



Re-Visiting Turkish National Security Strategy After the Cold War

Prehodnotenie tureckej národnej bezpečnostnej stratégie po studenej vojne

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Abstract:

Even though Turkey was a member of NATO during the Cold War years, its geostrategic importance was far behind its size and the number of its military. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Turkey's foreign policy and strategic doctrine gradually opened up, the country became an increasingly active participant in international armed conflicts, and after a while it aspired to a distinctly regional leadership role. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan treats the transatlantic alliance more and more only as a security guarantee, and based on this he targets his personal and national ambitions. The purpose of the article called Re-Visiting Turkish National Security Strategy After the Cold War is to provide a qualitative analysis of this process with the help of international literature.

Keywords: Turkey, NATO, national security

Abstrakt:

Aj keď Turecko bolo členom NATO v rokoch studenej vojny, jeho geostrategický význam ďaleko zaostával za jeho veľkosťou a počtom jeho armády. Po páde Berlínskeho múru sa postupne otvárala zahraničná politika a strategická doktrína Turecka, krajina sa stávala čoraz aktívnejším účastníkom medzinárodných ozbrojených konfliktov a po čase ašpirovala na výrazne regionálnu vedúcu úlohu. Turecký prezident Recep Tayyip Erdogan sa k transatlantickej aliancii stále viac správa len ako k bezpečnostnej záruke a na základe toho cieľi na svoje osobné a národné ambície. Účelom článku Prehodnotenie tureckej národnej bezpečnostnej stratégie po studenej vojne je poskytnúť kvalitatívnu analýzu tohto procesu s pomocou medzinárodnej literatúry.

Kľúčové slová: Turecko, NATO, národná bezpečnosť



Introduction

Turkey due to its neutrality maintained almost throughout World War II, only gradually became an active member of the international community during the Cold War years. Although it will become a member of NATO very soon, Turkey was for a long time only a neglected outpost of the military alliance. The proliferation of conflicts in the Middle East or the Islamic Revolution in Iran somewhat increased its geostrategic importance, but only after the fall of the Berlin Wall did it become a truly important and fast-reacting player in regional power games. The purpose of this study is to examine, with the help of various historical events and strategic plans, how Turkish foreign and military policy opened up, along with how Turkish society itself was demilitarized, and what other means Turkey and its Islamist government tried and is trying to increase its influence in the Middle East, the Balkans and the post-Soviet region.

Throughout the history of the Turkish people, one of the most important considerations has always been the security of the nation and the state. The Turks are often characterized as a military nation, in fact it is true of them that the military organization is systemic and the functioning of the state practically depends on the balanced and successful conduct of the army. The modern Republic of Turkey founded in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, himself a high ranking army officer and a hero of the nation, also preserved this army-centric way of thinking, which strongly influenced the political system itself until recently. This means that practically until the last decade, the Turkish armed forces created the legal conditions for their own operation, civilian control was weak, and the government and parliament exercised only partial supervision over the army. Overall, this situation can be characterized as follows: within a highly centralized but democratic state organization, the military had a high degree of internal autonomy. This was true throughout the Cold War and in the long decade that followed.[1] The army only gradually lost this independence after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002, and civilian control slowly appeared in Turkish public life only after the failed coup attempt in 2016. At the same time, in the era of strategic re-planning following the collapse of the bipolar world order, the system outlined above still prevailed, i.e. the Turkish political leadership had to formulate a new direction, while the army had the theoretical possibility not to follow the ideas of the government and parliament.

1. Turkish National Defense Strategy During the Cold War

Although they tried to exist as a neutral state in the 1940s and stay out of World War II., in February 1945, Turkey finally declared war on Nazi Germany, but essentially did not participate in the fighting. Until and during World War II, an elaborated Turkish national security strategy did not yet exist, so after the war, a tabula rasa situation was practically created, and in the emerging bipolar world order, Turkey was given a chance to formulate a new and Western-friendly strategy. The new opening in military politics coincided with a democratization phase in domestic politics, because after the Second World War, the establishment of new parties was first allowed in modern Turkish history, and then in 1950 a multi-party election was held, in which the Democratic Party triumphed among the new political formations. In this period of political transition, precisely in 1949, the decision was made to set up

several national security committees in order to promote the best possible communication in a war situation. These organizations were not long-lived. The National Security Council (NSC), which later played an important role, was established only after the 1960 military coup. The executors of the 1971 coup seized political power in the name of the National Security Council, and with this step they also wanted to symbolize that they had placed political decision-making processes under military tutelage.[2]

During the Cold War, the United States of America saw the NATO member countries as platforms for action against the Soviet Union and the communist threat, so it expected them to prevent communist movements from gaining too much influence in their countries. In Turkey, this effect was most noticeable in the 1970s, when the military was not influenced by the current political right, but by a right-wing, nationalist interpretation of Kemalism the ideology that follows the principles of the state founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.[3] Although, overall, Turkey was a distant periphery of NATO during the Cold War, in the eyes of the Americans, it began to appreciate after 1979. In the eyes of Washington, Turkey's importance increased with the fall of the shah's pro-Western regime in Iran and the rise to power of Ayatollah Khomeini, who regards the United States as a sworn enemy.[18]

In the 1970s, from a constitutional point of view, the National Security Council was an advisory body to the government, whose main mission was to help the political leadership in creating the best possible national defense strategy, i.e. in practice the army did not keep the government and the parliament under its guardianship, but sought cooperation. The most important turning point in the system occurred after the 1980 coup d'état. The putschists gave the nation a new constitution in 1982, according to the version of this law that is still in force at the time, the proposals of the National Security Council were actually binding on the cabinet, thus significantly narrowing the government's room for maneuver. On the basis of the 1982 constitution, Act No. 2945 was enacted, which provided for the National Security Council, its powers and the details of security strategy creation.[1]

According to the aforementioned law, in the last two decades of the 20th century, the following modus operandi was established in the field of strategy creation. The fundamentals of the national security strategy were formulated by the National Security Council, and the detailed elaboration was then the responsibility of the government. The national defense goals prioritized by the prime minister, i.e. the National Security Policy Documents, were classified as Top Secret, and the National Security Council had to ensure their implementation. The commander-in-chief of the army wrote the draft of these documents, which was then countersigned by the reigning prime minister. This theoretical work was followed by the creation of a practical National Strategy Document, which was finally adopted by the Supreme Security Council consisting of soldiers and politicians.[1]

2. Transition of the Turkish Military to the Post-Cold War Era

The weakening of the Turkish army in the political arena in the 1990s is well characterized by two events. The first of these was the resignation of Chief of General Staff Necip Torumtay. Until then, it was unimaginable that such a high-ranking Turkish military leader would voluntarily leave his post while claiming that the

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civilian government does not understand the principles of the republican system. The other similar event was the so-called 1997 postmodern coup, during which the army no longer sought to overthrow the government by force, it only issued a statement, and then, in consultation with the cabinet, Prime Minister Erbakan was forced to resign.[3]

The post-Cold War transition was made more difficult by the fact that the officers of the Turkish army, which was increasingly losing its domestic political influence, were less and less able to remain united. One aspect of the high degree of political division was around the question who should be chosen as the main strategic ally. In the 1990s, three trends developed. According to the first group, the United States of America should be Turkey's main military ally, the second group argued in favor of European countries that this way Turkey could gain more autonomy within NATO, while there were also those who preferred cooperation with Russia and Iran. This internal ideological conflict did not resolve, but was replaced by another in the 2000s. After the Justice and Development Party came to power, more and more religious Muslim officers joined the top leadership of the army, who wanted a religiously motivated foreign policy and strategy-making. It is ironic that this circle of officers put in place by the AKP could have been behind the failed coup of 2016 against the AKP government.

In connection with Turkey's choice of partners in foreign and military policy and its search for identity, the question of how far Turkey, the Turkish people and Turkish politicians have accepted Western values has often arisen. While Turkish military and political leaders are convinced that they have succeeded in this area, many Western opinion-makers are skeptical. Chief of Staff Hilmi Ozkok and AKP politicians, for example, repeatedly claimed that they are fully integrated into the Trans Atlantic spirit, but Texas governor and Republican presidential candidate Rick Perry has expressed the opposite. Perry launched an extremely sharp outburst against the Erdogan government. He believed that AKP-led Turkey should be excluded from NATO because he stated that the Anatolian nation was controlled by Islamist terrorists.[7]

„The Turkish political establishment began to position Turkey as a liminal state, underscoring its hybrid identity and its unique geography between the civilizational concepts of East and West as a meeting place for different cultures.”[2] Taking advantage of the existing and growing contradictions within the Turkish general staff, the Turkish political leadership also decided to diversify its foreign policy. Turgut Ozal, the eighth president of the Republic of Turkey, the conservative and civilian politician who succeeded the putschist Evren in the presidency at the very beginning of the 1990s, realized that geopolitics was enriched with civilizational elements and this could contribute to the reevaluation of Turkey's strategic position. Before the parliament of the Western European Union, he states that Turkey is "the drawbridge of Europe's fortress of contemporary civilization and its gateway to the Middle East.”[2] Meanwhile, Ozal understands that Turkey understands both the West and the East at the same time, thus being able to protect the former and communicate effectively with the latter. Ozal was also the one agreed upon the Turkish participation in the Gulf War.

The end of the Cold War also presented Ozal's Turkey with a serious ideological challenge, with international politics reevaluating the concepts of "West" and "East",

and in the meantime, the Turks found themselves in an interesting trap situation. Turkey formally remained an ally of the West understood in the new sense that was built on the foundations of the Christian world, but since 99.8% of Turkey's population is Muslim, it was pushed to the eastern half of the World on the basis of civilization and identity. In addition, they faced more and more security challenges that had to be significantly reevaluated in this new ideological framework. One of these was the issue of Kurdish independence aspirations. Until now, the PKK, the Kurdish Workers' Party, fought against the Turkish government in the name of communist ideology and with the support of socialist countries. Since the 1990s, communism was no longer the main enemy of the West, in the eyes of Western liberals, the situation of the Kurds is also changing, they are increasingly seen as an oppressed ethnic minority, who, incidentally, are in the same majority Muslim as the Turks.[2]

The Gulf War and Saddam Hussein's fight against the Kurds also showed Turkey that the Kurdish question cannot be neglected, and that it can no longer be considered an internal conflict from the beginning of the 1990s, the "globalization" of Kurdish secession efforts began as well as the loose cooperation of Kurdish nationalist movements. Turkish President Turgut Ozal therefore stipulated as a condition for Turkish participation in the war that Northern Iraq cannot become independent and cannot threaten Turkey's territorial integrity.[10] The no-fly zone in northern Iraq was worrisome for Turkey's national defense strategy despite the fact that it did not result in the creation of a fully independent Kurdish state. The PKK, weakened by the time of the Gulf War, gained a new hinterland and a serious arsenal of weapons, which led to Turkish special forces intervening in northern Iraq from time to time.[13] It is an interesting fact that 30 years after the Gulf War, AKP governments maintain quite good political and economic relations with the Kurds of northern Iraq.

Another challenge is the emerging Islamist movements. Indeed, Turkey has a Muslim majority, but its political system is secular and opposed to radical Islamism. In the international space that is changing from a civilizational point of view, the Muslim-majority Turkey therefore finds itself facing something that refers to Islam, but is an enemy of both them and the New West.[2]

The right-wing AKP following Ozal's footsteps began to gradually demilitarize Turkish society in the mid-2000s. This was also shown in the 2007 reform package, according to the constitutional amendment confirmed in a referendum, the National Security Council was restored to the form it was in back in the 1970s, so the responsibility for creating the national security strategy rests on the shoulders of the government, and the NSC is only an advisory body, they help the work of the cabinet.[1]

It is also clear from the above historical explanation that the army became an important actor in Turkey's domestic politics and national security strategy-making became one of the arenas of political battles after World War II, in an era which was laden with coups. This was possible despite the fact that the country joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1952. Although the Turkish military has always been one of NATO's largest and strongest armies, it can be said that it was located on the periphery of the organization during the Cold War years, so it could allow itself to have part of its potential tied up by internal political power struggles and coups. After

the end of the bipolar world order and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey found itself at one of the most problematic points in the post-Cold War international system. At the very beginning of the 1990s, NATO assessed its own positions, mapped the threats to the alliance system and defined its new identity. At the end of this process, it was determined that a total of 16 threats concern the member states of NATO and 13 of these also exist in the case of Turkey, i.e. the state that spans two continents suddenly became more valued in Western strategic thinking and it became crucial for the West as well how the Turks define themselves their own national strategy.[3]

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkey's global strategic position increased when the country suddenly found itself in the neighborhood of three conflict zones (Middle East, Balkans, Caucasus). At the same time, the disintegration of the huge neighbor also brought strategic advantages, since the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, which mostly speak Turkic languages and are of the Islamic religion, became independent, thus Turkey gained potential strategic partners whose total population reaches 150 million people, where they speak languages very similar to that of Turkey and share its religious identity with the otherwise secular Anatolian nation. At the same time, the Turkish political and military leadership did not like this transformation at first for two basic reasons. On the one hand, they saw the armed conflicts, such as the hostilities that started in Nagorno-Karabakh at the time and are still going on today, which broke out from many places near the Turkish border, as a bigger challenge than acquiring new potential allies. On the other hand, Turkey viewed NATO - and the Council of Europe as well - as the key to the country's European integration. Turkey became an official applicant to the European Community in 1987, and at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Turks viewed the transformation of NATO - as it turned out later, rightly - as something that would only hinder their accession process.[3]

Turkey's opening to Central Asia and the Balkans in the 1990s is a markedly twofold process. There are indeed Muslim peoples speaking Turkic languages living in Central Asia, but the operation of the main political power typically takes place according to post-Soviet principles. The Soviet way of thinking, the secular outlook inherited from communism, leaves its mark on the system of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and the others. Although these systems bear strong authoritarian features, it can be said that they are secular and Islamic elements appear in their values. This system of relations can be interesting from Turkey's point of view because they are good examples of a "secular Muslim" state. While Turkey did not interfere in the functioning of the countries in Central Asia after the Cold War, in the Balkans it can be said that it tried to Islamize the countries inhabited by Muslims to some extent. While the cooperation with Central Asian countries was essentially free of ideology or based on Turkish kinship, in the Balkans Turkey actively referred to the Islamic and Ottoman heritage. All of this gave rise to conflicts of a political nature with the Christian nations of the region.[2]

3. Turkey as an Emerging Actor of International Armed Conflicts

The armed conflicts that proliferated in Turkey's neighborhood, such as the Gulf War, the Bosnian and Kosovo wars, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, or the two Chechnya conflicts, also radically transformed Turkish public opinion. Until the end of

the 1980s, Turkey pursued a very cautious regional foreign policy and tried to distance itself from similar situations. The Iraq-Iran war that broke out in 1980, for example, had extremely negative political and economic consequences for Turkey, but Ankara remained a cautious observer and did not actively enter the conflict. After 1990, however, a completely different approach became characteristic.[3] Pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 665 adopted on August 25, 1990, the international community placed Iraq under a blockade because it had invaded its oil-rich neighbor, Kuwait, at the beginning of the month. Turkey has already participated in this military action by allowing the NATO air force to carry out missions from bases in Turkey. At the same time, in this situation, Turkey did not want to enter the neighboring Arab country with ground troops, as the mandate given by the UN to the international community did not allow them to do so and they did not have the intention either.

The appearance of Turkey in the armed settlement of international conflicts is also clearly associated with the preference for diplomatic solutions being relegated to the background. While in the 1980s, Turkey was looking for a peaceful solution to all its conflicts, from the 1990s onwards, this was no longer necessarily the case. In the early 1980s, for example, in connection with the flight zone over the Aegean Sea, a sharp conflict broke out between Turkey and Greece, also a NATO member, while in Turkey the military junta led by General Evren exercised power after the 1980 coup, and in Greece the socialist Papandreou won the 1981 parliamentary elections with a strongly anti-Turkish political rhetoric. The situation was mediated by the then Secretary General of NATO, Bernard Rogers. The negotiations were successful, NATO accepted some of the Turkish demands, and Evren agreed to ensure that the Greeks, who had recently joined the European Community, could also use the Aegean airspace to the full. This diplomatic settlement not only smoothed over a potentially military conflict while Turkey was still governed by the putchists, but also contributed significantly to the improvement of American-Turkish relations.[3]

The settlement of the Turkish-Greek tension in the Aegean thus contributed to the improvement of American-Turkish relations, and even there was a grouping within the Turkish army, which subsequently began to regard the United States as its main strategic partner. The Americans also had that realization a little later. After the Gulf War, the USA also re-evaluated its Middle East policy and recognized the importance of Turkey in terms of the stability of the region. It is also true that they saw the situation a little differently than the Turks themselves, since they began to consider the Anatolian territories as being on the front line, which foreshadowed that the United States would then expect a much more active armed participation from the Turks than until that point. Turkey was no longer taken for a distant periphery by Washington.[5]

Although it is true that with the end of the bipolar world order, Turkey became a part of armed conflicts more often and used the diplomatic models customary up to that time less, in the 1990s, it was part of many peace-making and peace-keeping initiatives. Such was the case of the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program, within the framework of which NATO tried to cooperate with the newly independent countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, to prepare them so that if the international system changes, then they, too, could join the North Atlantic Alliance. Until 1998, for example, 2,300 young military officers from partner countries graduated from Turkish universities. In the 1990s, Turkey took part in an increasing number of peacekeeping missions despite the ever-increasing economic crisis affecting the country. It is worth

mentioning the IFOR, SFOR and KFOR units sent to the Balkan region, and the UNOSOM missions in Somalia, and it should not be forgotten that Turkey sent military observers to several friendly countries, such as Georgia threatened by the breakaway republics and the Russian intervention.[4] In 2001, a resolution of the United Nations enabled the international community to build up a peace-keeping force in Afghanistan than liberated from the Islamist militia of the Talibans. This mission was taken over in 2003 by NATO and Turkey contributed over 500 military personals and important amount of money to this intervention.[19] Turkey also participates in various regional cooperation initiatives such as the South-Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial Process (SDEM), the Multinational Peace Force SouthEast Europe (MPFSEE) and the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Force (BLACKSEAFOR).[19]

Global changes in the 1990s made it possible to reformulate Turkey's national defense strategy, so that the country was better able to articulate its own expectations towards its international partners. An example of this is the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations, as a result of which Turkey was able to support its Turkish and Muslim strategic partners in the Caucasus and Central Asia with military advisers, weapons and even its own troops in the event of a conflict. In return, Turkey agreed not to increase its influence in the Central European region.[4]

After gaining influence in Central Asia, Turkey's relegation to the background in Central Europe accelerated even more after the AKP came to power. In many cases, there have been political flashes between Ankara and some European governments despite, or precisely because of, the presence of large Turkish immigrant communities in the West. One of the most striking events, which clearly demonstrates that the Turks were forced to give up their role in the Central European region during strategic planning, was the 2011 battle of words between Turkey's Ahmet Davutoglu and Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg. Davutoglu verbally lashed out at his Czech colleague, telling him that Cyprus should not have been admitted to the European Union, and his Czech colleague angrily explained that the Union does not tolerate interference in its internal affairs. In the end, Davutoglu and Schwarzenberg's quarrel went beyond the fact that Turkey had lost ground in Europe, as the Turkish foreign minister also brought up his grievances at a NATO forum, where he said to the Czech foreign minister: "we are the family here. We are one of the oldest members of this family. We were here when you were not".[5] It is clear that Turkey's pride was hurt by the situation that developed in the 2000s and 2010s. They were forced to watch as the European former socialist countries were admitted one by one to the European Union, where they enjoy political and economic advantages, while Turkey has been on the sidelines for decades. This is a period of disillusionment for the Turkish government. At the same time, they should not lose sight of the fact that their retreat in Europe is the price of their rise in Central Asia.

Not only the Turkish strategy changed after the fall of the Berlin Wall, with the Turkish foreign policy opening up towards Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Balkans, and it became more and more realistic that the Turks themselves would intervene with weapons in the conflicts in the region, but NATO itself was forced to act, as not only did the bipolar world order cease to exist, but new security challenges also appeared on the horizon. NATO's strategic meeting in Rome in 1991 identified three such essential problems: ethnic conflicts arising from flaring up nationalist movements, international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of

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mass destruction. Turkey was also burdened by essentially the same problems. At home, they had to reckon with the rising Kurdish nationalism, while abroad they had to be able to protect the minority Turkic peoples (Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh, Syrian and Iraqi Turkmens, etc.). In addition to the Kurdish terrorist organization PKK, Islamist terrorism also raised its head in Turkey at the end of the 20th century, and Turkey was also worried that some dictators or terrorist organizations in the Middle East might have access to weapons of mass destruction. In response to this, the Turkish political and military leadership created a new national security strategy based on four pillars: deterrence, forward defense, military contribution to crisis management and intervention in crises and collective defense/security.[5]

NATO encountered the three above military challenges that arose in the early 1990s (namely, ethnic conflicts, international terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction) primarily in Muslim-majority countries, and the fact that Turkey is also a Muslim-majority country though officially secular and is connected to the Trans Atlantic spirit since the beginning of the Cold War, help the Western alliance to achieve their military goals in the East. Starting with the Gulf War, Turkish participation in the missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya was mostly in NATO's interest. It was certainly typical of the 1990s that NATO missions in the Islamic world were legitimized by Turkish support and/or Turkish presence.[7] The political elite and the population of Muslim countries could more easily accept the presence of Western soldiers, knowing that there were a good number of Muslims among them. While in the 1990s NATO typically used the situation and Turkey to legitimize some of its interventions, with the coming to power of the AKP in 2002, the right-wing Turkish government, which increasingly refers to Islam, wanted to use the same conflicts for its own benefit. After the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011, the AKP, which pursues Islamist politics as much as possible, started independent actions and intervened in Syria and Libya in a way that clearly served Turkish interests according to their interpretation, increased the influence of the Turks and the AKP abroad, while during the implementation of the often expanding military operations, they showed themselves as cooperating with and acting in the name of NATO.

After 1991, NATO's strategic approach underwent rapid and comprehensive transformations, which is why in 1999 and 2010 the member countries had to adopt a new strategic concept. In addition to the fact that the Soviet Union and the communism were naturally removed from the list of threats, the leaders of NATO realized that the alliance and the Western world are surrounded by such a multi-directional and multifaceted mass of dangers, which is very difficult to describe well and does not necessarily appear as that would affect the territorial integrity of one or another member country. This can also be expressed as, since the beginning of the 2000s, European interests are most threatened by conflict situations outside Europe, and that is why it is in the well-understood interest of Europe and the West to intervene in the processes in the Middle East. During these missions Turkey's legitimization credit is essential, as well as their regional acceptance. In some cases, the interests of NATO expressed in 2010 coincided with the interests of the Turkish government. In 2012, the Erdogan cabinet complained twice to the relevant bodies of NATO against Syria and urged a joint intervention. In the first case, Syrian

government forces shot down a Turkish plane, in the other, forces loyal to Assad shelled targets in Turkey.[7]

In parallel with NATO's change of attitude, a significant transition will also occur in the Turkish military and diplomatic leadership. Retired Turkish diplomat Sukru Elekdag opens the discussion on the creation of strategic reform. In his article, he argues that Turkey should be ready to fight two and a half wars at the same time. Elekdag believes that Greece and Syria could be the adversaries abroad (it was then that Assad accused Turkey of supporting bombings in Syria), and domestically, the increasingly strong PKK must be fought.[20] As a response to Elekdag's thesis, in 1998, in a communiqué, the so-called white paper, the chief of staff indicated to the public that they had broken with the strategy of total war, i.e. from now on they were not preparing for a full-frontal war with another country, but that a response would be needed for low-intensity, modern armed conflicts.[16]

The war in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995 showed that a completely different symbiosis between Turkey and the Western member states of NATO is also conceivable. From NATO's point of view, Turkey's cooperation was desirable for roughly the same reasons as in the Middle East, but from Turkey's point of view, a completely different reality unfolds. Turkey was actually motivated by two specific interests: on the one hand, they wanted to impress the Western leaders of NATO by saying that Turkey is part of the stabilization of a European, a Western country, and on the other hand, they wanted to prepare the ground for Turkish soft power and the acquisition of influence in the post-war period.[7] The AKP, especially in the boom years after 2005, did its best to use the experience, relationship capital and influence gained in Bosnia for its own benefit. Civil and charitable organizations linked to the AKP, such as the IHH, gained sufficient battlefield experience, money and connections in the Bosnian war, with the help of which they built perhaps the largest Islamist charitable network in the world.

4. Alternative Ways of Gaining Momentum: Soft Power and Arm Industry

In addition to the military strategic steps listed above, after the Cold War, Turkey also used other means to increase its influence in the countries of the region, primarily in the Arab states of the Middle East. It can be said that this "soft power" worked quite well until the outbreak of the Arab Spring, which radically rearranged the relations of the Arab world, forcing Turkey into a series of armed interventions, which was therefore actually forced to give up the conscious and political use of soft power. Globalization and the international liberal political culture significantly helped the reviving Turkish civil sphere from the mid-1980s and its involvement in the planning of Turkish security policy. The European Union even provided funds for this purpose.[14]

There were several components behind the "deployment" of soft power. One of the most important of these is that the Turks used a considerable part of the revenues of the economic boom after 2005 to gain positions in countries poorer than theirs. The Turkish civil and aid organizations were also partners in this government policy, and their activities were not hindered even by the 2008 global economic crisis, as it had less of an impact in Turkey than elsewhere. In addition to the civil sector, Turkish

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investors were also very active. For example, they participated in 40 large infrastructure developments in northern Iraq. In addition, Turkish mass culture also had a great impact on Arabs in the Middle East, Turkish soap operas were present in the everyday life of every Arab family, thus the Turks became more and more accepted in places where they were not so popular for a long time.[17]

Turkey also used soft power in the Balkans, and it may seem that it served Turkish interests exclusively during the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. In fact, NATO itself built on the Turks' local acquaintances and network of contacts. NATO bodies were also willing to cooperate with Turkish non-governmental organizations and their Balkan partners. NATO believed that Turkish soft power could be well utilized in order to create new peace-making and peace-keeping networks in South-Eastern Europe. The United States did not want to control these remote systems, it was perfectly fine for them to have a nearby NATO member take care of it.[12]

The Turkish political leadership has always been proud of the new Turkish civil society that has been developing since the 1990s and the capital-intensive NGOs that carry out truly valuable charitable work in many war conflict zones and poor, developing countries, and support the religious life of Muslims. At the same time, the picture is strongly colored by the fact that Turkish influence-seeking is not limited to these noble goals, and that AKP governments are happy to cooperate with repressive regimes for this purpose. A striking example of this is the way the leadership in Ankara embraced Nicolas Maduro and his Venezuela, a country that most of the international community tried to exclude from world trade because of human rights violations there. The cabinets led by the AKP encouraged the use of soft power in the case of other dictatorships as well, such as in the case of Sudanese leader Omar al-Bashir, thereby provoking serious criticism from the West.[8]

The idea of using soft power in Turkish political practice can be clearly linked to Ahmet Davutoglu, who is known not only for his quarrel with the Czech Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg, but also for creating a new foreign policy called Neo-Ottomanism based on the growing Ottoman nostalgia in Turkey as a national security strategy in the second half of the 2000s. Davutoglu truly believed that Turkish soft power could be a peace-creating force in the Middle East and the Balkans, of course he did not hide the fact that he also wanted to gain normative power for his country in the region. Davutoglu believed that during the years of the Cold War, Turkish foreign and military policy was too passive and neglected many areas, so Turkey needed an active and problem-centered strategy, which he called strategic depth. At the same time, it is important to note that the goal of the Turkish foreign minister was not to revive the Ottoman Empire, but to build a system in which the Ottoman legacy forms the bridge between the West and the East.[6] The preference for armed interventions was also driven by the fact that the post-Cold War Turkish political leadership believed that until then Turkish foreign policy had always been reactive and that the time had come to be pro-active.[15]

There is also an interesting, often overlooked aspect of Ottoman nostalgia and neo-Ottoman politicization, which is sometimes referred to by AKP politicians and supporters. Historically, the Ottoman Empire was a rival of Byzantium, but in many ways it also came under its influence and took over many cultural achievements from the Eastern Roman Empire. As a result, the Ottoman Empire itself became somewhat

European and Westernized, different from other Islamic empires. Turkish Islamists often argue that the neo-Ottoman vision is actually a pro-Western approach and not a reclusive and exclusionary ideology.[9] At the same time, it cannot be denied that it was also a tool in the hands of Turkey until Davutoglu had a serious influence on Turkish domestic politics. With Davutoglu being relegated to the background, this view was also marginalized.

In addition to the application of soft power, the Turkish strategy for gaining influence was greatly helped by the fact that the Turkish military industry underwent serious development from the mid-1970s. Although Turkey was a member of NATO, after the Cyprus War, the United States introduced in 1974 an embargo against them, so Turkey could not get access to the most modern military technologies for decades. This ban provoked Turkey to develop its own weapons arsenal during the last decade and a half of the Cold War. The successful developments were part of Turkish national pride, and some products also found serious customers on the world market. Since the 1990s, Turkish arms production has embarked on an independent development path, thus ensuring that Turkey can "conquer" certain countries through the markets.[11]

Conclusion

Turkey has gained much more international influence in the last three decades than in the seventy years between the declaration of the republic and the fall of the Berlin Wall. This can be explained by the fact that it was also in NATO's interest to use the half-European, half-Asian country, which was gaining value from a geostrategic point of view, and Turkey itself was able to expand its own sphere of influence in the Balkans, the Middle East and Central Asia thanks to this new structure. However, this symbiotic development cannot be separated from the ulterior motives that characterized NATO on the one hand, and Turkey's interim and post-2002 Islamist governments on the other. If we want to simplify this dual process system, it should be said that NATO sees Turkey as an increasingly less reliable and loyal, but still useful shield. It is quite telling that Turkey itself named one of its armed interventions in Syria the "Euphrates Shield". For Turkey led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, NATO is a security guarantee that does not respond in all cases, but forms a background that can serve as a basis for the diversification of Turkish foreign and military policy. On this basis, despite existing minor conflicts, further cooperation between Turkey and NATO can be expected.

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