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**TURKEY AS A NATO ALLY IN THE POST-COLD WAR  
PERIOD**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Following the end of the Cold War and collapse of the former Soviet Union, NATO, the world's biggest intergovernmental military alliance, has emerged as a key framework provider on maintaining global security. Turkey, an important regional element of the NATO-bound geostrategic understanding, visibly enjoyed and, to an extent, treasured its NATO membership since 1952. However, since the end of the Cold War and, especially, when Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took his office as the country's Prime Minister in 2003, Turkey started playing a multi-dimensional, more independent as well as proactive role in international system, and this factor generates plenty of questions on the depth of the country's regional and global acting as a NATO member state.

Considering the above and assuming the relatively obvious factor of necessity and even politico-institutional desire for NATO to keep Turkey as the organisation's integral as well as reliable part, this paper, while defining and observing a number of driving forces that are still firmly interlinking a new Turkey with NATO-originated priorities, will be testing the argument that, despite a very new 'outfit' embraced by Turkey in the last decade, the country is turning to become an even more vital member for the alliance.

**Keywords:** NATO, Turkey, post-Cold War era, security, geostrategy.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis principally aspires to observe and analyse the Republic of Turkey's current position as an integral part of NATO, the generation time after the end of the Cold War when an arguably different Turkey had been evidently playing a different role in the region. More specifically, this research work observes Turkey's direct involvement, within the NATO framework, in the process of responding to several security threats in the specified period and contextualises the discussion with the country's geo-cultural, historical and political background and experiences.

Prior to getting into a discussion, this paper underscores the following **assumptions**. Firstly, a range of conflict areas, which generate some of the world's most alarming security challenges, represents a territorial cluster where Turkey has always had noticeable influence for different reasons. Secondly, within a significant historical period that was featured by a relative geopolitical stability as well as predictability, Turkey evolved from a static member of the south-eastern bloc against the former USSR into a strong ally in the post-Ottoman territory, where security is threatened on the every-day basis. Thirdly, a particular geopolitical *status quo* that paved the way for the Turkey's membership in NATO, gave the alliance a unique possibility to extend its geographic outreach when conducting its politico-military actions. Characteristically, it made Turkey an important regional element of the NATO-bound geostrategic understanding. Arguably, this status has been visibly enjoyed and, to a certain extent, treasured by Turkey since its NATO membership's commencement in 1952.

At the same time, contrasting with the aforementioned premises, the modern Turkish state's sincere attitude towards its NATO membership has been recently criticised (Bershidsky 2017). In many respects, indeed, Turkey is now a different country compared to what it used to be when it had joined the alliance. Moreover, many recent events such as the proxy-war in Syria together with the migration of refugees from the area, the ongoing conflict with Kurdish supporters at the Turkish border as well as the power struggle in the Eastern Mediterranean had a profound impact on NATO-Turkey relations (Gürcan 2016). Even before the most recent Turkey's recall of its Ambassador to the USA due to the American Embassy in Jerusalem Crisis

(Gaouette and Kosinski 2018), it would hardly be disputed that the tensions between Ankara and Washington were increasing due to the Kurdish issue. It is widely known that the United States, which is the main ally in NATO, supports the Kurdish People's Protection Units, whereas Turkey opposes them due to the links they allegedly maintain with the *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* or PKK, known internationally as the Kurdistan Worker's Party. Yet, NATO listed the latter as a terrorist organisation. One of the most recent public opinion polls in Turkey points out on the country's growing distance from NATO (Gürcan 2016). For example, in general, the Turkish public denounced the lack of interest and action by the alliance following the July 2016 *coup d'état*. Güvenç and Özel (2012, 533) went even further claiming that "NATO membership now looms large in the strategic calculations of the new Turkish elite in the aftermath of the Arab Awakening". Arguably, NATO maintains a supportive but low profile when relations with Turkey are addressed. Snyder (2018) noted that, in the context of the now ongoing Turkish 'Operation Olive Branch' in Northern Syria, NATO even initially approved Turkey's involvement in the area as the organisation's Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller indirectly acknowledged the terrorist threat targeting the country in an interview given to the Turkish press one week after the launch of the military operation. The same source stated that Turkey's decision prevents Russia from becoming more powerful in the Middle East, a situation that NATO would wish to avoid. On the other side, it needs to be highlighted that Turkey adopted an active stance in the process of communicating with the alliance. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2018) harshly criticised the alliance's lack of involvement by his side: "Hey NATO, where are you?", further accusing it of adopting double standards. In addition, Erdoğan reminded that Ankara has supported NATO in the past, for example in Somalia, Afghanistan as well as in the Balkans, but it has not received any help in return now that more soldiers are needed in Syria.

To put it in a nutshell, NATO is currently facing a dilemma as it cannot afford to 'lose' Turkey from the 'radar' of its influence, but also refuses to actively back the decisions of the Turkish government due to the conflict of interest in the context of the fight between the People's Protection Units and the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army. The contrary seems to be of the same nature – Turkey tries to not bring the debate to the level when NATO would start questioning the country's desire to remain the alliance's full member. Those ongoing events depict the complexity of the relations between NATO and Turkey, a strategically essential, but also increasingly fanciful member of the alliance.

Considering the above and assuming the obvious fact of necessity and even politico-institutional desire for NATO to keep Turkey as the organisation's integral as well as reliable part, this paper is, firstly, attempting to define and observe a number of driving forces, which from both sides firmly interlink a new Turkey with NATO-originated priorities, and then, secondly, discussing the argument that, **despite a very new 'outfit' embraced by Turkey in the last decade, the country is turning to become an even more vital member for the alliance.** The following research questions, which will then be corresponding to the paper's main two empirical data-gathering chapters, are to be answered: 1) from the Turkish side, what are the major driving forces and frameworks, which are firmly interconnecting Turkey with NATO? 2) from the NATO's position, what are the factors that make it strategically unacceptable and institutionally unrealistic to lose Turkey as an ally.

The Deutsch's concept of security community frames up this thesis and, together with the chosen methodological approach, will be discussed at length in the context of the main argument. This research essentially takes advantage of thorough qualitative data. Both primary and secondary sources are selected, including online ones. In addition, comparative case study mechanisms are employed to illustrate the discussion: four different but relevant examples (namely interventions in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and the Missile Defence system), which evidently involved the participation of Turkey in NATO key missions are observed. Finally, the paper's conclusion summarises the findings, contextualising them with the principal hypothesis on the Turkey's prospective role in the NATO-bound framework.

# 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

As Turkey and the other members of NATO should presumably share the same values on peacekeeping strategies, the country agrees with the alliance's new ideas but observes its safety and foreign affairs' objectives as well. Indeed, Turkey is the second biggest military power in NATO after the USA, allowing it to participate in missions to a large extent and reinforcing its image. For example, the involvement in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan enabled Turkey to show its force in different settings. Also, the estimated number of troops Turkey has sent to NATO is 3,250 (Diriöz 2012). Moreover, NATO was obliged to bring geostrategic changes in the extensive region spread from North Africa to the Middle East known as MENA due to the Arab Spring and consequent civil wars. Under those circumstances, Turkey constructively supports NATO's plans to achieve democracy and political order, as well as strengthen diplomacy in areas affected by conflicts. Therefore, there is a certain logic to understand and discuss the country's current place in the NATO framework, using the Karl Deutsch's idea on security community.

Deutsch introduced the concept in 1957 in his work *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience*, noting that a "group of people" considered as a society share at least one interest, which is solving conflicts as a "peaceful change" (Deutsch 1957, 1-228). This goal should be attained with the help of institutionalised institutions and without "large-scale physical force" (*Ibid.*). Further on, in his book *Tides Among Nations*, Deutsch (1979, 1-322) tried to understand the balance between national and international motives, which shape the political environment over time. Since the volume is a collection of 18 research papers written by Deutsch himself in the period between 1940 to 1974, the evolution of his thoughts was taking place when the world was witnessing major events such as Second World War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Suez Crisis, and many other important events.

The notion of security community is categorised by Deutsch into two kinds: amalgamated and **pluralistic** ones (Ulusoy 2012, 3). Arguably, NATO, with Turkey in it, is an example of the latter. Turkey joined NATO in 1952 and according to Haydar Berk, the Permanent



Representative of Turkey to the North Atlantic Council, the country's membership in the alliance represents "one of the essential dimensions of Turkish foreign and defence policy" (cited in Ghosh 2012). Having been accessed to the alliance, Turkey became a part of the Western world's security community. This way, the organisation broadened its influence towards the East and aimed to reduce the possibility of conflict in the Middle East. As a pivotal state due to its size and location, Turkey has gradually been invited to share the responsibility with other members of the alliance to prevent unrest in its region as well as beyond, for over 60 years (Demir 2016, 78).

Furthermore, after the end of the Cold War, most of NATO's missions have been located in either the previously Ottoman territories or/and in Islamic countries, and that is why the Turkey's membership in the alliance could be seen as a **solidifying element for the whole NATO-framed security community** – Turkey is a both secular and democratic country in the Islamic part of the world but also the only NATO member with a majorly Muslim population. It does not get more pluralistic than that. On the Turkish side, as Demir confirms (2016, 78), the country chooses to stay in the NATO security community mostly for the following three reasons: the country is stronger against new threats when supported by other allies, the population urges the government to follow NATO's directives due to reduced budgeted expenditures, and the alliance also provides a stronger approach to the legitimacy of using military power when necessary. Contrary to Turkey's relatively immobile south-eastern flank status against the former USSR in the past, the country is now able to play a super-active role in the post-Ottoman region, being treated everywhere and in whatever it does as a NATO member. In the context of community-building process, the alliance benefited from Turkey's diplomatic outreach, army and experience for the development of new strategies against security threats in the Middle East.

Methodology wise, an extensive and predominantly qualitative data analysis – based on academic and normative discourse analysis, statistical data gathering, case studies and historiographic method – is employed in this paper. A high number of primary sources includes legal documents of NATO and Turkey are analysed. They are crucial in providing first-hand knowledge on the topic of NATO-Turkey interaction from both historical and **community-building** perspective. Additionally, this research collected a range of secondary sources, comprising academic journals, relevant books, and newspaper articles together with official NATO reports. The paper also relied on credible online data taken from reputable newspaper

columns published in both Turkey and elsewhere and materials of different think tanks and research centres.

As the research paper illustrates the argument with four separate cases, it observes and, whenever necessary, compares those using chronological manner and within an identical or similar situation. The examples of the NATO-linked Turkey's involvements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Kosovo and the analysis of the Missile Defence System are valuable to understand a broad range of causal mechanisms, which interlink NATO and Turkey, making the alliance a strong pluralistic security community. In this way, it will be possible to follow, in a multi-dimensional manner, the evolution of Turkey's contributions to NATO in time, starting from the early 1990s with the Bosnian example, continuing with the Kosovo intervention in the late 1990s and ending with more recent events in Afghanistan as well as the peculiarities of the Missile Defence System. Therefore, the following work highlights the causes and consequences of Turkey's participation in the most important post-Cold War security events in accordance with NATO's principles, considering the fact that this organisation is both a supporter of the Euro-Atlantic safety maintenance in the long term and an advocate of the development of Western political ideas. In addition, NATO's strategic plans in this period are studied, together with the Turkey's stance on national security.

## 2. WHAT INTERLINKS A NEW TURKEY WITH NATO

The status of Turkey as a NATO ally is a massive topic as it covers a period of about seven decades. These days, it is impossible to claim that the country's relations with NATO are 'cloudless', yet the contrary is not backed by strong evidence either. For example, several reputable experts believe that Turkey ceased to be a dominant ally in NATO after the collapse of the USSR and end of the Cold War. Therefore, its south-eastern flank status could be seen as disputable because both Turkey is not a Western country per se and a high number of the country's top politicians, including the President himself, are sympathisers of the Sunni part of Middle East. In order to illustrate this argument, Jonathan Schanzer's, Stanley Weiss' and Ziya Öniş' analytical points could be taken into account.

Schanzer (2014) reminded the readership that, although NATO was created to stop the spread of communism, current international security threats involve terrorist groups and that the alliance is now facing difficulties to maintain peace. The expert accuses Turkey of being an "ambivalent" and "unreliable" member of NATO because it did not always permit the use of its strategically located airbases, forcing the Western soldiers to operate from Qatar, UAE and Jordan (*Ibid.*). This scenario also occurred in 2003, when Turkey did not allow the use of the *İncirlik Hava Üssü* (Incirlik Air Base) in the Iraq War. Moreover, Schanzer highlighted the official Ankara's initial reluctance to fight against the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, also known in literature and commentaries as Daesh, and this factor significantly and consequently extended the geographic area of the conflict and led to a higher number of civilian casualties.

In his turn, Weiss (2016) pointed out that, while NATO has no practically feasible way to exclude a member from the alliance, the time has come to "kick Erdogan's Turkey out of NATO". To the scholar, Turkey used to be a faithful, "democratic" and "secular" ally, but Erdogan's accession to power in 2003 undermined its reputation to a large extent. Indeed, the Turkish President is depicted as an authoritarian leader who interferes with the "25 million

ISIS-battling Kurds” (*Ibid.*). However, there has been an ongoing struggle against the PKK in Turkey for over 30 years. Weiss also mentions the shooting down of a Russian jet in November 2015, the arrest of “more journalists than China” and the purchase of an air defence weapon forbidden by NATO to support his claim (*Ibid.*).

Öniş (2011, 47-48), rather than encouraging a radical debate, metaphorically describes a gradual “shift of axis” in the context of Turkey’s foreign affairs policy’s evolution. While Turkey has been very close to the political West since the end of the Second World War (even wanting to join the European Union (EU) for many years), the country is currently turning to the East and South, namely the Middle East, Russia as well as Africa and Brazil (Öniş 2011, 50). A clear alienation of Turkey from the West could be highlighted by its support to Iran in 2010, over the nuclear program conflict (Öniş 2011, 52). Finally, Öniş believes that Turkey’s scattered multi-axis approach will not be constructive for the country from the long-term perspective.

The paper points out that the current Turkish government is responsible for the aforementioned “shift of axis”, which is noticed by NATO and the rest of the world. However, it is worthwhile mentioning that the three scholars listed above believe that Turkey should not belong to NATO anyway, arguing that the organisation is less important these days if compared to the Cold War era. Nevertheless, this is a strong academic and political call for Turkey urging it to keep its strategic importance for NATO. For example, Stevekroft (2016), acknowledging that Ankara disagrees with Washington over the fight between ISIS and Kurdish forces, argues that the United States cannot “afford to lose” Turkish bases used for its operations.

Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2012, 4), the former Secretary General of NATO, advocated Turkey’s significance in the alliance, underscoring that Turkey can be distinguished as a strong, modern country with a Western state identity, despite its geographic location, and it brings many advantages for NATO in the era of terrorism and attempts to suppress democracy in MENA regions. He reminded the field of international relations that Turkey has always honoured NATO’s diplomatic and military plans, which is illustrated by the country’s active participation in NATO missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. In all of those interventions, Turkey proved its capacity to restore peace and bring more stability to the problematic area (Rasmussen 2012, 5). Therefore, the former NATO functionary forecasted that the Turkey’s involvement will be valuable for the alliance in the future as well – its geography, size, and population,

together with its cultural, historical and economic bonds with Central Asia, Caucasus, MENA and Balkans represent vital assets for NATO (Rasmussen 2012, 6).

On the Turkish side, Ahmet Davutoglu (2012), the former Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of Turkey, noted once that NATO is the most accomplished alliance of countries worldwide, and insisted on the scattered and diverse nature of threats to security. He pointed out that the 9/11, resulting in the NATO's invasion to Afghanistan, introduced the alliance to a new era regarding global security matters (Davutoglu 2012, 7-17). Indeed, due to the emergence of terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, and spread of weapons of mass destruction, those issues became NATO's primary concern. In Davutoglu's opinion, those threats are more difficult to stop than those of the Cold War time were. In addition, the former Turkish top-politician argued that Turkey's political stance and its location are valuable factors for NATO, and the country is capable of initiating security measures (Davutoglu 2012, 16).

Back in time, the view of mainstream scholarship was pushing the case on Turkey to lose its importance in and for NATO after the collapse of the USSR and the decisive resolution of the Cold War, and, therefore, would be discounted as a value-added component within the alliance. However, the emergence of the new security challenges and risk, which NATO started facing directly, proved this position wrong. As both Rasmussen and Davutoglu stated, the post-Cold War period, in fact, has strengthened links between NATO and Turkey, allowing Ankara to participate in further peace promoting operations regionally and globally and solidifying the NATO-bound security community.

## **2.1. A Historical Brief**

Turkey joined NATO on 18 February 1952 (Trifunovska 2010, 22) due to the Soviet threat during the Cold War and both parties' agreement to the terms. Moreover, it is important to be aware of the degree of tension between the USA and the USSR, the Truman Doctrine and even Turkey's participation in the Korean War with 5,000 odd soldiers to understand the idea of Turkey's accession to NATO. Aybet (2012, 1) divides the relationship between Turkey and NATO into three phases: first, a time of "dominant collective defence for both Turkey and NATO" then, a shared interest of "collective security", and finally "Turkey's engagement as a strategic partner for NATO" (Aybet 2012, 1).

Following the end of the Second World War, Stalin set his mind on annexing the Turkish Straits as they represented the only passage from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean for Soviet ships, resulting in a crisis on 7 August 1946 (Carter 2014). This event became the driving motive for Turkey to moving closer to the political West. Then, the following year the USA recognised Turkey's strategic importance in blocking the USSR in the Mediterranean and Eastern region, as the parties were preparing for the Cold War, taking Turkey's situation into account when the Marshall Plan and Truman Doctrine were designed. Furthermore, Washington formed a new team called 'Joint American Mission for Military Aid to Turkey' in order to organise trainings, prepare equipment and plan constructions (Outzen 2012, 2). Three new airbases were built at Eskisehir, Diyarbakir and Adana (Incirlik), and approximately 12 other important ground and air bases were modernised. Outzen (2012) underlined that the year Turkey joined NATO, it had become an important contributor for the UN military contingent in Korea.

Finally, the end of 1940s and the start of the next decade represented a major shift in world politics as past powerful states during the pre-Second World War time lost their leadership, leading to a new, bipolar system. In addition, at this point liberal and democratic values flourished and formed a basis for a new international order. Therefore, welcoming Turkey into NATO and strengthening their bond was a way to prevent the spread of communism as well as establish Western conditions in world politics.

## **2.2. The Nature of NATO-Turkey Cooperation in the Post-Cold War Period**

The early 1990s marked the emergence of different ideas regarding the relevance of NATO in the West as the Soviet threat had disappeared and a new international order was getting formed. However, one may argue that by that time – in more than 40 years – the alliance already managed to build what Deutsch previously described as “security community”. Indeed, as noted by Ulusoy (2012, 3) in the context of the Deutsch theory, a group of countries would maintain such close ties that there would be “real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically but will settle their disputes in some other way”. Thereby, at the time when the Soviet Union was collapsing and further onwards, NATO already represented a strong security community since its members did not only share “real assurance” but also the same ethics, standards and ideas which would keep the alliance united in any situation (Aybet 2000). On the normative side, in 1990, NATO members reasserted their faith in the organisation

with the London Declaration. The crashing fall of the Wall of Berlin obliged them to review the structure of the alliance and build the basis of what NATO represents today ('20 years ago...' 2010). Later, a "new Strategic Concept" regarding security measures was issued in November 1991, and then reviewed in 1999 (*Ibid.*). Elements of change included a lesser "forward presence and a reduced reliance on nuclear weapons", together with a transformation of troops into smaller and more flexible units (*Ibid.*). Also, Article 2 of the *North Atlantic Treaty* kept highlighting that members would promote "conditions of stability and well-being" as well as "encourage economic collaboration" between allies ('North Atlantic Treaty...' 2016).

Under these circumstances, with the disappearance of the USSR from the political map, on the one hand, and the beginning of the post-Cold War dynamics, on the other hand, Turkey-NATO relations were entering a new era. Therefore, NATO switched its strategy from "collective defence" to "collective security" as a way to adapt to the new international environment. That is why the Turkish position gained in importance, for example during the Gulf crisis of 1991, where the country became a frontline actor (Lesser 1992, 24). Moreover, even though Turkey failed to get developed into a "regional power", its strength was nevertheless recognised both by Eastern and Western states. NATO, as Lesser pointed out, clearly qualified Turkey as an "asset" after the Second Gulf War, and Turkey was among the most significant actors during peace-making processes in the 1990s.

In this context, since NATO's involvement in development of global security mechanisms has never been purely theoretical, the alliance has constantly been arranging high-scale military trainings in order to strengthen the membership's ties with the outer world. For instance, Kınacıoğlu and Gürzel (2013, 594) noted the establishment of Combat Joint Task Forces being active in peacekeeping and humanitarian mission, known as "non-Article 5", in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan.

Normatively, should the focus remain on the Turkey's role in NATO after the Cold War, it is worth mentioning that the alliance issued three key declarations, in which a number of new strategic ideas were presented, namely the 1991 and 2010 London Declarations as well as the 1999 Washington Declaration. The so-called 'Musketeer Clause' (Ringsmose and Rynning 2009, 17), known as the Article 5, kept its significance in all strategic concepts and confirmed that the allies would stay united, if necessary. Additionally, the Article 4 attested that the members of the alliance should consult each other if a threat appears (Ringsmose, Rynning 2009, 6). Turkey was an initiator of the Article 4-framed discussion for the first time during the

2003 Iraq War, which resulted in additional protection from NATO along Turkish south-eastern borders. In 2015, Turkey formally invoked the Article 4 communication again, this time it was in the mist of the Syrian Civil War at its borders. Consequently, NATO condemned terrorist attacks in Turkey, such as the one in Suruç, and clarified that the ties between the allies within NATO are “indivisible” (Cited in the Economist 2015). Moreover, the Incirlik Air Base is the optimal base to reach Syria and Iraq in anti-Daesh missions. For example, the spokesperson for Operation Inherent Resolve, US Army Colonel John Dorrian, stated in January 2017 that the world became safer thanks to interventions carried out from Incirlik (‘Turkey and NATO...’ 2017). He also pointed out that, although Turkey and NATO may not always share the same discourse, without Turkey, the alliance would not be able to solve the Syrian issue, which would eventually affect NATO’s members (*Ibid.*).

Therefore, the post-Cold War period underlines a special level of cohesion between Turkey as a NATO member and the alliance as a whole. According to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the state has actively increased its involvement with the Euro-Atlantic **security community**, making Turkey a reliable ambassador of NATO’s values and providing for the country’s participation in the alliances’ missions in the future as well (‘Turkey’s relations...’ 2011). Moreover, as many in Turkish academia argue, Turkey, apart from the military side of NATO, fully respects those universal values that the alliance has been trying to promote during its existence (Kınacıoğlu and Gürzel 2013, 589-610).

In any case, Turkey needed to reaffirm its identity in the NATO framework during the post-Cold War time as the alliance’s vision continued to evolve to match a new world order. In other words, new alternatives appeared both for Turkey and for NATO, encouraging them to choose a common policy regarding geopolitical and security threats. This is when Ankara felt that its image was weakening in the eyes of the West (Lesser 1992, 25). Turkey turned to newly independent countries in Central Asia – those are predominantly Turkic-speaking nations – to create friendly ties with them, engaged with Ukraine on the Black Sea collaboration talks, established relations with Russia and Iran regarding energy deals, participated in peace maintenance projects in the Balkans, and strengthened its relations with Israel.



### **3. A VITAL MEMBER OF THE ALLIANCE?**

Operationally, NATO's structure has been into an ongoing mode of making improvements, and Turkey has been directly involved in this process. The most recent substantial changes were made in the aftermath of the 2002 Prague Summit where the alliance set up a "revised structure based on the minimum military requirement" (Allied Land Command 2016). In June 2003, a new version of the NATO Command Structure was approved, and, for the alliance's southern flank where Turkey is located, Joint Forces Command (JFC) in Naples and the three subordinate Component Commands: The Air Component Command (ACC) in Izmir, Maritime Component Command (MCC) in Naples and the Land Component Command (LCC) in Madrid were activated (*Ibid.*). The ACC, being deactivated in June 2013, became the institutional base for the Allied Land Command (LANDCOM), which was established in Izmir in December 2012. On the operational side, LANDCOM became the first of the three core units, which would be required to reach Full Operating Capability (FOC) by the end of 2014, right to meet the deadline for NATO activities in Afghanistan to be supporting the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) to later conclude and transition to Operation Resolute Support (*Ibid.*).

The following chapter is looking at the actual depth of Turkey's involvement in the NATO-originated operations to detect those existing and developing linkages – more visible from the alliance's operation side – which are significantly reducing or even perhaps making it unrealistic to end up with a total break-up between Turkey and NATO in any foreseeable future. Therefore, the Turkey's NATO-bound role in solving the Bosnian crisis and Kosovo turmoil, and the country's participation the Afghanistan operation are to be discussed. In addition, the nature of the Missile Defence Command is to be outlined in the context of this paper's main argument.

### 3.1. The Bosnian War Intervention

From the start of the Bosnian War in 1990s, Turkey's position was to become very active in the UN and NATO frameworks, encouraging multinational military missions to stop hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in spite of its own external and internal challenges between 1992 and 1995, such as the Kurdish issue. Also, as argued by Coşkun (2011, 8), this was the chance for Turkey to prove its allegiance to the political West, and the West would reaffirm its multi-dimensional alliance with Turkey. Therefore, as NATO's air strikes started discouraging the Bosnian Serbs, led by Mladić and Karadžić, Turkey's active position secured the legitimacy of the mission (*Ibid.*). In the past, Bosnian leaders decisively motivated Ankara and, more specifically, the then Turkish Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, to get involved in their country's dispute as a mediator and help in keeping civilians safe. An important reason explaining traditional sympathy of Bosnians towards Turkey is its historical, cultural and religious presence on Bosnian territory. The first President of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegović, a Bosnian Muslim and a former Islamist dissident in the collapsed Yugoslavia, called Turkey the most helpful ally and criticised other NATO members for reacting too slowly to the Bosnian cause (Pope 1993). Moreover, when the Turkey's demand to participate in Bosnia was rejected by the UN Protection Force due to historical, cultural and religious ties between the two countries, the Bosnian Ambassador to the UN openly criticised the organisation's Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali for allowing the Russian soldiers into Bosnia, claiming that the Bosnians would benefit more from Muslim troops than the Russians who have affinity for Serbia.

Being always on the Bosnian case, Turkey was repeatedly urging its European partners to push the international community towards an agreement and end the war in a diplomatic way – in a way, the country's efforts were eventuated with a document passed by the 1992 London Conference, which aimed at bringing peace through humanitarian help, diplomatic peace-making and sanctions against Serbia (Sloan 1998, 47). Although Turkey did neither belong to the European Community nor it was a part of the conflict in the Bosnian crisis, it was called to the meeting being a part of the Western security community. Arguably, when the conflict in Bosnia got unfolded to a highly dangerous extent when the Srebrenica massacre occurred – with 8,373 Bosnian Muslims being killed by a unit of the Bosnian Serb Army of Republika

Srpska (Lockie and Rosen 2015), it was yet another one Turkish Prime Minister, Tansu Çiller, who urged NATO to start a military action.

The NATO Operation Deliberate Force, taking the whole month of September in 1995, was organised against the Bosnian Serb Army of Republika Srpska totalling more than 60 fighter jets (Dittmer and Dawkins 1998, 20-21). Turkey actively participated in this mission by delivering 18 of those aircrafts to the NATO's Southern Air Allied Command. In the Bosnian geostrategic scene, NATO's recognition of Turkey as a core ally was probably not done in a timely manner, but it made a crucial impact on Bosnian people to appreciate NATO's involvement in solving the crisis.

### **3.2. Kosovo Intervention**

In 1999, NATO intervened in Kosovo to counter yet another conflict involving Serbian military and para military population of the Balkans and the peninsula's Muslim ethnicities, more specifically, represented in this case by the secessionist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). This time, keeping in mind that, for NATO, the Deliberate Force already became an example of solving a complicated crisis, the decision on the alliance's involvement in Kosovo was not made in a straight-forward manner either.

Javier Solana (1999), the then NATO Secretary General, asked the alliance to unite and end the crisis in Kosovo because, from his point of view, it was not only demanding military actions but also had a moral and humanitarian element. Consequently, the allies agreed to participate in this mission, and the Operation Allied Force went under way from 23 March to 10 June 1999. According to him, the Kosovo Intervention could be described as a "major intervention" because for the first time, an alliance conducted a military operation remotely, in order to safeguard civilians' security (Solana 1999, 114). As a side note, on the contrast with the Bosnian War, Turkey decided to show a more pacific and careful stance in Kosovo (Gangloff 2004, 105). Although Ankara accused Serbia of breaching human rights, particularly Slobodan Milošević's determination to expel Kosovar Albanians and Turks from their homes, it behaved in a more passive way than back in 1995. The reason would be that Turkey was reaching a turning point in the conflict against the PKK at the same time, and the Turkish leadership assumed that if the country would dynamically encourage the UN Security Council's military actions, then it risked the same type of involvement on the Turkey's case with the Kurds.

However, when Turkey successfully arrested the PKK's leader in Kenya and dismantled its administration in Northern Iraq, then it got involved in solving the Kosovo crisis largely, pushing for a greater involvement of NATO in the area.

The then Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit called the Operation Allied Force an international reply to the persistent Serbian belligerence and ignorance of peace talks offered by the UN (Ercan 2017, 95). He was supported by the same Süleyman Demirel, who was already the country's President, being internationally vocal in arguing that the protection of civilians in Kosovo was a legitimate reason for NATO to conduct its comprehensive military mission (Gangloff 2004, 111). Demirel, who was, in fact, the signatory of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act on behalf of Turkey, was also underscoring that the NATO's main objective in the post-Cold War time was to promote democracy and develop diplomatic as well as a military partnership between members so that their values would be embraced universally. Indeed, he stated in a speech at the Commemorative Ceremony of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of NATO: *"We must complete the job we have started in Kosovo, whatever this may take. That's why safeguarding our freedom must remain our common goal. That's why we need to preserve NATO as an effective and deterrent organization"* (Demirel 1999). In details, during the military mission, Turkey sent 18 F-16 fighter jets and then 350 soldiers to Kosovo (Leicht 1999), while assisting other NATO units to deliver over 4,666 tons of food and water and 4,325 tons of other goods to the area by the end of May 1999 ('NATO's Role'... 1999). Additionally, further on, Turkey became responsible for the leadership of Multinational Task Force South in 2007 ('Turkey's International...' 2011). This paper highlights that the solidified security community of NATO, with Turkey as its core element, made it possible for the Kosovo crisis to be, if not fully resolved, but placed into a process that created a much safer environment for all ethnic communities previously involved in the unrest.

### **3.3. Afghanistan Intervention**

Contrasting with the previously described NATO missions in Bosnia and Kosovo, which would be distinguished by their peace-making and crisis-solving features, the military intervention in Afghanistan right after the 9/11 was featured by the collective defence practices. That is why the alliance invoked the Article 5 for the first time in its history to get all members united in planning a range of military actions against the Al Qaeda and the Taliban organisations (Santamato and Beumler 2013, 7). Indeed, the 9/11 marked the beginning of a new chapter in

terms of security environment, which prompted NATO to act further than its normal Euro-Atlantic zone. In general, NATO was successful in transforming its peacekeeping techniques, previously used in the Balkans to tackle a completely different range of threats, but it was only possible to achieve via utilisation of the alliance's multi-regional perspectives – this includes the Turkey's presence in the Middle East and the country's visible influence in the Central Asian regions.

In the context of the 9/11, the Operation Eagle Assist became the alliance's first anti-terror mission, which lasted for 8 months and consisted of patrolling the sky in the USA with 'Airborne Warning and Control System Aircraft' (Santamato and Beumler 2013, 8). Then, the next year, NATO organised its second counter-terrorism mission, in which Turkey was actively participating – it was the Operation Active Endeavour, lasting for more than 15 years. Finally, the most comprehensive response from NATO on the Afghanistan challenge was framed by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which was initially responsible for securing the Afghani capital Kabul but gradually covered the entire territory of Afghanistan by 2006, also aiming at rebuilding the bombed areas. This mission was the alliance's most demanding task to date and involved over 130,000 soldiers from 51 countries at its peak ('ISAF's mission...' 2015). It represented the first encounter with terrorism for NATO in the organisational level and for Turkey as a NATO ally.

Indeed, the post 9/11 security threat system is based on worldwide terrorism as well as religious fundamentalism, forcing NATO to employ its best peace-making strategies, while acting outside the Euro-Atlantic zone. In 2009, during the Bratislava Security Conference, the then newly appointed NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated that it would be necessary to stop terrorism in Afghanistan so that it does not spread to the Central Asian countries, eventually putting the West in danger ('New challenges...' 2009). In this context, NATO's sphere of security-related interests was getting significantly enlarged in the direction of Central Asia where Turkey's strategic influence has always been acknowledged internationally. In the Afghanistan case, Turkey's proximity to the region as well as its historic linkages with the regional actors dating back to the Ottoman Empire, made the country's NATO membership literally looking as unbreakable.

In details, Turkey took part in the ISAF immediately sending 300 troops that would not be acting against rebellions or terrorism at the frontline. Instead, the Turkish personnel was responsible for the non-combat tasks and projects on rebuilding the affected areas to promote

peace and help for Afghanistan to recover from hostilities. Since 2002, Turkey has spent more than USD 2 billion on different projects in this country (Kaya 2013, 24). Additionally, Ankara was the leader of this mission from June 2002 to February 2003 and then from February to August 2005. In the first period, the military personnel count was 1,300 at its highest level, and, in the second one, Turkey was in charge of 8,000 soldiers coming from 30 different countries (*Ibid.*). Both times, Turkey commanded over the international airport in Kabul. Later on, Turkey was heading over the ISAF's Regional Headquarters for four years (2009-2013) – in this period, it was named the eighth biggest troop contributor among 49 states, and its effort remained continuous ('Turkish contributions'... 2016).

In Afghanistan, Turkey was also arguably successful in socio-cultural projects due to its authority in the area, enabling it to strengthen its own soft power mechanisms as well. One example is related to the 'Wardak and Jawzjan Provincial Reconstruction Teams', which is a cooperation between various Turkish experts and medical doctors with the Afghani local authorities to raise awareness and offer help to the poorest civilians in terms of education, healthcare, job trainings, encompassing more than 200 projects in total (Kaya 2013, 24). Additionally, the infrastructure was improved, with the reconstruction of buildings, roads and bridges (Kaura 2017). This paper highlights the fact that those programmes reinforced Turkey's influence in Afghanistan, and by achieving that, assisted NATO to reach the segments of the Afghani society, which would have never been reached without Turkey. In recent times, Ankara continues to provide support for this country, also as part of NATO's plan. For example, the Chief of General Staff Gen. Hulusi Akar stated on August 23, 2017: "We are trying the best we can to provide all kinds of support and help for Afghanistan" ('Military to continue...' 2017).

Certainly, it is accurate to note that the Turkey's interest in Afghanistan are not only based on or linked to the country's membership in NATO. Those interests and concerns also originate in the broad field of Turkey's own geostrategic goals in the region and globally. Ankara claims that if Afghanistan remains chaotic, failing as a state and giving in to terrorism, it would gradually destabilise Central Asia, then weaken the Caspian basin, resulting in a weaker Middle East, and then eventually threatening the economic and political stability of Turkey ('New challenges...' 2009). However, if Afghanistan becomes a stable, peaceful state everlastingly, then the entire surrounding area would prosper economically and politically. Therefore, Turkey and neighbouring countries would be able to engage in trade and cross-cultural communication without any Afghanistan-originated security dangers, strengthening the Turkish power in the

region from a long-term perspective. The location of LANDCOM in Izmir is evidently proving the latter statement.

Furthermore, especially considering a particular stance on Islam (including political Islam) promoted by the current Turkish President, Turkey would arguable want to positively convert to its own benefit a situation when the shared religious sentiments and some similar cultural aspects helped Turkish soldiers and other professionals to deliver the NATO message to the Afghans. To date and even regardless of the undisputed fact that Turkey has significantly moved away from Kemalism, the country is still the only secular democracy in the Islamic world, and this particular identity enabled it to conduct a number of vital assignments in Afghanistan, acting on behalf and as a part of NATO. Therefore, its status in the Euro-Atlantic framework could be characterised by a sort of ambassadorial functions in regards of the alliance's missions in the areas where Islam dominates the religious landscape. Back in time, Secretary General Rasmussen underscored that Turkey's work in this region as a vital ally, both in terms of military leadership and soft power influence, promoted NATO's values ('NATO Secretary...' 2012). Also, at the Joint Press Point gathering Rasmussen and the Turkish former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu, the former Secretary General sincerely expressed his appreciation: *"Turkey has been a vital participant in the ISAF mission, and I welcome and appreciate Turkey's continued leadership in the new mission we are planning, to train, advise and assist the Afghan forces from next year [...] NATO's purpose is to keep our citizens safe. And to respond to challenges from wherever they come [...] I know I can count on Turkey's continued strong support"* ('Opening remarks'... 2014).

### **3.4. The Missile Defence Command**

Concerning the missile defence command, this is yet another key factor associated with Turkey's strategic place in the NATO framework. Arguably, the country's power status depends on the alliance's deterrence capacity in the Middle East, the quality of weapons and military equipment it possesses and how they are improved, as well as NATO's capacity to protect civilians and territories from threats coming from Turkey's eastern neighbours. Turkey's complete assistance is required to achieve the EU's and NATO's goals, as it possesses one of the biggest and well-prepared army in Europe. Its geographic location enables the alliance to reach the eastern Mediterranean or norther Middle East rapidly in case of crisis

(Yılmaz 2007, 51-64). In addition, its geopolitical position covers areas from the Balkans to the Middle East where both Russia and the EU are involved (Leonard 2016).

The 2010 Lisbon Summit issued a strategic concept stating that NATO should station its missile systems in a manner that increases the collective deterrence strength against a prospective aggressor. Factually, this definition alludes to Iran, which possesses ballistic missiles. Therefore, NATO decided to upgrade its defence system in the Middle East to prevent any threats to security directed at the Euro-Atlantic zone. For example, in 2012, NATO activated the early radar system in the town of Malatya, which is located about 500 km. from the Turkish capital city ('Part of NATO...' 2012). Also, Portugal, Romania, Poland and Spain accepted to contribute to deploy parts of this defence system alongside Turkey (*Ibid.*).

From the beginning of the process, Turkey urged NATO to fully activate the defence system and take command of it without specifically targeting any countries such as Iran and Syria. This deterrence measure was necessary because the Arab Spring resulted in increased security threats on NATO's territory. Consequently, an international debate on the NATO system installed in Turkey followed and weakened relations between Turkey and Iran (Ülgen 2012, 10). Iran accused Turkey of increasing tension in the surroundings by displaying missiles from the alliance, which threaten Iran and its neighbours. Also, Russia expressed its opposition on the placement of those missiles in Turkey, claiming that NATO is risking to create a new polemic in the Middle East. Then, NATO and Russia attempted to compromise at the 2012 Chicago Summit, but they did not reach a common ground (De Haas 2012, 14).

Finally, this research notes that the stationing of the NATO's defence system on the Turkish territory demonstrates the importance of this country's agreement with the alliance's interest in the Middle East regarding security matters. Turkey, on behalf of NATO, is hereby responsible for deterrence in one of the most problematic region of the world. According to İsmet Yılmaz who has been the Turkish Minister of National Defence for five years in total, NATO's interests are closely related to the idea of "smart deterrence" (İsmet Yılmaz 2012). The fact that Turkey agreed with the deployment of the missile defence system as well as the installation of the alliance's radar is a positive example of the development of smart deterrence, which is an important element in NATO's chronological improvement of its defence methods.



### **3.5. Recent developments between Turkey and NATO members**

The recent history, especially, since Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took his office as the country's Prime Minister in 2003, has shown that the relations between Turkey and other NATO members are constantly changing. In September 2017, the situation became even more intriguing after Ankara agreed to buy S-400 missiles from Russia, which are to be delivered in 2019. This bilateral deal includes the training of hundreds of Turkish soldiers by Russian staff and will likely result in further agreements between the countries (Dempsey 2017). Although the deal seems currently intimidating and controversial as political communication between Turkey and Europe are worsening, and it may seem like Turkey is all over sudden turning to Russia, many politicians believe that this event will not threaten NATO's strength. According to Brakel (*Ibid.*), the deal between Turkey and Russia would not affect the NATO's unity on the organisational and operational levels, but the country's disagreements with other allies such as Germany could have serious consequences on the stability of the organisation instead. Moreover, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg attested that he raised this issue with President Erdoğan and called it "sovereign" (Emmott 2017). He added that Turkey was ready to elaborate on its needs to purchase the S-400 missiles if it becomes necessary (*Ibid.*).

Another factor from the Turkish history that significantly strained NATO is the aftermath of the failed *coup* attempt, which occurred on 15 July 2016. Indeed, 58% of naval admirals, 44% of land force generals, and 42% of air force generals lost their position in the nationwide mass purges (Kogan 2017, 22). Thereby, those dramatic changes in the Turkish army combined with internal issues such as lengthy investigations decreased the Turkish military's readiness to act. According to US General Curtis Scaparrotti who is the current Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO Allied Command Operations, the Turkish army lost talented, senior personnel in this event, which of course negatively affected the quality of work performed by the Turkish troops. Indeed, he expressed his worry in the following manner after a meeting gathering NATO foreign ministers: "I have a concern about what happened to the people who were working for us" (Emmott 2017). Moreover, the fact that a part of military personnel living at the time of the *coup* attempt in NATO member states sought for asylum further increased the tension between Turkey and the concerned allies such as Greece, Germany and the USA (Kogan 2017, 22).

Furthermore, the historically friendly cooperation between Ankara and Berlin was severely affected in March 2017, when President Erdoğan harshly criticised Germany after being banned

from organising political meetings ahead of the constitutional referendum held the next month. The Turks are the largest minority living in Germany and account for approximately 5% of the population. The conflict resulted in a suspension of Turkey's admission process to the EU by the European Parliament. German Chancellor Angela Merkel commented that she was willing to permanently stop the membership talks ('German Chancellor'... 2017). This view was shared by the Austrian government, which was one of the 40 countries banned from cooperating with NATO by Turkey after a diplomatic incident in 2016 (Huggler 2017). Strained relations could also be highlighted by the wish to stop Turkey from hosting a NATO summit in 2018 – Germany, France, Denmark and the Netherlands agreed to prevent President Erdoğan from organising the event in Istanbul because they do not support his internal policies (Huggler 2017). It is known that 18 European countries and Canada are backing the decision, the Summit is now scheduled to be in Brussels, but no official statement has been released.

Finally, relations between Turkey and other allies keep evolving, and positive developments occur as well. In 2017, Turkey and Britain agreed on a £100 million deal in order to build together a “fifth generation fighter”, which will be part of the Turkish Air Forces in the 2020s (Bronk 2017). This evolution will enable Turkey to reach the level of other powerful NATO air forces. Also, Turkey remains an important country to maintain security on the European continent, and as it has already been mentioned earlier in the thesis, there is no clear protocol to expel a full NATO member state from the alliance. Recent tensions did not result in talks to ban Turkey from the framework, and, it could be speculated that the difficulties in communication will be lessened after the next Turkish presidential in 2018 and parliamentary elections taking place in November 2019. Turkey has always answered the call when it was necessary in the past and is still seriously committed to NATO.

At last, this final chapter highlights a number of factors, which evidently confirm that it is strategically unacceptable and institutionally unrealistic for NATO to lose Turkey as an ally, regardless of the present conflicting circumstances. While it is true that hostilities have been growing between Turkey and other NATO members, Turkey is still considered a core element of the alliance's framework due to its geostrategic location, regional outreach, a high degree of interoperability in the NATO-wide platform, cross-cultural advantages in the context of strategic communication with the Islamic world, enormous military capacity, and economic integration with the European market. There is also an advantage of specific ties, which Turkey managed to establish with different types of actors. For example, its close connection with

Russia can be seen as a factor to achieve smoother peace talks in Geneva when discussing the Syrian issue. Although Ankara's discussion with the USA has not been successful regarding the Kurdish question, Turkey turned to Russia as a mediator in several instances. Because of Turkish efforts, the beginning of 2017 was successfully marked by direct discussions between the Syrian opposition and the representatives of the Syrian government in Astana. As a result of this meeting, an agreement to de-escalate zones in Idlib, Homs, eastern Ghouta, Deraa and Al-Qunetra ('Factsheet...', 2017) in an attempt to stop violence and solve the humanitarian crisis. Additionally, participants agreed on the resolution that the Syrian conflict could not be solved by military means, but only by diplomatic efforts.

While tensions over the conflict in Syria have already entered the global agenda, both the NATO Secretary General as well as the North Atlantic Council attested that Turkey's concerns about endangered security at its border are legitimate. Moreover, the present security plan (Kınacıoğlu, Gürzel 2013, 597) followed by Ankara complies with NATO's values. In this light, Turkey has always formed a bridge between East and West, currently placing it at the crossroads of tensions. Possibly, a new Turkey has come as a surprise to many experts in the field of international relations, but the factor of the mutual devotion towards establishing and then solidifying the security community, shared by NATO and Turkey for almost seven decades, cannot be easily destroyed or replaced by a new political scheme. Turkey has simply grown up from the Lausanne times, and this factor has already reminded the observers that the security community can include members with different backgrounds and uniquely diverse political views. Furthermore, as Turkey is preparing for its upcoming presidential elections on 24 June 2018, a year and a half ahead of schedule, the alliance is still standing together, agreeing to protect each other. For NATO, Turkey is not just an ordinary member of the world's biggest intergovernmental military alliance. It is also possessing the NATO's second largest army and the country has arranged a number of refugee camps on its own territory to host more than 3.5 million people ('UNHCR... 2017). Jens Stoltenberg referred to Turkey's importance recently, during a speech in April 2018: *"Both Turkey and Greece are two highly valued NATO Allies and they play an important role, not least in addressing the migrant and refugee crisis, where we have a NATO deployment [...] helping to implement the agreement between Turkey and EU on the immigration crisis in Europe"* (Stoltenberg 2018).

Finally, this development increased tensions among Turks over time. Indeed, a survey revealed in 2014 that 38.9% of them believed "Refugees are not a concern of Turkey and they should be sent back to their country" (Weise 2018). Nowadays, however, 86.2% of civilians (*Ibid.*)

believe that Syrians need to return to their country once the crisis is resolved. This change of opinion is due to inevitable political and social consequences brought by this mass immigration. Indeed, politicians realized that they were not able to grant citizenship to many refugees as it was promised earlier, and Turks became dissatisfied with the economic crisis heightened by the fact that Syrians often unofficially work for lower salaries, consequently decreasing the standard for unemployed Turkish citizens as well. Therefore, conflicts erupt more frequently between the two groups due to cultural differences as well as failure of integration, resulting in a tripled number of violent incidents in the second half of last year, compared with the end of 2016, according to a report by the International Crisis Group ('Turkey's Syrian Refugees'... 2018). This unfortunate turn of events will surely influence the results of the upcoming presidential election.

## CONCLUSION

Although Turkey's presence and importance in NATO in the post-Cold War period have been criticised in recent times, especially during Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's mandate, this paper claims that Turkey has a vital role in this organisation due to its unique, key features which essentially maintain and promote global security. Indeed, the research thoroughly states the ways in which Turkey is relevant to the Alliance based on crucial elements such as the historical background, geopolitical location (growing in importance due to security threats in the Middle East), strategic diplomatic ties bridging the East and West, participation of its army in NATO as it is the second biggest in size after the USA; not forgetting the idea of security community introduced by Karl Deutsch, shared by these two powers. Despite the formation of a new political model of Turkey, it remains an essential part of NATO because of its strong links with the Middle East as well as other countries such as Russia, strategic location and shared long-term goals. Therefore, prospective goals and important developments are stressed in the argumentation of the thesis. One valuable example includes the effort demonstrated by Turkey in the Astana talks of 2017, which gathered Syrian representatives alongside Russian, Iranian Turkish delegates and the participation of UN intermediaries to ensure a smoother mediation in several sessions. The event successfully resulted in a plan to de-escalate several strategic zones such as Idlib and Homs, keeping in mind the improvement of the humanitarian dimension.

In this light, the thesis first presents a rich theoretical framework accompanied by a reference to the chosen methodology. Then, elements which interlink a new Turkey with NATO are thoroughly explained in order to reach the following discussion: is Turkey currently a vital member of the alliance? The latter is supported by references to essential case studies, namely Turkey's chronological involvement in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan, as well as a sub-chapter on the Missile Defence Command, finally ending with references to recent political developments between Turkey and other NATO allies. These events enable the readership to identify a broad range of causal mechanisms, which interlink NATO and Turkey, presenting the organization as a tight pluralistic security community. The particular design of the research

integrates and answers the following research questions in two principal empirical data-collecting chapters: 1) from the Turkish side, what are the major driving forces and frameworks, which are firmly interconnecting Turkey with NATO? 2) from the NATO's position, what are the factors that make it strategically unacceptable and institutionally unrealistic to lose Turkey as an ally.

To put it in a nutshell, NATO's identity and vision have been explained, together with their reliance on deterrence and diplomacy, as well as initiation of military actions after trying other measures in the post-Cold War period. On the one hand, NATO adapted to the new world system and has been promoting democratic ideas, which form the basis of its alliance. On the other hand, Turkey has been attempting to develop a pro-Western image and matches its foreign policy line with NATO's principles, as well as participated in critical military missions, for example in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan (Kınacıoğlu, Gürzel 2013, 597). Despite disagreements with President Donald Trump's actions, attempts at peace promotion have also been witnessed by Turkey's stance on the ongoing Syrian as well as Gaza conflicts.

In the post-Cold War time, Turkey tackled different regional and global security cases associated with NATO's strategic concepts. For example, a national official report lists the most common security threats including several forms of terrorism (separatist, fundamentalist), regional menaces and disagreements, political or economic disruptions, threatened energy supply, spread of mass destruction arms as well as drug smuggling (Turkey's Defence... 2010). As a response to these unrests, Turkey devised a proactive foreign policy which uses deterrence and military powers in missions organised by NATO and UN. Moreover, improving the standard of democracy and welfare nationally and regionally are key components of Turkey's foreign policy. Although Turkey reassessed security threats in the post-Cold War time on a national level, it also simultaneously maintained and strengthened ties with NATO.

This thesis discusses that the alliance between Turkey and NATO in the post-Cold War era represents a turning point regarding regional security cases occurring in Islamic and previously Ottoman areas, which directly have an impact on Turkey's politics. On the one hand, the link between the two parties justified the alliance's military missions in problematic areas and on the other hand, strengthened Turkey's western state identity, which is vital for Ankara in the post-Cold War era. Their dynamic alliance and shared values about security principles enabled them to work and evolve together during more than 60 years and paved the way for a promising collaboration in the future. Although disagreements are currently expressed in the political

theatre between different actors, also partly due to their background, those ties cannot easily be broken or replaced. Nowadays, Turkey is undergoing an intense domestic change, especially given that the first round of presidential elections is taking place on 24 June 2018, and the unfortunate fact that economic stability is disrupted in the country. However, although disagreements do exist with several countries such as the USA, as it was witnessed during the recent Jerusalem crisis, the maintenance of friendly ties with other NATO allies remains a positive element for the future of the organization. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyse the position of Turkey as a NATO ally in the post-Cold War period and conclude that the country is keeping its strategic importance in the NATO-bound framework despite internal, for example the Kurdish question, and external issues.

Moreover, in the post-Cold War time period, NATO's evolution included a change from "self-defence" to "collective security" in order to adapt to the new world conditions, as a measure of deterrence against threats to security such as terrorism, ensure military operations as well as peacekeeping tasks on the Euro-Atlantic geography and beyond, as it was the case in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. Indeed, Western ideologies formed a basis for NATO's strategies. Also, NATO's successes in encouraging democracy in Turkey's surroundings allowed the organisation to strengthen its image in problematic areas, it also enabled Turkey to further build its Western state identity by participating in military and peacekeeping operations led by NATO, using its smart power strategies.

Additionally, the research shows that NATO improved its strategies to a large extent as it prepared to act in out-of-area territories against potential threats to security as an alliance, and not only defending its members within the Euro-Atlantic zone. The cases studied in the thesis revealed that NATO enlarges its definition of security to the defence of human rights, counterterrorism, promotion of democracy, measures of deterrence against the stationing of ballistic missiles, for example, as well as conducting peacekeeping operations. In this regard, Turkey actively contributed to missions occurring in the Islamic and previously Ottoman world, which legitimised NATO's strategies and highlighted Western principles in different contexts. The paper demonstrates that Turkey's presence in the alliance acts as a bridge between the West and Muslim civilians such as in Afghanistan, uses its historical legacy in post-Ottoman states to build trust during NATO missions, as it was the case in Bosnia and assists in the alliance's development with numerous essential references to Karl Deutsch's notion of security community.

Therefore, as NATO attempts to reach its aim of being accepted as the leading safety provider in the world, capable of commanding successful peacekeeping operations as well as military missions, Turkey provides diplomatic assistance to Islamic populations affected by NATO's involvement. This way, Ankara's active efforts decrease the risk of opposition reactions against NATO in Islamic countries. Additionally, by attending all of NATO's events, Turkey proves that Western missions were not targeting Islam nor Muslim, as it was historically the case, in the Middle Ages.

The experience Turkey gained during various NATO tasks demonstrates its Western state identity, but also advocates its regional smart power characterised by secularity, democracy, particular geography at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, complemented by a rich culture which becomes a useful asset during missions in Islamic countries, as well as a strong army. Thereby, getting involved in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan enabled Turkey to reaffirm its sphere of influence in post-Ottoman and majoritarily Muslim states, as well as keep its strategic advantages. The thesis also explains in what ways the security and stability of Turkey depends on the status of the Balkans, Central Asia and the Caspian Basin. Indeed, events in Bosnia and Kosovo destabilised the prosperity of the surroundings, but also negatively impacted Turkey's both domestic and foreign politics. A valuable lesson has however been learnt under these circumstances.

Furthermore, the Republic of Turkey aims to become a smart power in the region due to several important internal and external reasons. Indeed, over ten million Turks from the Balkans are living on the Turkish soil. The majority has either Bosnian or Albanian origins and communities of migrants exist as well. The numbers are smaller for Turks in Bosnia and Kosovo, but the fact remains that a strong bond is shared by Turkey and this area, which of course influences the course of Ankara's political actions concerning the Balkans. The external factor is that Turkey considers the Balkans as a door to the West, and it wants to prevent the emergence of an Orthodox-Slavic influence, which could be problematic for NATO as well. Therefore, Ankara's full integration in the alliance's tasks preserves its geopolitical advantages and contributes to its development into a regional smart power, taking into account its military strength as well as soft power characteristics.

Finally, in the post-Cold War era, Turkey has the possibility to demonstrate its Western values through the role played in NATO. Although being a majoritarily Muslim country, Turkey works together with allies in maintaining peace during military and deterrence assignments for over



60 years. The readership has been informed about the reasons why NATO is unwilling to lose Turkey as an ally. That is why, the thesis states that Turkey is keeping its strategic importance for NATO-bound framework despite some significant internal and external issues. All in all, Turkey has continuously promoted essential values such as secularity, democracy, peace and respect of human rights, which perfectly aligns with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's famous maxim "Peace at home, peace in the world".

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