

BOOK REVIEWS

Turkey—Anglo-American Security Interests, 1945-1952: The First Enlargement of NATO
by Ekavi Athanassopoulou
(London and Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999).
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Modern Turkish history, the Republican Era, in particular, has often epitomized a sense of “Oedipal complex” in its ontogenetical texture like many other republican regimes established in the 20th century. In fact, roughly speaking, the last 160 years would prove to be a textbook illustration for the Lacanian scholar to prove how feasible the concept “Oedipal complex” is in view of modern Turkish history. Oedipus complex in psychoanalytic theory, remember, is a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and a concomitant sense of rivalry with the parent of the same sex. The son’s unconscious antagonism to the father appears to be a crucial stage in the child’s normal developmental process. Sigmund Freud first introduced the concept in his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). Employed in the sense of Lacan, who has reinterpreted Freud’s concept symbolically, however, Oedipal complex implies introducing a set of values symbolized as “the patriarchal law” and induces the development of a superego in the child. The incestuous desire and the murderous impulses make the child feel guilty, and the result is that the superego becomes the heir to the Oedipus complex. The whole experience gets reprised in adolescence concerning authority and may arise again when one or the other parent dies. The repressed desire does not yet vanish and lingers on in the unconscious, thus producing a radically split subject.

Viewed from this triangle, the Ottoman Empire represents the father, the Turkish Republic, the son. The son feels obligated to rebel against the Empire’s parenthood to assert his authority and justify his existence as he enters a pre-existing system of signifiers, which is the set of all that the Empire was entangled and involved in. To complete the metaphor, the mother that the father bequeaths is the imperial heritage and geography; that is, the Ottoman territories and historico-political ties with all their assets and liabilities that the young Republic has been striving to own and disown at once.

Several factors paved the way for the formation of this Oedipality. One was the long-

standing historical and cultural heritage of the past. The Republican revolutions, which have turned into an ideological see-saw where the official pro-Republican and sometimes freelance historiography is often on the ascending end at each other’s expense, are actually the offshoots of the Ottoman Tanzimat period, if more Procrustean. The cynosural process of Westernization, which is a Sisyphean sine qua non conventionally associated with modernization, was one of them with pros and cons still tacitly challenging each other. Another was the pressing demand of international political actors for power in foreign relations such as Russia and Britain.

On the one hand, the Turkish Republic has desired to shrug off the commitments of the past. On the other, the rivals of the now-defunct Ottoman Empire on the vigilance for its death toll and inheritance kept pressurizing Turkey on account of the financial and geopolitical obligations of the Empire. This made the Oedipal triumph impossible for modern Turkey despite its revisions and transformations in the cultural and educational spheres to ingratiate itself with the West. Since then, the Turkish Republic has been vacillating between a penumbral continuity and trenchant rebuff, the notion of *ummah* and *millet*, which were interchangeably used in the Ottoman period, the East and the West, having ineluctably worn out its welcome with the former and unable to get a cordial welcome from the latter.

Following the Ottoman Empire’s demise, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s autocratic, dominating, and inspiring personality guided and shaped the Turkish Republic in its infancy. This was a period when the domestic maelstroms and social reforms were the main points of revolutionary focalization. At Atatürk’s death in 1938, his closest associate, İsmet İnönü, was elected president. With the approach of war, foreign affairs assumed greater importance. An alliance with Britain and France (October 1939) was not implemented because of Germany’s early victories. After Germany’s invasion of Russia (June 1941), there was widespread support for an alliance with Germany, which seemed to offer chimerical prospects of realizing what was once called old Pan-Turkish aims. Although a non-aggression pact was signed with Germany (June 1941), Turkey clung to neutrality until an Axis defeat became inevitable; it entered the war on the Allied side in February 1945.

The expansionist and irredentist policy of the former Soviet Union exposed Turkey in June 1945 to Soviet demands for control over the Straits and the cession of territory in eastern Turkey. It was also suggested that a large area of northeastern Turkey be ceded to Soviet Georgia. This led Turkey to seek and receive US assistance, which had never been the case earlier. The US military aid began in 1947, providing the basis for a large and continuous flow of military equipment, and economic assistance began in 1948. Turkey hoped that membership

would offer the assurance it needed, which underpins the North Atlantic Treaty, namely that the members are supposed to come to each other's aid, individually and collectively, in the event of an armed attack against any one of them. It would ensure that no individual member country might be forced to rely on its national efforts and economic resources alone to deal with fundamental security challenges. Initially, Turkey was not even sure of the degree to which NATO alliance membership would provide increased security and stability. It is against this backdrop of Turkish history that Athanassopoulou's book, *Turkey—Anglo-American Security Interests, 1945-1952*, should be perused.

The book covers a very critical period in Turkish foreign policy. Having undergone the effects of World War II, if not the battleground per se, the country is in a quandary as to whether to seek an alliance with the West, for which she has nourished both an unrequited love and sporadic cynicism both in the late Ottoman and early Republican period or fall prey to the political objectives of the former Soviet Union. In this process, Turkey's long-standing policy of Westernization is put to the test on the one hand; on the other, it leads the Turks to revise and enlarge, if you will, the concept of the West. Earlier in the nineteenth century, the concept implied the Great Britain in politics, France in culture and literature, and later Germany in military aspect. The US does not essentially take place in the Turkish Westernization until late in the 1940s. Understandably, the Turkish-American relations were not practically useful because of the American geographical distance and lack of shared interests until the first half of the 20th century. Athanassopoulou justifiably indicates that Turkey's love for the West was neither meticulously delineated nor requited because despite centuries of serenade until as late as the late 1950s. The NATO allies, the US and England, were inclined to visualize Turkey as part of the Middle East geography, let alone mapping it out in a Western alliance. According to Hale's foreword, "the policy-makers in Washington had pigeonholed Turkey as part of the Middle East, which was seen primarily as a British responsibility, peripheral to American interests."

Running throughout the book are two intrinsic corollaries, which the author subtly remarks. Athanassopoulou covertly sandwiches between the American and British power struggle the first enlargement of NATO, now focusing Turkey's both "helpless" and formidable attempts to grope for an alliance now presenting the American statesmen adroitly masterminded and prompted by the British. At times Athanassopoulou tends to underestimate in familiar shibboleths Turkey's procrastination as to whom to side with--Germany, the Great Britain, and sometimes with Russia, the archenemy; she willfully zooms in on Turkey's concept of

"friendly" power. Thus, the author brings to focus the relationship between morality and foreign policy in Turkish history.

Athanassopoulou seems to forget that adaptability and practicality in adjusting principles to circumstances were the guiding principles of İnönü in times of international crises. Besides, no position was irreversible; as late as the early twentieth century, an Ottoman statesman argued assuredly, if vainly, that he was sure of the Balkans as much as he was of "his own religious faith." The motive behind Enver Paşa's urge to drag the country into World War I was the Ottoman concept of "Manifest Destiny" ingrained in the collective unconscious. He was hoping against hope that the country would regain the past glories along with its territories.

In the turbulent years up to World War II, Turkey had seen many examples of the real politics from its prospective allies that it tended to imitate. For instance, in the post-Cold War era, the US's role in world affairs has similarly raised among foreign policy ethicists the old question about morality and foreign policy. Machiavelli and Hobbes much earlier maintained that politics and morality are inherently divorced. Practical dilemmas require immediate action, whereas morality is a relentless quest for the ultimately true and good. The annals of international relations bristle with almost overnight shifts of interests between two countries of different ideologies, which is outside the scope of the present review.

Athanassopoulou's work is often marred by an anthropomorphic urge to see countries or nations as individuals, let alone intermittent spelling and punctuation errors. A particular mien appears to be operating behind expressions or quotations in the book such as Turkey being "relatively small state" vis-à-vis the great powers, "no more than a mere pawn on the international chessboard" and "Ankara was like a mistress, who had the affection of her American lover." The author is undoubtedly aware of why the so-called "terrorists" turn into acclaimed "freedom-fighters" and why communist Poland has recently been welcomed as a new NATO ally and the like. Therefore, as she catches in miniature, the case in question was not that Turkish diplomat looked like "a sort of super real-estate salesman," but the country could not slough off the past commitments and the effects of the Independence War. Prudence, perhaps occasional over prudence, marked out the period that she recapitulates, and the aim in foreign policy was not to make the plight even worse. Turkey could not simply afford to preserve its neutrality by clinging to the Menderes period's status quo any longer, which was the cherished policy in the İnönü period. Athanassopoulou slightly dwells on essential events that underlie Turkey's cynical attitudes to Western countries and Russia when she writes, "Turkish political leaders were not guided in their foreign policy by contemporary events."

Actually, Turkey's case was not a mere whim or reticence or reluctance to set up alliances. Instead, it was an attempt to be prudent as it grudged on the Protean ground after unpleasant experiences with France, Britain, and Russia in the 19th century and Germany in the 20th.

Athanassopoulou forgets to duly reflect the haunting memories of the past that both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic lived through and instead presents the background narrative of Turkey's NATO alliance almost in terms of questioning the morality of the Turkish foreign policy. Moreover, the author views this alliance like a mendicant intruder's attempt to take a shelter rather than an agreement of symbiosis. She does subtly focus on such issues through mouthpieces often, which she has incorporated into a well-organized narrative, and which sometimes tends to blur the significant etymological affinity between "history" and "story." The Turkish side's views are either adumbrated in the book or based on the British archives mainly. Accessibility to Turkish archives is no longer a problem.

Moreover, another significant idiosyncrasy of the book is that the author refers to İstanbul as Constantinople, which is quite an anachronism because just as the US is no longer "the Colonies," İstanbul is no longer Constantinople and Salonika is no longer Selanik. It is history itself that has made the onomastic changes, and not the preformed and self-willed decrees of historians. Indeed, an expression like "Constantinople government" sounds all too Greek to Turkish scholars of history.

Leafing through the book, one pictures to himself the image of a belated Victorian scholar who, with a wig and lorgnette on, promenades gloomily through a pergola, glowering back at the halcyon days, and brooding over the spatial distance between the Thames and the Dardanelles, temporal difference between the Empire of the Sun and Great Britain, startled to see how great the chasm is. Consequently, the Self continues to otherize the historical process in search of times lost, "différance" is lost in the penumbra of a monolithic meaning of the text as knowledge and discourse are placed at the disposal of the will to power. Post-colonial theorists must necessarily read this book in the light of *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Meticulous readers discover the extent to which history becomes an instrument not of understanding the past events but to discover a revenge tragedy with a scholarly veneer.

Metin Boşnak, Ph.D.

İstanbul Zaim University, İstanbul