.

During the last 30 years, small and large-scale conflicts have occurred; the major conflicts being the Persian Gulf War that took place in 1990 after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the shorter Gulf War II when the USA and Great Britain invaded Iraq. Besides these, there has been no activity that can be described as a war, apart from some terrorist activities on a global and regional basis. But now, the Russian invasion in Ukraine must be faced. On February 24th, when Russian President Vladimir Putin declared a "special military operation" against the neighbouring Ukraine, this action was considered by the European Union, the Western Alliance, and most other countries as war, and led them to impose economic sanctions not only on Russia but also on Russian individuals. Guidelines issued by the European Commission have banned the transit of some goods from Russia through EU territory (EC, 2022). Consequently, a decision taken by Lithuania, according to these guidelines, was to ban, for a short time, the transit of coal, metals, construction material, and advanced-technology goods and products from Russia to the exclave of Kaliningrad, a former Soviet Union port city in the Baltic Sea located between EU and NATO members Poland and Lithuania.

As Gilpin (1987) mentions, the true nature of economic diplomacy is to break off, to apply or to control trade and political intercourse, and it is used as such by the EU and Member States in the current, ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. Within the framework of their economic statecraft, the EU and its allies use their economic resources diplomatically in the form of a bounty, or impose sanctions, according to political views, in order to achieve their foreign-policy objectives (Berridge, James, 2003).

However, economic diplomacy is frequently used not only in order to eliminate injustices and lawlessness, but also to strengthen relations between countries. Okano-Heijmans (2011) delineates economic diplomacy as the use of political means in international negotiations with the aim of earning high returns, along with the aspiration of enhancing national economic prosperity and increasing the political stability of a given nation.

Jon Dingell defines war as a result of a failure of diplomacy (Willmott, 2017). Looking at the wars in history, it is apparent that the winners of those wars remained only in the texts of the ceasefire agreements. When

the results of the wars are examined, it can be seen that there are no winners of any war. All the warring parties, who won or lost in the history books, have paid a huge price.

These experiences bring diplomacy to the fore as a solution to the international conflicts that arise today. According to Van Bergeijk (2009), the second of the three elements that comprise economic diplomacy is that it could either “increase the cost of a conflict, or to increase the mutual advantages of cooperation and politically stable relations through the use of economic assets and formal relations”.

Mr. Muş, the minister of trade in Türkiye, indicated in June 2022 that the government continues to follow commercial diplomacy where bilateral trade and economic relations are comprehensively appraised in Türkiye's foreign trade policy (Hurriyet, 2022). This statement is in accordance with Van Bergeijk's (2009) definition of economic diplomacy as the trade activities and decisions on international business relations made by formal actors with authorities and non-state actors using trade instruments such as export, import, investment, lending, aid, and migration. This kind of approach in economic diplomacy promotes international trade and influences it positively in order to make markets better functioning and to reduce the costs and risks of international transactions.

Bayne and Woolcock (2007) indicate that cross border economic issues are interrelated to economic diplomacy and state governors and the way they conduct relations in international trade. Rana also mentions that economic diplomacy is something that nations have to face in the international arena at varying degrees i.e., on reciprocal relations with neighbouring countries, and in multi-lateral degrees in order to achieve a country's specified aims, to increase economic growth, or to gain more investments and improve trade relations (Kishan, 2007). Economic diplomacy is the use of economic instruments (direct investments, financial activities, aid and grants, and foreign trade practices) in the regulation of international relations. Considering the world order of the day, the principles that successful economic diplomacy should have (Yueh, 2020) are:

- the balancing of trade openness with strategic foreign policy objectives,
- the promotion of a rules-based system and the recognition of foreign economics,
- it should have a principled and transparent framework focused on trade openness that is consistent with foreign trade, security, and other relevant policy objectives,
- it should not direct its foreign economic policy solely in line with domestic concerns but strive for balance between foreign economic policies and domestic concerns,

- it should not ignore the importance of countries' values as well as investment and commercial processes,
- and by focusing on a global solution, high participation in diplomatic processes with strong partners should be ensured.

Economic Diplomacy in Practice

In the process of economic diplomacy, when coercive measures (sanctions) are imposed on another country, the sanctioned country can respond with similar measures with a counter-implementation. If the country which puts leverage on another country is an economically strong country, the sanctioned country will not be able to respond and beat the applied sanctions. Therefore, in this case, the strongest country will achieve its goals. The country that is subject to sanctions may have to accept an agreement. The tools used by economic diplomacy are generally;

- 'Incentives' (grants, low-interest loans, and trade agreements that promote mutual trade, direct and/or financial investments) in which cooperation and providing help are practiced by making mutual concessions with a country where relations are normal and it is desired that economic relations will develop, and
- on the side of the country or group of countries, so-called 'coercive' economic tools (the suspension of trade agreements, increasing tariffs on imports, quota applications, tariff-like barriers, increasing and slowing down bureaucratic procedures in the foreign trade process, grants and boycotts and embargoes applied in the form of cutting economic aid, stopping investments and visa applications (Zirovcic, 2016).

A good example of this process is the so called USA–China Trade War (BBC, 2020). In 2018, US President Donald Trump made a request to increase tariffs on Chinese products on the grounds of anticompetitive trade and intellectual property rights violations. China responded to that by increasing tariffs on US products with a similar application. Not only these two countries, but all the countries of the world have been adversely affected by this process. Beside the trade defensive instruments used in sanctions, embargoes may also be applied by the countries aimed at the defence industries of sanctioned countries.

At the end of 2020, the United States of America imposed sanctions on the Republic of Türkiye's presidency of defence industries (SSB) under the restrictions of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, also known as CAATSA (U.S. Department of State, 2020). According to this federal law, sanctions were also imposed also on Iran, North Korea, and Russia. Though those sanctions focus mainly on the financial sectors

of a given country and causes detrimental effects on specific categories and individuals. In Türkiye's case, it was the bill which was passed by the U.S. Senate and signed by then President Donald Trump, which only targeted the defence industries (Under, 2021).

These CAATSA sanctions fall into four categories; a prohibition on granting specific US export licenses and authorisations from the Directorate of Defence Trade Controls (DDTC), from The Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), which deals with issues involving national security and high technology, and from The United States Department of Energy (DOE). In addition to these three categories, there is a fourth one of the sanctions on loans by any financial institution of the United States of America, of more than US \$10 million, through the US import-export Bank to Türkiye. By this article, the USA coerces international financial institutions to stop the progression of loan aid for Türkiye. Moreover, several high-ranking Turkish individuals are forbidden to engage in any transactions.

Parallel to the above, similar sanctions were imposed on Türkiye by EU members and NATO. The United Kingdom put restrictions on defence exports to Türkiye, although in the first quarter of 2022, these restrictions were lifted. Canada imposed an embargo for high-tech arms exports to Türkiye, but there is a reasonable prospect for a lifting of this ban after the United Kingdom's decision (MEMO, 2022). France and Germany also halted arms exports to Türkiye alongside Czechia, Italy, Finland, and Sweden. These countries claim that their actions are based on reasonable foundations, however a former Secretary of State of the USA said that the USA's foreign policy should be carried out more in terms of engagement in trade with other countries and that the US should take the lead in economic growth around the world (Newsome, Jarmon, 2015).

The importance of economic diplomacy is understood by all departments of every nation's governmental authorities. Economical diplomacy has been at the heart of the State Department's missions as has been stated by former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (U.S. Department of State, 2018). The European Commission also declared in 2017 that the importance of EU economic diplomacy is recognised, and that it should be more integrated. The EU and its Member States should also take initiatives in European economic diplomacy pro-actively and should advance the coherence of external policies and tools for the citizens of the Member States and European economies (Pangratis, 2019).

Economic diplomacy is generally directed by state institutions and officials. In parallel to state policies it is also determined by the top government authorities' decisions, according to the regime on which it is going to be applied. A country's diplomacy process is carried out through

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and corroborated by other ministers according to their specialisation. However, it is not only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is involved in relations with other countries. In international negotiations, the relevant minister, or expert state official, will be able to carry out diplomatic activity. For instance, in a cooperation process related to agricultural activities, this diplomatic activity will be more effective if it is carried out by the competent Ministry of Agriculture. Depending on the scope of the diplomatic initiative, in cases where many different issues will be discussed, the diplomacy process can be carried out by a delegation of other ministries and expert state officials (Turgutoğlu, 2020).

Nowadays, the biggest issue that countries face, due to the ongoing Russia/Ukraine war, is a world grain shortage. To avert a global food crisis, Türkiye has undertaken diplomatic initiatives to carry out a UN plan for the creation of a safe grain corridor in the Black Sea. Türkiye recently hosted a four-way meeting with the UN, Russia, and Ukraine in Istanbul. Military delegations participated so as to determine the basic headers for the accomplishment of a safe maritime corridor to export Ukrainian grain to Africa and the Middle East. From the point of diplomacy, an observation mechanism comprising representatives from Russia, Ukraine, Türkiye, and the UN supervised the process (Xinhua, 2022). The successful outcome of this endeavour has shown, once again, how important the diplomatic path is and that it should always remain open. It also shows that diplomacy can be carried out even in complex cases involving many different agencies of governmental bodies.

The EU's Economic Diplomacy

The economy, economic growth, and wealth have been always at the centre of an urbanised human's life. From centuries past to this very day it remains a topic of heated discussions between people, and could even be a cause for governmental collapse. But the economy also became the tool and the means for the unification of different groups, tribes, states, and countries. In the 19th century, the Zollverein, or the German customs union, was formed. It got almost all German states' approval as an organisation, and it shared many similarities with the European Economic Community (Wallich, Wilson, 1981). It was generally understood that the states which are united have greater advantages and better chances of economic growth than they could have even dreamed of achieving on their own (Oslington, 2013). The member states of the Zollverein and the European Economic Community found common ground and worked

collaboratively on many different activities. Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, and Luxembourg established a common market to work towards integration and economic growth through the trading of coal, iron, and steel. The Treaty of Rome, as the European Economic Community (EEC) Treaty is also known, created a common market which is based on the free movement of goods, people, services, and capital (Treaty of Rome, 1957).

It was not particularly easy to reach the point of creating economic unity and intercalating it with politics. The first peaceful unification proposed by Count Coudenhove Kalergito, created a United States of Europe in 1923. In addition to this call, in 1929, Aristide Briand put forth a motion to create a European Union based on the League of Nations (Borchardt, 1987). If one wants to ground the European idea on a doctrine in literature, then the collective representations theory proposed by the theoretician Durkheim, which implies building a community, can be cited. But of course, the origin of the European idea goes back centuries to myths originally told by the ancient Greeks, to expedients in order to preserve peace in the Medieval Periods, and to the writings of the philosophers Voltaire and Montesquieu in the 16th century (Swedberg, 1994). Today, relations between the external policies of the European Union and the national policies of each Member State of the EU tend to run parallel with common negotiating positions, even though sometimes Member States' opinions differ.

Economic diplomacy can be seen as a decision-making and cognitive process of achieving agreement through discussions in global economic relations. The EU's economic diplomacy is also composed of decision making and/or the process of accomplishing a common objective, or trying to find common ground between EU Member States and further to implement consented EU positions in negotiations with other associated countries outside the EU (Woolcock, 2012). The internalisation in economies, bilateral trade, and commerce between the nations, and, additionally, the relatively increasing economics-related issues, made economic diplomacy all the more important. Globalisation impelled governmental agencies and institutions to make changes in applied policies and decision-making processes. The complex structure of the global economy led countries to add or exclude actors who are involved in their economic activities. In the European Union, many Member States and EU officials have been more closely associated with negotiations in the international arena.

Until the beginning of 20th century, all issues related to economic diplomacy had been performed by ministers of foreign affairs with the

assistance of Ministries of Trade and Finance. Nowadays, however, the number of actors who are directly involved in international negotiations and the decision-making process are much larger in number. Many other departments are more likely to get involved in negotiations, as are sub-central governmental bodies and non-governmental organisations. From the beginning of 1970s, the US's domination over western economies was replaced by club-based-model organisations, in which the European Community participates, as do Canada and Japan (Keohane, Nye, 2001). Later on, the USA and EC, along with other countries, formed, through multilateral negotiations, the transatlantic economic diplomacy in trade, development and finance, striving to direct the markets. This trend towards being a member of an economic organisation other than the OECD has not lost its appeal even today. To belong to an economically strong organisation is still considered as an advantage and can play a large role in the strengthening of one's position in international negotiations.

Relative to this case is the establishment of the BRICS organisation, of which Russia is co-founder and member state. This organisation includes the world's major emerging economies which wield significant power in regional affairs and represents around 42% of the global population, 23% of GDP, 27% of the territory, and 18% of trade (DW, 2022). This shows that a bipolar capitalist system can form an association wherein all countries following the capitalist system, although they might differ in political views, participate and have the economic organisations' support. President of the BRICS International Forum Purnima Anand disclosed that Türkiye, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia expressed their willingness to join the BRICS organisation, and the BRICS member states are supportive of their acceptance. In addition to that, Iran and Argentina have already applied to join the BRICS. Those memberships will increase the power of the organisation globally.

Within this multi-polar economic system, economic diplomacy is not only more effective in trade negotiations, but also in international relations. Therefore, the importance of the economic diplomacy carried out by the European Union comes into prominence in international economic relations. Positive economic relations with other nations bring stability in economies to the Union and development within the EU Member States. Pangratis (2019) observes that European Economic Diplomacy (EED) "is about the EU's own interests, but EU integration itself is built on the principle that a sustainable own interest is one that is founded on solid respect of your partner's interest as well... Thus, most EED priorities, in most countries, can be, and in many cases already have become, joint priorities with local authorities too".

Turkish Economic Diplomacy

Looking back at Turkish history, it is apparent that diplomacy has always kept a solid footing in international relations. Poland was one of the first countries with which Türkiye officially started diplomatic relations in the year 1414. In 1453, the first diplomatic relations were created with the Republic of Venice, which had the right to establish an embassy for permanent missions shortly after Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Emperor Mehmed II. Bailo of Constantinople, a diplomat who was in charge of the affairs of the Republic of Venice in Constantinople, was the first of the diplomats from European states which soon started establishing embassies in Türkiye (Topaktaş, 2014). The main reason why Turks were in a close relationship with Italian states was the bilateral commercial interests between powerful maritime Italian republic states and, as a dominant trading partner, the Ottoman Empire (Reena, 2009). This shows that Turks have placed importance on international relations throughout history, and have tried to solve multilateral problems primarily through diplomacy and to develop bilateral relations based on economic relations besides political, cultural, geopolitical, and agnatic relations. They were highly critical and cautious in diplomatic relations and, for this reason, they trained state officials who were experts in the field of diplomacy and managed international relations through those officials (Elci, 2019).

The Republic of Türkiye, created by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, has strived, since its foundation, to establish relations with world nations, stressing the great importance of diplomacy. Atatürk always prioritised diplomacy even during the War of Independence, which lasted from 1919 to 1922. His diplomatic achievement was to reconcile the countries and to endorse the establishment of Republic of Türkiye before it was even officially constituted. The victorious War of Independence culminated with the Armistice of Mudanya signed on October 11th, 1922. These negotiations between representatives of the Great National Assembly of Türkiye, England, France, and Italy, is the most important indicator of Atatürk's extraordinary intelligence in diplomacy, besides his being a military genius. The Lausanne Peace Agreement, which was signed even before the establishment of the Turkish Republic, was another diplomatic achievement courtesy of Atatürk and the Republic of Türkiye. In 1931, during his visit to Anatolia, Atatürk said: "We work for peace at home, and peace in the world". Later on, this became one of the basic principles of Türkiye's domestic and foreign policy.

The internal and external policies which were formed and directed by this principle led Türkiye to achieve hugely important successes in

diplomacy to this day. In accordance to this policy, Türkiye did not take any sides in WWII. Until the final stages of that war, Türkiye remained a non-aligned country and took initiatives to ensure peace through diplomacy which has been the essence of the Republic of Türkiye in its foreign policy since the very moment of its establishment (MFA, 2022). Due to the fact that the newly established country of the Republic of Türkiye had no economic power and a rather new nation-state structure, there was limited yet rather pioneering industrial manufacturing. Therefore, the state had to take initiatives to form, organise and develop industrial production (Ulusoy, 2017). During the previous era, the financial crisis and, additionally, the incorrect economic policies of the Ottoman Empire administration resulted in giving several capitulations in trading and some other rights within the territories controlled by the empire to Christian nations. This was one of the main reasons why the idea of accepting foreign investments was not welcomed by the new Republic, therefore a nationalisation of the available resources was preferred (Kalaycı, 2008). These capitulations were abolished by the Treaty of Lausanne, and it was also agreed that the country would practice its own commercial policies starting from 1929 and, consequently, the international economic framework for the new state was successfully constituted. The government approved some other policies for the protection and encouragement of the domestic producers by imposing tariffs, quotas and etc. on imports, thus giving SMEs and local producers a great opportunity to enter to the internal markets by having more advantages due to import repression in the 1930s (Pamuk, 2007).

From the very beginning of its establishment, the Republic of Türkiye sought and gradually increased economic relations with the Soviet Union (Özder, 2017). The Great Depression of 1929 forced countries to look for new economic solutions. The Soviet Union successfully implemented a five-year plan in its economy, a fact that influenced Türkiye to accept etatism and to develop Soviet-Turkish economic relations (Vandov, 2014). In Türkiye, etatism, an economic policy widely accepted at that time, was implemented in industrialisation policies. Türkiye asked the Soviet Union to send experts in order to prepare a report for a five-year Industrial Plan similar to the one which had been implemented in the Soviet Union. In response to that, many distinguished professors and technical experts visited Türkiye, such as economy professor Orloff, and Vladislav Vago who was the director of the Mathematics and Physics Institute in the USSR.

The efforts of Türkiye to find its way in economic policies were not limited only to the USSR; they also asked for a report from the USA.

Walker Hines, a railroad executive, attempted to draw up a report, but, due to his sudden death, this report was ultimately finalised by other US experts at the beginning of 1934, when the first five-year plan was actually imposed by the economic and technical support of the USSR in Türkiye. Therefore, the US report ended up not having any effect on the five-year industrial plan (Soylu, Yaktı, 2012). However, in 1932, Türkiye joined the League of Nations at the same time as Iraq, thus also participating with western allies (William, 2021).

In 1930s, economic policies were mostly connected with the foreign policies of those times. On 1st September, 1939, Germany attacked Poland without declaring war, and, after two days, England and France declared war against Germany, and so began World War II (Özcelik, 2010). Türkiye tried to remain neutral in this war, although they had signed a tripartite treaty with Britain and France in October 1939 because Türkiye expected to receive financial aid and military equipment (Koçak, 1986). The balancing of the diplomacy of Turkish foreign policy is apparent in the terms of this treaty. Under the tripartite treaty terms, Türkiye was obliged to participate in the war by joining England and France, but, under article II, Türkiye was allowed not to participate in a war should that participation cause conflict between the USSR and Türkiye. However, in February 1945, in order to be able to participate in the conference of San Francisco (which resulted in the creation of the UN), Türkiye finally declared war against Germany and Japan. This move was mostly a symbolic gesture because, physically, Türkiye did not participate to the war at all (Gol, 1992). In the current Russian War against Ukraine, Türkiye is trying to maintain a balance in its relations with Russia and with its Western Allies (Tapia, 2022).

Türkiye has constantly updated its policies in accordance to the prevailing economic trends striving to take a place in the new world order created after World War II. Joining the United Nations after WWII, global organisations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and Türkiye's becoming a member of NATO after the Korean War, are important diplomatic achievements of Türkiye towards this goal. The country also adopted important changes in its domestic politics. After the war, under the influence of domestic and foreign circumstances, the country's transition to a multi-party system took place, which broadly shaped and transformed the Turkish political system. The economic transformation of Türkiye was actualised together with political transformation.

The country's state-centric economic approach gradually changed into that of a more liberal one, aiming to support more individuals and privatisation in most sectors towards a more free market economy. The foreign

policy of Türkiye during the post WWII period was mostly structured by the need to adapt to European economies, economical concerns, and to achieve westernisation (Atlı, 2013). The Marshall Plan also had a significant effect on decisions in Turkish economic policies due to the fact that Türkiye had to accept following a more liberal economic policy in order to receive financial aid from the USA. Apart from deciding to become member of international organisations right after WWII, Türkiye also took big steps regarding economic relations with other countries by signing The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which later on, in 1995, became the World Trade Organization (WTO) which also included China, a fact that led the country to also become more liberal in international trade. Joining the Bretton Wood system and the received aid in economic development and military grants from USA were some of the reasons why Turkish economic and political policies were shaped under the Truman Doctrine (Satterthwaite, 1972).

Turkish foreign policy became a Western-oriented policy, wherein the Turkish economy is much more integrated with post-war international organisations pioneered by the USA. In the mid-point of the 20th century, Türkiye faced an economic crisis due to rising inflation and fiscal disequilibrium caused by the expeditious liberalisation attempts in the economy which led Türkiye to look for international support to pay its debts through the receipt of funds from the IMF. From then on, Türkiye became a debtor nation until 2013, meaning that the foreign policy of Türkiye would be more under its creditors' control.

At that time, Türkiye had to face up to not only its economic problems, but also had to deal with serious internal conflicts and instability, since it had the misfortune of experiencing the 1960 coup d'état. Turkish armed forces ousted the elected government of the Prime Minister Adnan Menderes from the Democrat Party (DP), who won the 1950, 1954, and 1957 elections and governed the country five times between 1950 until 1960 (Dagdemir, Kucukkalay, 1999). He was sentenced to death and was subsequently hanged. During this period, relations between Türkiye and USA were tense, however Türkiye managed to establish closer relations with Europe and the USSR.

In addition to that, in 1959, the Turkish government submitted an application to be a candidate for associate member in the EEC, and, in 1963, the Ankara Agreement was signed with the EEC, with the intention of establishing a customs union between both parties. Accession negotiations for full membership started officially in 2005, 46 years after the initial application. This initial agreement resulted in the development of economic relations between Türkiye and EEC countries. The General Secretariat

of European Union (UEGS) was the leading institution discussing and supervising the necessary steps that the country should take for reforms politically, socially and economically, so that Türkiye's legislation would be in accordance with EU legislation (Ugdul, 2022).

Türkiye's tendency towards balancing foreign policy also appears in the creation of economic ties. From 1960s until 1964, Türkiye and the USSR signed five different protocols to improve bilateral trade relations, in addition to the trade and navigation agreement they had signed in 1937. In 1961, Türkiye also joined the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

This turbulent period in Turkish history played a significant role in the internal and external policies of the country. The 1960s was also the time when Türkiye started to implement import substitution industrialisation (ISI) in its economy (Dağdemir, 2016), acts that could be characterised as neo-étatisme. The import substitution industrialisation planning strategy was supported by the owners of industrial enterprises and bureaucratic groups and led to structural changes and sharp growth in economic means along with the development of industry (Unay, 2010).

This economic integration via its membership of international economic organisations allowed Türkiye to reconsider its international policies and had a significant influence on the country's foreign policies which became more linked to global issues. However, although Türkiye steered its development in line with import substitution policies in the 1960s and 1970s, it was largely deprived of the opportunities offered by the international economy (Ögütçü, 1998). At the beginning of 1970s, the global oil crisis greatly affected the Turkish economy. This global fact aside, Türkiye's military intervention in Cyprus prompted significant changes in the country's foreign economic relations with the USA, which began to implement arms embargoes on Türkiye (Coşkun, 2015). This was a period when crises were experienced; the cold war between the USA and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) escalated, and the European Economic Community, to which Türkiye had applied for membership, began to become a power that could defend its interests in this superpower struggle. These processes affected greatly relations between countries. During this period, Türkiye's internal political crises, along with the conflict with Greece after the "Cyprus Peace Operation", caused the economic crisis in Türkiye to escalate and brought internal political instability. It is characteristic that, from the beginning of 1970s until the 1980s, there were ten different governments, two Memorandums and one coup d'état in the country (Yıldırım, 2014; Gunter, 1989). This situation made Türkiye unable to respond to the international sanctions

and embargoes which were imposed during this period. These incidences brought dramatic economic losses to the country until the 1980s, when the country adopted a free-market economy approach.

In the 1980s, the most important changes took place regarding economic and foreign policies, due to the fact that the country adopted neo-liberalist economic policies. The 24th January reform package signed by Turgut Ozal established a new economic model, one in which the Turkish economy should follow a market supremacy model, there should be a minimum of government regulations, there should be more liberalisation in trade in order to bring more importance to the private sectors, to forward the economy, and to discharge import restrictions (Buğra, 2003). These initiatives towards new liberalisation moves brought significant export rates, which had a direct and positive effect on the country's economic policies. Economic relations with other countries also increased during the new liberalisation period including with countries from international organisations such as OPEC and the EEC (Kurtaran, 2020).

These decisions towards outward-oriented economic policies opened new possibilities for the country; to vary its trading partners during this period, to integrate with multifarious economies all around the world and to bring in new international economic partners. But they also facilitated the emergence of new actors within the country itself, such as the Anatolian Tigers,¹ which will have significant effect on the development of the economy and economic policies, but also strengthened the ones which already existed, such as the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD). The more the private sector attained power and financial strength, the more they played an important role in external economic relations (Atlı, 2013). In addition to this, the chambers of industry, the chambers of commerce, the national chambers associations, foundations, and non-governmental associations such as The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), and the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Türkiye (DEİK), had the chance to engage in international activities. The diplomacy carried out by these organisations is mostly aimed at improving bilateral or multiple relations and to increase economic, political, and social cooperation between countries (Özkan, 2019).

Formal economic diplomacy is carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a major actor in Türkiye. The Ministry of Trade (MOT) has

¹ The term of Anatolian Tigers, inspired by the successful Asian Tigers, refers to Anatolian entrepreneurs, mainly family businesses. Due to the similarities between the pious Anatolian Tigers businessmen's work ethic and values and the approach of Calvinist Burghers, they are also called as "Islamic Calvinists" (Özçobanlar, 2015).

a certain effect on the economic diplomacy of the country and is the main decision maker on foreign trade policies and regulations. The responsibility of the MOT is not just deciding on re-regulation and policies, but also to carry out bilateral and international economic relations within the context of trade and commerce (Presidential Decree on Presidential Organizations of 2018, article 1). The Ministry of Treasury and Finance (MOTF) is another governmental institution which plays a significant role in terms of the economic policies of the country. The ministry shapes negotiations regarding foreign capital investments and loans etc., and has the right to negotiate with international monetary organisations such as the IMF, and with international financial organisations such as the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, and the Asian Development Bank. The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) is another governmental organisation which plays a key role in sharing the country's development experience with other countries thereby strengthening bilateral relations around culture and creative economy under the principles of cooperation and partnership. One of the most important projects that TİKA has undertaken is the rebuilding of the Turkish house in Lazienki Park in Warsaw, Poland. The project was discussed between the two countries' ministries in 2021 (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2022).

The Foreign Economic Relations Board of Türkiye, or DEİK in short, was established by Turgut Ozal in 1986. The organisation's responsibility is to perform the coordination of the Turkish private sector's foreign economic policies so as to meet Turkish business people's needs. The executive board of directors of DEİK displays the importance of this organisation since it includes representatives of leading organisations in the Turkish economy: The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), TİM (the Turkish Exporters' Assembly), MÜSİAD (the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association), YASED (the International Investors Association), and İKV (the Economic Development Foundation).

All of the abovementioned organisations have a distinct influence on the Turkish economy and decision-making processes. Beside these governmental institutions which represent and implement Turkish economic policies abroad, there is also the non-governmental organisation called the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD), established in 1971 and founded by the biggest Turkish private sector representatives. TUSIAD, with its 4500 member companies, and with an 85% share of Türkiye's total foreign trade, plays an important role in international business within Turkish economic diplomacy (TUSIAD, 2022).

The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), the largest business organisation in the country, has one of the most important roles in the Turkish economy in the form of settling the economic policies of the Turkish private sector. In addition to that, the union has an important responsibility to assist governmental institutions and to guide these institutions to integrate the Turkish economy with the rest of the world (Kurtaran, 2020). The non-governmental organisation MÜSİAD (the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association), established back in the 1990s, focuses on economic cooperation among Islamic countries, while the abovementioned TUSİAD is more linked to European countries (Basar, 1994). Today, Türkiye, a strong economy completely open to the outside world and ruled by free market conditions, has become a highly important actor of international relations due also to its important geopolitical position (Polat, 2017).

Türkiye's geopolitical position is advantageous; the country is close to energy sources, is a neighbour of Russia (one of the most powerful countries), and to the European Union, one of the most important economic entities. It is located between Europe and Asia, is a NATO member country with strong military capabilities and is close to the Middle East and Central Asia. 99% of the country is of the Muslim religion, and the country is respected by the other Muslim countries because of its modern, social structure, stable and developed democratic form, and economic power.

Türkiye's economic relations in the international arena during the period of the Unipolar World were affected by international concerns. The reunification of Germany and the dissolution of the Soviet Union caused significant political changes globally. Türkiye's effort at the beginning of the USSR's collapse was mostly focused on the Turkic republics, which became independent. Türkiye was one of the first and main supporters of these new republics' desire to become members of international organisations. Therefore, Türkiye undertook comprehensive diplomatic initiatives with NATO, the UN, and the Council of Europe. Türkiye was a co-founder of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) founded in 1992, a regional international organisation focusing on multilateral political and economic initiatives and which is important for cooperation, peace, stability, and prosperity in the Black Sea region. In 1995, Türkiye joined the Customs Union Agreement which allowed the country's bilateral trade with EU countries to increase.

In 1997, under the initiative and actions of the then Prime Minister of Türkiye Necmettin Erbakan, the Developing 8 (D-8) organisation for economic cooperation with the major Muslim countries including Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Pakistan was

established. A year after the establishment of D-8, Türkiye became a member of the G20, The Group of Twenty, an intergovernmental forum comprising 19 countries and the European Union. The economic and political integration of Türkiye with the world's major economies, which comprise more than the 80% of world GDP and 75% of global trade, strengthens Türkiye's position in the international arena and in the exercise of the country's foreign policies.

During the 1990s, there was again political turbulence caused by internal and external financial crises that brought insecurity and instability to the country. From 1991 to 2002 there were 10 different governments, a fact that created uncertainty in the country's foreign economic policy. In 2002, the Justice and Development Party came to power, bringing the country into a new era; one in which the country was not under the rule of a coalition of parties as there had been, but rather the rule of a single party. Since then, political stability has prevailed, and created a stable economic and political environment without crisis, and which is advantageous to all activities for the progress of the country in all aspects of economy and trade.

Conclusions

Türkiye has put international relations at the forefront of its concerns in order to increase its economic development. In this process, Türkiye has signed free trade agreements with 38 countries, most of which are European countries, which is one of the most important results of economic diplomacy. Since then, 11 of these countries have become EU members and 22 free trade agreements are still valid. Three more will be added to this list of countries with the approval of the text of the free trade agreement with Sudan, Lebanon, and Qatar. These agreements are constantly updated during negotiations held according to the conditions of the day. In addition, free trade agreement negotiations with 5 other countries (Ukraine, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, and Somalia) are about to be completed, while free trade agreements with Mexico, Peru, Colombia, MERCOSUR, Ecuador, Cameroon, Chad, Gulf Cooperation Council, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Seychelles, Djibouti, and Pakistan are in progress. Negotiations are ongoing within the scope of trade in services, investments, and public procurement with Ukraine, Peru, Mexico, and Japan. Türkiye has also taken initiatives to conclude free trade agreements with the USA, Canada, India, Vietnam, Central American Countries, African Caribbean Pacific Countries, Algeria, the Republic of South Africa, and Libya (MOT, 2019). All of this shows that Türkiye has enjoyed

major achievements with diversifying its partnerships in economy within distinct foreign economic policy fields (Bağcı, 2011).

Türkiye's regional and specific bilateral relations increased in parallel with the unilateralism in its foreign economic relations, as shown by membership with all above mentioned international organisations. In addition, Türkiye is a member of MIKTA, which was established in 2013 as a cross-regional grouping of G20 member nations between Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Türkiye, and Australia and, since 2016, has been a member of the newly created international financial institution named the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) led by China. Last but not least, Türkiye has shown its sympathies to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on the basis of the "win-win" principle. The desired updating of the customs union agreement between Türkiye and the EU has been unduly delayed and accession negotiations have been effectively frozen by the EU for the present, as there are issues to be addressed.

Türkiye is striving to broaden its options and chances of participation in different global organisations and markets by joining, for instance, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). After the 2001 economic crisis in Türkiye, specific institutional reforms were made by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Especial focus has been placed on the reforms regarding the links between politics and the economy, resulting in enormous economic growth. But this economic boom seems to have been in decline since 2013 due to internal and external factors in the region and globally. This may have a negative effect on Turkish economic policies when negotiating with other parties. The 15th July, 2016 coup d'état attempt against state institutions, which was attributed to the Gülen movement (Fetullah Terrorist Organizations, FETO), was an internal factor which has had a short-term, limited negative impact on the economy, but it greatly affected the country's foreign policies. Although FETO was designated a terrorist organisation by the Republic of Türkiye, it was not recognised as such by foreign governments. However, with the signing of the trilateral memorandum with Sweden and Finland under the NATO on July 28th, 2022, for the very first time, it is now classified as a terrorist organisation in an international, official agreement. This is a success of foreign diplomacy for the Turkish government. In the new Turkish economic policy, several measures have been implemented within the country in monetary policy (Faure, 2022) aiming to control the sharply increasing inflation and the declining value of the country's currency. Geopolitical risks in the region create and increase uncertainties in international politics. Türkiye analyses each case individually and, by diplomatic movements, strives to retain bilateral symmetry in international relations. The country's diplomatic force continues

to work together in harmony with all its institutions i.e., the private sector, along with governmental and non-governmental bodies which are related to the decision-making process for foreign and economic policies.

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*Talip Küçükcan**

Türkiye's Migration Experience and Policy Orientations: Integrating Syrians in Higher Education

Abstract

Türkiye has had multidimensional migration experience not only in its past, but also in its present that has led to the formation of a dynamic migration policy to govern such a dynamic process. Türkiye's migration policy has been informed and shaped by its geopolitical location as a migrant receiving, labour migrant sending, and migrant transit country. Today, Türkiye hosts the largest number of migrants and refugees in the world with a far-reaching social, political, and economic impact on the country. This article aims to shed light on the multidimensional migration experience of Türkiye and analyse its migration policies to govern manifold challenges brought about by the presence of almost 6 million foreigners in the country. It is argued in this article that the integration of migrants in general and of Syrians in particular remains a major challenge for Türkiye. Therefore, this article recommends that Turkish decision makers should make short and long-term plans for the integration of Syrians as the current conditions indicate that it is unlikely that Syrians will return in any significant numbers any time soon even though the Turkish government has initiated a number of projects in parts of Northern Syria for the safe and voluntary return of its countrymen and women. One important area of integration in this context is higher education, which would enable Syrians to have access to employment and social mobility that would benefit both themselves and Türkiye.

Keywords: Migration, Irregular Migrants, Migration Policy, Türkiye, Syrians in Türkiye, Turkey

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Introduction

Türkiye's geographical location, geopolitical position, political legacy, its increasing role in regional and international politics have had a long-lasting effect on the country's demography, population structure, and migration waves it has experienced over a number of decades. Globalisation, economic exchanges, the dissemination of information, and transportation facilities have enabled peoples to be on the move and, more recently, regional conflicts, civil wars, climate change, natural disasters, and increasing poverty as well as the search for security have all uprooted the masses and forced them to migrate cross borders. Modern Türkiye has found itself at the centre of such population movements both in the past and even in more frequently in the present. This article aims to shed light on how Türkiye has been governing patterns of migration to and from the country in its historical and contemporary manifestations both as a sending and receiving country. After analysing the historical milestones of migration to mainland Türkiye that began towards the end of the Ottoman State and which accelerated during the process of its disintegration, this article will go on to address the contemporary challenges that the Republic of Türkiye faces as far as migration movements to and from the country are concerned, and also to address how the country has developed various policies to govern the multiple dimensions of mass migration it has received in recent years. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNRA), Türkiye hosts the largest number of migrants and refugees today, with Syrians constituting the majority of that number, exceeding 3.6 million as at the end of July 2022 as reported by the Presidency of Migration Management at the Ministry of Interior.

Modern Türkiye was established on the remnants of the Ottoman Empire which ruled the entirety of Anatolia, parts of the Middle East, North Africa, and Southern Europe including the Balkans. When the Ottoman started to disintegrate, a sizeable number of people migrated to safer areas within the Empire and, following the total collapse of the Ottoman State, people of various ethnic and linguistic origins moved to Anatolia in even higher numbers. One could argue that this period constitutes the first major wave of migration to Turkish lands and to Türkiye itself, a country which pursued an open-arms policy to those groups who took refuge there as the former subjects of the Ottoman State. It should be noted here that such population movements to Anatolia took place when a new nation state was emerging on the ruins of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic Ottoman Empire. As the new nation state was inspired by the homogenising, secular, nationalist ideology of the time, policies

regarding the identity formation of modern Türkiye and its citizens focused on culture, language, ethnicity, and religion while evolving over the years in the face of new migration waves.

Migration Waves Towards Ottoman Lands and Türkiye

The Ottoman Empire ruled over vast amount of territories, and its imperial borders were open for the purpose of trade and diplomatic relations, and were also open to people who sought political protection. The social and political structure of the Empire provided a sphere where migration is not necessarily linked to the security of state. One outstanding example of early migration to the Ottoman Empire is the movement of Jewish people from Spain after the Reconquista in the 15th century. Muslims and Jews who refused to convert to Christianity were forced to leave the country and, as a consequence, thousands migrated to the Ottoman territories. What enabled the easy acceptance of Jews in the Muslim-dominant state was the recognition of Jews and Christians as religious communities known as the Millet System which afforded these communities a legitimate legal status within the society. The Ottoman State had an open society which did not securitise religious, ethnic, and sectarian minorities, a policy that would largely continue under the Republic of Türkiye despite a clear demarcation of borders and identities as exemplified by the Jewish migration to Türkiye from Germany by those who fled the Nazi Regime in 1930s.

Military retreats and political turmoil in the late 18th century in the Ottoman territories sparked migration to areas still dominated by Turks and Muslims. In this context, sizeable migrations from Crimea, Caucasasia, and the Balkans due to political tensions and military conflicts starting from the mid-18th century towards the late 19th century to the safe and secure Ottoman territory is well studied and documented. It is estimated that by the end of WW1, millions of people from former Ottoman territories migrated to central Ottoman and Turkish territories in search of security (Erdoğan, Kaya, 2015). The Balkan Wars triggered a major wave of migration toward Ottoman controlled areas just before WW1. Turks and Muslims of other ethnicities moved to Anatolia from Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Greece where there was a sizeable presence of Turkish and Muslim Ottoman subjects. WW1 caused a large-scale population movement in and around Anatolia during the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and following the founding of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923. The population exchange between

Türkiye and Greece is an example of rather noteworthy demographic engineering by both nation states, shaped by homogenising nationalist ideologies. Although there are varying claims as to the numbers of people during the exchange, it is estimated that between 1.2 to 1.3 million Greeks left for Greece while between 400,000 and 500,000 Muslims migrated to Türkiye based on an agreement between the two countries (Onur, 2013; Hirschon, 2003; Fortna et al., 2012) Türkiye continued to be a migrant-receiving country, especially from breakaway countries from the Ottoman State. A significant number of Turkish Muslims came to Türkiye from Bulgaria in the 1950s and 360,000 Turks came to Türkiye in 1989 alone (Kamusella, 2020). As these cases illustrate, Türkiye had an open-door policy towards refugees and immigrants produced by regional conflicts and wars in neighbouring countries. For example, following the 1979 revolution in Iran, almost one million Iranians came to Türkiye so as to escape the regime and stayed temporarily until they left for the USA, Canada, and Europe. Moreover, Türkiye had to deal with the Iraqi Kurdish refugee flows of 1988 and 1991, when more than one and a half million Iraqi Kurds came to the mountains bordering Türkiye, having been forced by the Iraqi regime to do so (İhlamur-Öner, 2013). Türkiye hosted almost half a million Kurds from Iraq, the majority of whom returning home when the Gulf War ended. As these cases illustrate, Türkiye is and has been a migration destination as well as a transit country. Türkiye's experience with migration is not limited to the reception of immigrants and refugees in the past and present. Türkiye has also been a migrant-sending country most notably since the 1960s, with a large diaspora now mainly concentrated in Europe. As the following table shows, there are

Table 1. Turks in Selected European Countries

	1973	1984	1995	2020
Germany	615,827	1,552,328	1,965,577	3,000,000
France	33,892	144,790	254,000	700,000
The Netherlands	30,091	154,201	252,450	500,000
Austria	30,527	75,000	150,000	400,000
Belgium	14,029	63,587	90,425	250,000
Denmark	6,250	17,240	34,700	70,000
Britain	2,011	28,480	65,000	400,000
Norway	n.a	3,086	5,577	20,000
Sweden	5,061	20,900	36,001	150,000
Switzerland	19,710	48,485	76,662	120,000
Total	777,727	2,108,097	2,930,392	5,610,000

Source: Küçükcan, 2021.

more than 5.6 million Turks in Europe. If one considers Turks in the USA, Canada, Australia, and Middle Eastern countries, the populations of Turkish origin in the diaspora exceeds 6 million.

A Bigger Challenge: Syrians in Türkiye

It has been 11 years since the first arrival of Syrians to Türkiye, and whose numbers have steadily increased through the fleeing of the atrocities of the Syrian regime as the civil war continues the displacement of civilians. The presence of Syrians in large volumes led to a wide range of political and legal discussions in Türkiye, and their move to Europe has brought Türkiye and the EU around the same table to address the challenges of displaced Syrians. On the 11th anniversary of their arrival, discussions and debates about Syrians in Türkiye revolve around their legal status, their integration into education and the economy, the provision of public services, and humanitarian assistance in relation to COVID-19 (Murphy, 2021; Mohyidin, 2021; Pekkendir, 2021).

Public opinion in Türkiye is predominantly occupied with following questions: Will Syrians remain in Türkiye or leave? How many will return if reasonable political and economic ground is prepared? If there is to be a voluntary wave of returns, how, when, and for how long this will take place? What are the social, political, and economic ramifications of the presence of almost 3.7 million Syrians with temporary-protection status in Türkiye? How has Türkiye been coping with the various dimensions of hosting the largest number of refugees in the world? How will Syrians integrate into the social, economic, and educational fabric of society? These are frequently asked questions in and outside of Türkiye as the civil war continues to ravage Syria, with the risk of a new wave of migration not completely eliminated. This study will not try to answer all of the above questions and its scope will be limited to providing evidence from the higher education sector into which Syrians are increasingly integrated so as to show how Türkiye has responded to the presence of a large number of displaced persons from Syria in education. Türkiye has, among other things, pursued an open-door policy to displaced Syrians since April 2011, established new institutions at national and local levels, introduced a new legal framework, and developed policies of inclusion over the years in cooperation with international agencies and organisations such as the UN and the EU. Broadly speaking, Türkiye had two options when the refugee flow began following the failure of finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict through a transition to a democratic political system in Syria. The first option was to close the borders to Syrian civilians – mostly wom-

en and children bombed by the regime forces – and to turn a blind eye to the unfolding humanitarian crisis along its borders. The second option was to open the gates so as to provide shelter for the those fleeing war and persecution. Türkiye went for the second option, a policy that reflects the traditional migration experience of the country which is informed by opening its borders to those seeking safety.

The presence of 3.7 million Syrians in Türkiye forced itself to the centre of political and public debate as the opposition parties instrumentalised populist sentiment against immigrants and refugees by promising that they would return Syrians back to their home country. Such political discourse encouraged anti-immigrant groups to propagate hate against Syrians in conventional forums and on social media especially. Despite the rise of anti-Syrian sentiment led by the opposition parties, the government continued to repeat its position, emphasising the fact that Syrians in Türkiye are guests and that they would be hosted until safe zones are established, a political solution to end the conflict achieved, and that there would be no forced return. In line with such political positions, the Turkish government designed and implemented numerous projects to integrate Syrians into education, the economy, and society. One important area of the inclusion of Syrians is education as a key strategic project for the inculcation of civic culture in addition to language learning and the improvement of their academic skills.

The Turkish higher-education sector and Turkish universities face numerous challenges as regards teaching quality, equal access, administrative issues, financing, relations with the industry, research funding and internationalisation etc. On top of these issues, Turkish universities have yet another common challenge today that requires both urgent attention and a policy-based response; the integration of Syrians and other displaced peoples into the higher-education system.

The world, as of today, is marked by social and political upheaval, natural disasters, armed conflicts, ethnic and sectarian tensions, economic inequalities, along with human rights violations which all contribute to forced migration and the displacement of people to varying degrees. In fact, the numbers are shocking. According to a Global Trends Forced Displacement 2017 Report published by UNHCR (The United Nations Refugee Agency), “Globally, the forcibly displaced population increased in 2017 by 2.9 million. By the end of the year, 68.5 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, or generalized violence. As a result, the world’s forcibly displaced population remained yet again at a record high” (UNHCR, 2017b).

According to the same report, Türkiye hosts the largest number of displaced people, migrants, and refugees in the world today (UNHCR, 2017b). It is reported that 5 million displaced persons from various countries and people under temporary protection from Syria live in Türkiye (Hürriyet Daily News, 2017). That amounts to almost 5.6% of the total population of present-day Türkiye. Syrians who would go on to escape armed conflict, ethnic and sectarian clashes and repression by the Syrian regime began to flee to Türkiye in April 2011 when Syria's political upheaval turned into civil war in the country following the Arab Spring.

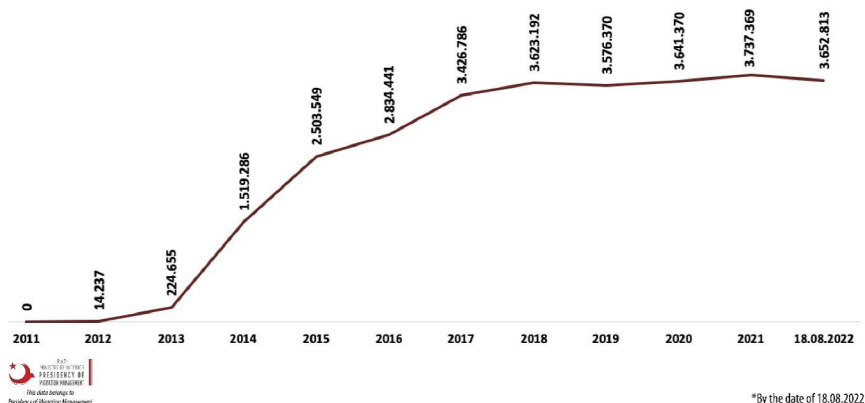
Türkiye has been following a humanitarian policy towards those men, women, and children who are forcibly uprooted from their towns, cities, and countries. Türkiye has been a safe haven for displaced people from conflict ridden regions, following an open-door policy to such people regardless of their ethnic, sectarian, religious or national identities. As an example, almost half a million Kurds fled the bombs of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and found shelter in Türkiye. Since 2011, millions of Syrians including Arabs, Kurds, the Sunnis, the Shias, Nusayris, and Yazidis have all made their way to Türkiye.

Syrians in Türkiye: Demography

Before going into further detail about the integration of Syrians into the Turkish Higher Education System, it would be useful to share some demographic characteristics of the Syrians in Türkiye. Demographic data regarding total numbers, settlement patterns, age and gender distribution will help us too see what kind of challenge Türkiye is facing as far as governing and managing irregular migration is concerned. The sheer volume of irregular migrants and displaced persons living in Türkiye indicate that no other country in the world faces as many challenges as Türkiye today when it comes to providing services such as shelter, food, security, education, and social and cultural inclusion to people who are forced to leave their home countries.

According to the recent figures, more than 3.7 million Syrians live Türkiye. It is reported that if no solution is found for the Syrian crisis in the near future, this number could rise to 5 million by 2028 (Hürriyet Daily News, 2018). Since 2011, the number of Syrians in Türkiye has steadily increased from 14,000 in 2011, to 3,676,000 in 2019 (Operational Data Portal, 2022). As of August 2022, the Presidency of Migration Management reports that there are 3,652,813 Syrians in Türkiye of whom only a fraction have returned to Syria after two major security operations conducted by Türkiye. The Turkish Minister of Interior Foreign Affairs

stated that the number of Syrians who returned to their country after operations Euphrates Shield in 2016 and Olive Branch in 2018 is 340,000 (Hürriyet Daily News, 2019).



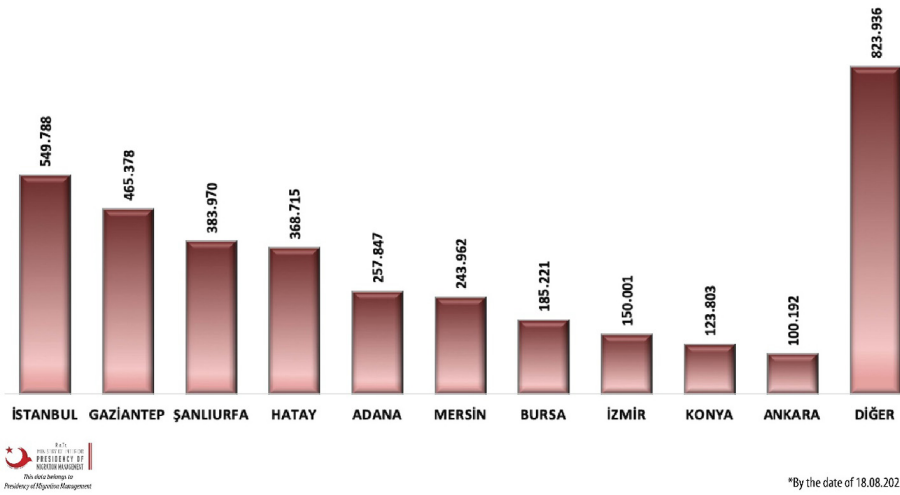
Graph 1. Distribution of Syrians Under Temporary Protection by Year

Source: Ministry Interior of Turkey.

Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye seem be concentrated in ten cities where they naturally put a lot of pressure on those cities' infrastructure, especially when it comes to housing, public transportation, and the health and education services. As seen in the following map, there are more than half a million Syrians in Istanbul. Almost 50% of all refugees in Türkiye are registered in four key provinces: Gaziantep, Hatay, Istanbul, and Şanlıurfa (OCHA Services, 2018).

There is a unique situation in some cities where demographics regarding the Syrians in Türkiye inform us of what the central government as well local authorities (municipalities) are dealing with. In Kilis, for example, the Syrian population make up almost a half of the city's population today. In Hatay, 368,175 Syrians are living there, which amounts to 27% of the total population. There is a similar picture in Şanlıurfa where almost 22% of the city's population is now Syrian. In Adana, Mersin, and Osmaniye, 10 to 11% of the populations are from Syria. Most Syrians in Türkiye live outside the special camps and shelter centres which were established by the government. Only 48,399 Syrians out of 3.6 million live in seven shelter centres in five provinces.

More than 3.6 million Syrians are living away from those temporary shelters, exist side by side with Turks, and participate in daily life which enables many of them to interact with the members of the host society. It



Graph 2. The Distribution of Syrians Under Temporary Protection Listed by the Top 10 Provinces

Source: Ministry Interior of Turkey.

Table 2. The Distribution of Syrian Refugees in the Scope of Temporary Protection According to Shelter Centres (7 Shelter Centres in 5 Provinces)

PROVINCE	NAME OF TEMPORARY SHELTER CENTERS	TOTAL	GRAND TOTAL
ADANA (1)	Sarıçam	16.135	16.135
HATAY (3)	Altınözü	3.455	6.703
	Yayladağı	3.230	
	Apaydın	18	
KAHRAMANMARAŞ (1)	Merkez	9.809	9.809
KİLİS (1)	Elbeyli	8.146	8.146
OSMANİYE (1)	Cevdetiye	7.606	7.606
TOTAL		48.399	
NUMBER OF SYRIANS UNDER TEMPORARY PROTECTION THAT NOT IN THE SCOPE OF SHELTER CENTERS			3.604.414

Source: Ministry Interior of Turkey.

is argued that “Living in urban areas may be better for the longer-term integration, livelihood, self-reliance, and dignity of refugees, as well as the capacities of the countries to absorb new residents” (Culbertson, 2015, p. 6). Most Syrians in Türkiye are young. According to recent data, more

than a million Syrians living in Türkiye are young people between the ages 15 and 29. The number of children aged between 5 and 9 is more than half a million.

Table 3. The Distribution by Age and Gender of Registered Syrian Refugees Recorded via and Based on Biometric Data

AGE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
TOTAL	1.977.150	1.667.192	3.644.342
0-4	252.618	235.764	488.382
5-9	260.887	245.186	506.073
10-14	202.904	188.072	390.976
15-18	149.356	123.695	273.051
19-24	321.032	229.901	550.933
25-29	209.538	148.373	357.911
30-34	173.594	126.713	300.307
35-39	123.113	96.492	219.605
40-44	81.370	71.406	152.776
45-49	60.291	57.298	117.589
50-54	48.949	46.521	95.470
55-59	34.135	34.267	68.402
60-64	24.006	24.505	48.511
65-69	15.934	16.390	32.324
70-74	9.056	9.649	18.705
75-79	5.098	6.289	11.387
80-84	2.838	3.544	6.382
85-89	1.585	2.057	3.642
90+	846	1.070	1.916

by the date of 07.02.2019



Source: Ministry Interior of Turkey.

The age distribution of the Syrians living in Türkiye illustrates very clearly that there is a significant number of children and young people of school age at various levels. Not only in the area of education, but also in the areas of vocational training, employment, welfare provisions, access to public services etc. do we find such numbers which pose great challenges for Türkiye. So far, one should acknowledge that Türkiye has handled the Syrian refugee crises remarkably well despite the lack of sufficient support from the international community. The UNHCR acknowledges this as follows, “The Government of Türkiye plays a firm leadership role in the refugee response in Türkiye” (UNHCR, 2019). Türkiye has spent more than \$30.2 billion on the well-being of Syrians under temporary protection (Haberler.com, 2019). This is in line with a humanitarian policy

that Türkiye has been following over the years. In 2018, as reported by the Development Initiative's (DI) Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, Türkiye spent more than \$8.1 billion on humanitarian purposes, more than any other country in the world. Developed countries with much bigger economies such the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. followed Türkiye's lead, albeit to a smaller degree, spending \$6.68 billion, \$2.98 billion and \$2.52 billion respectively (Development Initiatives, 2018, p. 9).

The Integration of Displaced Persons into Education

The integration of displaced persons into the education, workforce, training, social, cultural, and economic sectors has been a challenge for all countries. European countries which have received legal immigrants for their labour markets, irregular migration, and asylum seekers, have all had similar experiences. There is still a lot of discussion on the failures and achievements of government policies past and present as far as the integration of migrants and refugees is concerned. Turn the Tide: Refugee Education in Crisis, a report published by the UNHCR, provides a global picture of the education of refugee children as follows: "Comparing the situation of refugee children and youth with their peers illustrates the gap between the two – and the manner in which that gap grows to a chasm as they get older. In 2017, 61% of refugee children were enrolled in primary school, compared to 92% globally. At secondary level the figure was 23%, compared with a global rate of 84%. This means nearly two thirds of refugee children who go to primary school do not make it to secondary school" (UNHCR, 2017a, p. 13). We should all be concerned with these disturbing findings. Moreover, data on access to higher education by refugee children is also alarming and disturbing. While 35% of the world's youth enrol at a university, only 1% of refugee youth can enter similar seats of education.

Türkiye has been a labour-force-sending country since the 1960s as mentioned earlier, but now the country is a recipient of irregular migrants and people under temporary protection. Türkiye's policy towards the integration of Syrians is well stated by the by the UNHCR in the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP) 2018–2019 as follows: "In Türkiye, social and economic inclusion is an integral part of the legal framework. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection refers to activities to facilitate harmonization between foreigners, applicants and international protection beneficiaries and the society, that is, an environment where foreigners and international protection beneficiaries can live in harmony with host communities (...) The concept of harmonization provides

a basis for service provision to refugees and asylum seekers in Türkiye and is a stepping stone towards inclusion” (UNHCR, 2019, p. 9).

In what follows, I will try to shed some light on the integration of Syrians into the education system. Firstly, let us underline two important developments. One is the fact that since 2011, 625,000 thousand Syrians were born in Türkiye by 2020 and this number exceeded 700,000 according to the Minister of Interior of Türkiye in 2022 (Erdoğan, 2020, p. 64), children who will, in addition, soon need schooling. The other fact is the steady increase in the schooling of Syrian children. It is reported that “(...) of the school-aged Syrian refugees, 610,278 were enrolled in either Turkish public school or temporary education centers. Of this figure, 36,548 were enrolled in pre-school education, 374,304 in primary school education, 137,613 in middle school education and 61,813 in high school education in 2017–2018 school term” (Kolcu, 2018). The Ministry of National Education confirmed the rise in the number of Syrian students in the education system on June 8th, 2021. The Ministry reported that “35,707 students were enrolled in kindergarten, 442,817 in elementary school, 348,638 in middle school, and 110,976 in high school. In total, 771,428 children continue their educational life. There are 432,956 children of educational age who do not attend school (Refugees Association, 2021). A recent report by the Ministry of Education updated the data showing that there are over 1 million (1,124,353) Syrian school-aged children in Türkiye and 855,136 of them (67.55%) were schooled by January 2022” (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2022).

Given the high birth rate and the new arrivals, this figure has been gradually increasing over the years. Despite such a marked rise in the number of Syrians, “the Government of Türkiye continues to make progress towards its commitment to have all Syrian children under temporary protection in some form of education, including the facilitation of enrolment for those missing documentation (ID cards or previous school report cards)” (UNICEF, 2018, p. 23).

Despite meaningful and positive developments, some challenges need to be addressed due to the high demand to go to formal schools in the face of the limited availability of places. There are over 350,000 school-aged children and adolescents who are not enrolled in education or training programs at the moment and who represent the most disadvantaged and vulnerable group. In fact, 28,000 new classrooms are needed to accommodate these children in formal educational settings as the current level of demand for school enrolment, including higher education, exceeds the number of places available (UNHCR, 2019, p. 49). Meanwhile, 11,000 Syrian teachers are allowed to work for the education of Syrian children

in formal and informal settings. It is underlined that, “By allowing Syrian teachers to work with refugee children, the government of Türkiye is helping to reinforce the resilience of the Syrian refugee community in Türkiye, and encouraging its access to education. Syrian human capital is key to get refugee children back to school. Governments hosting refugees shall consider the steps taken by the Turkish authorities, and accordingly formulate policies towards encouraging the involvement of Syrian teachers in delivering education” (Nasser, 2018, p. 85).

The Integration of Syrians into the Turkish Higher Education System

Türkiye makes a significant effort and allocates large funds in order to integrate Syrian children and youth at the age of schooling into the formal educational system. In other words, Türkiye invests in the future of displaced children from Syria and elsewhere. The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) and the Higher Education Council (YÖK) play a key role in facilitating access to higher education. Now let me provide a brief piece of context as regards higher education in Türkiye. There are 206 higher-education institutions in Türkiye, of which 129 are public universities, 72 are foundation universities and 5 are foundation vocational schools. More than 7.5 million students are registered at different levels at these universities.

Turkish universities are open to Syrian students, and there are special support programs and regulations to facilitate the integration of Syrian youth into the Turkish higher education system. According a report entitled “We Made a Promise”, the number of Syrian students in Turkish universities increased from over 14,000 in 2016 to more than 20,000 in 2018, out of 108,000 foreign students in total. This represented 4% of the Syrian youth of university age in Türkiye which is a much higher rate than the world average of refugee youth at the universities which is just 1% as noted earlier. Almost 6,000 students have participated in higher education preparation programs that enable them to meet the language proficiency requirements for admission to Turkish universities (UNHCR, 2018, p. 23). In fact, “The Turkish Government has supported higher education access through the waiving of tuition fees in state universities for Syrian students. YTB has provided 4,048 scholarships since the onset of the crisis and, with partners, it is increasing scholarship numbers. University preparation programs, focused on Turkish language acquisition, have also been introduced (UNHCR, 2017, p. 42) to support Syrians to overcome language barriers to enter the university. It is reported that more than

500,000 Syrian refugees were of university age (19–24) in 2021. This is the second largest age group, accounting for 13% of the total, with the 4–10 age group being the biggest. The higher education enrolment rate for this group rose to 3.8% in 2018, to 5% in 2019 and to 9.5% in 2021. This rate is higher than the global refugee enrolment rate” (Esen, 2022). The Ministry Education’s data indicate that the number of Syrians in Turkish universities reached 48,192, and are students who receive a free education in public universities (Refugees Association, 2021). If one adds Syrian students at the foundation universities, the total number would be higher than 50,000.

Entrance to a university for Turkish nationals is based on centrally-administered test scores. This is a highly competitive examination. “The admission process for international students at Turkish universities is complex and decentralised, and international students must apply at universities individually. Unlike other international students, however, since 2013/14, Syrians do not have to pay tuition fees at state universities as a result of the Turkish state’s recognition of their specific status as displaced persons. Each university sets its own admission criteria for international students” (Hohbergeri, 2018, p. 17).

Syrians can enrol at Turkish universities in three ways, the first way is that, in order to apply for an undergraduate degree, Syrian students need a valid high school diploma and a transcript as well as an equivalency certificate obtained by the Ministry of National Education or a Turkish embassy or consulate. The second option: “In case students fail to receive equivalency for their diploma or if they were enrolled at a Temporary Education Centre, Syrians can attend the ‘Temporary Education Centers High School Proficiency and Equivalency Examination’ and then take the Foreign Students Exam” (YÖS, Yabancı Uyruklu Öğrenci Sınavı). They can be admitted to a university according to their test results. The third option: “Students who started their university studies in Syria and wish to transfer to a Turkish university may ask universities to recognise the credits that they have earned in Syria. The decision whether to recognise courses passed in Syria is made by each university and may differ from one department to another” (Hohbergeri, 2018, pp. 17–18). “To facilitate transfers and enrolment for Syrians, reacting to the exceptional circumstances of refugees, YÖK introduced a guest status called “special student” (özel öğrenci) status. As a result, Syrian students were allowed to register at seven universities close to the border and, later, also at other public universities across the country without needing to obtain an entire whole package of original documents” (Hohbergeri, 2018, pp. 17–18; Watenpaugh, Fricke, King, 2014, pp. 24–27).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Türkiye's operation in North East Syria which started on 9th October 2019 and paused 8 days later following talks with the U.S. (18th October 2019) and Russia (22nd October 2019) sparked a heated debate as to the intention and objectives of Türkiye, the future of Syria and Syrians living in Türkiye, Türkiye-US relations, and counter-terrorism operations against Daesh and the PKK linked PYD/YPG terrorist organisation that poses a national security threat to Türkiye in the region. Turkish officials have repeatedly stated that Operation Peace Spring will be limited to creating a safe-zone for the voluntary resettlement of Syrian refugees in their own country, the removal of PKK linked PYD/YPG armed groups from the immediate borderline of Türkiye, and to contributing to preserving the territorial integrity of Syria as any further disintegration of this country would follow an emergence of new, armed, non-state actors, a greater scale of the displacement of people, and broader human suffering and security threats that would threaten the entirety of the Middle East. Despite such clear cut statements, Türkiye has faced accusations that Syrians would be forced to return and that demographic engineering would take place. The evidence on the ground suggests that these claims are founded on false presumptions because there have been no demographic shifts following previous operations, namely Euphrates Shield in 2016 and Olive Branch in 2018. Moreover, Türkiye's policy towards Syrian refugees indicate that with its limited resources and little financial assistance from the international community, this huge problem has been managed successfully to date in all fronts. More importantly, the integration of Syrians into higher education provides significant evidence as to how Türkiye plans the future of displaced Syrians under temporary protection.

As pointed out earlier in this article, there is a growing number of displaced persons in the world that poses numerous challenges for modern societies. One of the major questions regarding refugees, migrants, and displaced persons is their integration into the various institutions of the host societies. The response of nation states to such crises depends on how they perceive displaced persons. If these people are seen as a burden, policy responses are mostly negative and exclusionary. If the displaced persons are regarded as an asset rather than a burden, the policy responses are positive and inclusionary. Türkiye's open-door policy towards displaced people reflects such an approach which is marked by humanitarian concerns. As per the abovementioned rules, the practices and policies outlined in this paper illustrate that, "unlike the other countries hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, the Government of Türkiye has consist-

ently taken proactive measures to grant Syrian university students with opportunities to continue their studies in Türkiye” (Watenpaugh, et al., 2014, p. 26). Türkiye has been doing its best to integrate its Syrian guests under temporary protection not only into the higher education system, but also into all walks of life despite financial constraints, security concerns, and the lack of sufficient international assistance. In order to address the problems related to Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye and its neighbouring countries, especially to facilitate their integration into the higher education system, the following steps should be considered:

- Engaging in capacity-building, and increasing existing facilities’ funding, and their number of teachers and classrooms so as to accommodate the steadily-growing number of displaced Syrians.
- Facilitating access to all levels of education for displaced children and youth including higher education.
- Providing more language courses to enable displaced Syrians to overcome linguistic barriers in order to enter university.
- Organising more outreach activities and inform displaced youth that there are opportunities to enrol in universities.
- Providing more scholarship to encourage young Syrians to partake in further-education-preparation training and university education.
- Better international co-operation and engaging in closer dialogue to address educational needs of displaced Syrians as no single country can overcome current challenges on its own.
- Sharing best practices and institutionalize exchange of innovative ideas, methods and policies to increase the quality of higher education for the displaced people.

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From the Sponsor of This Issue

The question of how academics and NGOs can collaborate has always been asked.

This academic publication is a convincing piece of evidence we can use to answer this question. This wonderful work, which has been developed with the diligence of Polish and Turkish researchers, academics, and volunteers will be a source of inspiration for the coming generations.

Should we consider the long-standing academic relations between Poland and Turkey as a seed planted many years ago, we then can call this academic publication the fruit of such strong bonds between the two nations.

It is indeed meaningful that the relations between Poland and Turkey, which are developing in every field, have reached such a high bar to the point where we have reached the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Turkey. Looking at this unique academic work, I feel confident and validated to have voluntarily spent many years of my life dedicated to bringing the two countries together in every field.

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I wish for this academic publication to be a motivating touchstone for the younger generations who will work on academic projects carried out between the two countries in the future.

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President of the TURKPOL Association

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