

The Role of Turkey in the Perspective of Nato's Extension Policies in South - Estern Europe

Angela Mihaela Ene¹

Abstract: Turkey, a NATO member country, is repositioned on the international political scene in a more than exciting manner. USA ally within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, it opens up new horizons from the perspective of international relations with non-allied countries. The approach of this theme aims to outline the major role that Turkey is to play on the scene of NATO's interests in South Eastern Europe, especially from the perspective of close relations with the USA historical rival, namely Russia. After NATO's failure to co-opt Ukraine as a country aspiring to join the organization and Russia's prompt response by annexing Crimea, the policies of both sides underwent major changes in the work strategy for the future action plan. Our perspective outlines the strengthening of Russia-Turkey axis which, at this moment, by receiving a new presidential mandate by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, raises serious issues regarding the cooperation within the alliance and the bilateral relationship between Turkey and the United States of America. On one hand, we notice Russia's interest in counterbalancing the USA expansion plan in South Eastern Europe and, on the other hand, it is Turkey's interest in the historical dispute over the Kurds. Once again, in this engagement on the international political scene regarding the security of some regions, the established powers reconfigure strategies and develop partnerships, we would say under atypical conditions, strategies and partnerships which benefit from the support of some states that we dare call stake-holder states. At this moment, Turkey is in this situation, a situation that is suited and finds its sustainability as a result of the new constitutional changes and obviously, in Recep Tayyip Erdogan's new mandate.

Keywords: Russia-Turkey; Recep Tayyip Erdogan; North Atlantic Alliance

1. Introduction

Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1952, the year when Greece joined it. The purpose of the organization was to prevent any attack by the former Soviet Union directed against the United States and Europe. Turkey's status within the alliance is a very important one, both through its geographical position

¹ Senior Lecturer, PhD, Danubius University of Galați, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd., Galati 800654, Romania, Tel.: +40372361102, Corresponding author: angelamihaela.ene@univ-danubius.ro.

and its contingent armies available in the alliance, Turkey's army being the second largest after the USA.

Turkey is one of the five member states of the North Atlantic Alliance that subscribes to the alliance's policy of nuclear share with Germany, Italy, Belgium and Netherlands. Incirlik's base houses a total of 90 B61 nuclear devices, of which 40 are allocated for use by the Turkish Air Force in a nuclear conflict, but their use requires alliance's approval. Moreover, Turkey is estimated to have 20 military bases and targets partially serving the alliance.

The recent tensions between Ankara and Washington tend to increase the suspicion that Turkey will have a major shift in attitude within the alliance, especially as an agreement has been signed by Turkey to acquire Russian anti-aircraft systems S 400, a fact that has not happened so far in the actions of any member state. These antiaircraft systems are incompatible with alliance's systems.

Against these backgrounds, we can clearly see the intersection of three major interests of three totally different entities in terms of the social, political, economic and military concept. Thus, we have Turkey that wants a strong energy and socio-military security, we have Russia that is in a military and economic defense towards the Western world, especially towards the intentions of the United States of America and, last but not least, the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, which globally represents the Western mechanism to counter Russia's economic and military security operations. In this paper we are trying to describe a reality which, from our point of view, was thoroughly prepared by Russia, at this moment being only the final dispute between the North-Atlantic Alliance and Russia.

In order to outline the future of these three entities mentioned above and to outline the risks arising from long-term economic, social and military security developments in South Eastern Europe and the Middle East, it is necessary to understand that we are in a new era of war. At this point, wars are no longer what is meant in the proper sense of the word, namely that military confrontation in a particular theatre of operations. We must see war as a more complex and profound mechanism, changed in all its aspects, but especially with regard to the long-term effects of this new model of war described by the West as a hybrid war and by Russia as the war of the new generation.

This concept carries a profound complexity, one of its peculiarities being that it is very difficult to identify both the moment of triggering and the moment of its termination. We believe that this new type of conflict has in its center precisely the maintaining of a permanent state of insecurity, both interstate and intrastate. This type of war can also encompass allies or entities with temporary interests without affecting the coordinating structure or its interests, on the contrary, it only confirms the functionality of this new concept. Being of Soviet origin, the new generation war was perfected with the coming in power of Vladimir Putin, at this moment ongoing at a global level. In an article in "The Monitor of Defense and Security", it is stated that:

"In order to obtain the key to more accurately understand the Russian operations at strategic level in recent years, it is necessary to explore the main principles and elements that outline the Russian concept of "the New Generation War - NGW". The starting point in many of these analyses is the decryption of the vision, partly publicly expressed in various articles, regarding the adaptation of military operations to the current security environment and on the conceptualization of the modern war, by the Joint Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, Valeri Gherasimov. An article of this general, published in 2013 (therefore, until the start of the war in the East of Ukraine), has remained a reference one, which was ignored by a large number of Western military analysts. After Ukraine, Gherasimov's strategic vision generated extensive analyses, most of which were affected by the difficulty of precisely understanding the Russian actions as the concept of Western style hybrid war could not explain the traditions and new practices of the Russian military art."¹

As a result of winning this year's elections and with the guarantee of strengthening the power through constitutional changes, Erdogan and implicitly Turkey, positions itself in the global security as a key element of stability and security. At this moment, Turkey is interested in two major objectives, namely the construction of the nuclear power plant in Akkuyu and the annihilation of Kurdish militias in Syria, but both objectives place Turkey ahead of some of the most important decisions. For the construction of the nuclear power plant, an agreement with Russia was signed and for the annihilation of the Kurdish militias it is necessary to support the United States of America, which at this time has chosen to fund these paramilitary structures in order to fight against the Islamic State on the Syrian

¹ <http://monitorulapararii.ro/>.

front. A member of the North Atlantic Alliance in 1952, Turkey is currently in a situation of incompatibility with the interests of the alliance; moreover it is developing connections with the state entity towards which this alliance was formed, i.e. Russia.

“The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, has announced today that the atomic power plant in Akkuyu, Turkey, whose construction has been officially launched today with his counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, will be put into operation in 2023. Speaking during his visit to Turkey, Putin said he was grateful for Turkey's decision to give the Akkuyu programme a strategic investment scheme, ensuring that the process of building the nuclear power plant would be in line with the highest standards of security and environmental protection. In his turn, Tayyip Erdoğan said that, by completing and putting it into operation, the Akkuyu plant will cover 10% of Turkey's basic needs.”¹

Following the history line, we consider that the Russian-Turkish relations have always been based on a favorable context that has served the interests of both states and, in the current situation, we can talk about the same reason. The fact that Donald Trump did not meet Turkey's demands for ending the support given to Kurdish militias in Syria and did not support the extradition of the Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, is a sufficiently serious reason for Turkey's new orientation towards Russia to become a certainty both for the United States and, implicitly, for the North Atlantic Alliance.

Following the failure of co-opting Ukraine as a member of the North Atlantic Alliance, the alliance urgently needs to clarify the support and seriousness of its ally, Turkey. What is a variable to consider at this moment is France's proposal, namely the establishment of a European military force that practically refers only to the operation of a body with the same purpose for which the North Atlantic Alliance operates. All these elements present on the international scene in the field of military, social and economic security direct our attention to the pattern of the new generation war adopted by Russia.

On a closer analysis, we notice that Russia has secured its Black Sea Front, strengthened its position in the Middle East by intervening and supporting Bashar Al Assad regime in Syria and ensured a cooperative relation with Iran, at this

¹ <https://revistapresei.hotnews.ro>.

moment orchestrating the final blow by co-opting Turkey into far-reaching economic projects and, last but not least, in military projects.

Against this background, Turkey is pushed to make major decisions that will dictate the North Atlantic Alliance policy for the future, both in South Eastern Europe and in the Middle East. From our point of view, Turkey is caught up in the new generation war carried on by Russia against the United States of America and Turkey's current situation cannot have a different way than choosing a direction in favor of the North Atlantic Alliance or in favour of Russia, a decision that should be taken in a very short time. Bearing in mind the military convergence data of the great powers involved in global security, we consider it extremely important that Turkey should adopt the principles of the democratic world and the rule of law, essential elements in the stability of the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

The reaction of the United States of America towards Turkey and Erdogan regime can also be translated into the fact that, in the end, they have succeeded in revealing Russia's intervention model, namely the "Deep Operations" war. As part of these operations, Turkey tends to play the role of the "discovery force" and then, through another tactical force, to cause an annihilation of the opponent. Largely, Russia's goal has been reached, on the South Eastern Europe front, the North Atlantic Alliance has stopped all efforts, at this stage being re-operational.

The focus on this type of operations (which even imposed some Russian military reforms) justifies the new approach of Russian strategists to integrate all national power structures and all government instruments in an offensive operation directed towards a target state. Recent history shows that Russia is able to strike an opponent without any restriction and in several ways simultaneously. Emphasis will be placed on the use of operations predominantly involving precision strikes across the entire depth of the enemy territory, the mitigation or even the disappearance of delimitations between strategic, operative and tactical levels being acceptable. However, the conventional military operations become necessary in the final phase of the war, for the occupation of the enemy territory and its final defeat.¹ Even though US officials' statements are encouraging for the future of the North Atlantic Alliance in terms of meeting Turkey's obligations under the Treaty, the events on the international scene lead to a completely different conclusion.

¹ <http://monitorulapararii.ro/>.

NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, said that Turkey was a country of major importance for NATO. “It is enough for someone to look at a map to understand the importance of Turkey”, Stoltenberg said and drew attention to the strategic importance of Turkey neighboring the two countries, Iran and Syria, where there is violence and which represent a threat to NATO. In an interview with the Turkish reporters after the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Ministers in NATO countries, the Secretary General, reminding that Turkey created the World Coalition infrastructure to combat the Daesh terrorist organization, added: “We are grateful to Turkey.”

Emphasizing that Turkey had the right to prosecute on the basis of the rule of law of those who had been behind the attempted coup d'état on July 15th, 2016, Stoltenberg reiterated that Turkey, being a country most affected by terrorism, had the right to self-defense. The Secretary General also mentioned that, in a few years, Turkey would assume an important key role within the North Atlantic Alliance.¹

Conclusions

The global scene in military and economic security is clearly and irreversibly reconfiguring. The treaties and historic alliances are redefined in more pragmatic terms, more regionally cohesive, giving rise to some atypical economic and military security configurations. Against the background of these major structural changes of the world's great economic and military powers, the North Atlantic member states are in a position to make decisions in an inertia that is already very difficult to control. What is worrying about the North Atlantic Alliance is represented in the attitude of the second member as an armed force, namely Turkey.

Under the new concept inspired by Russia in the Muslim world, that of the ethnic nation, there is a reorientation and repositioning of Turkey on the international scene, a position that will not have productive effects for Europe and the United States of America. Under the threat of massive flows of immigrants and in the fight for energy security, Europe needs to adopt a mediation and non-disintegration

¹ <http://www.trt.net.tr/>.

position within the North Atlantic Alliance by granting political and economic guarantees to Turkey.

Turkey's role in the policies of the North Atlantic Alliance in the South Eastern and Eastern Europe is crucial, in that a reorientation towards Russia will give rise to a state of economic, social and military instability in the area.

Bibliography

Chekinov, S.G. & Bogdanov, S.A. (2016). The Nature and Content of a New-Generation War. *Military Thought: A Russian Journal of Military Theory and Strategy*.

(2014). *Russian Federation, Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, Moscow (Government of the Russian Federation).

Wilson, Andrew (2014). *Russian Active Measures: Modernized Tradition*. The Institute for Statecraft.

Online Sources

<http://monitorulapararii.ro/>.

<https://revistapresei.hotnews.ro>.

<http://monitorulapararii.ro/>.

<http://www.trt.net.tr/>.