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ABSTRACT

Focusing on Turkey's 68-year-old formal alliance with the US, this study asks why the alliance persists in spite of diverging perceptions of threat and worldviews. The first section of the article explains that the alliance has been transformed into a more than a threat-centric and transactional partnership over time. The second section focuses on the key issues of the US–Turkey alliance management between January 2009 and 2020 and points to a significant increase in the alliance security dilemma. The third section explores the AKP leadership's divergent worldviews and rising contestations against the US. Overall, the study argues that both transactional and 'order-centric' arguments can be useful to explain the resilience of the US–Turkey alliance in the post-Cold War era.

Introduction

Trump's security strategy relies on encouraging the US allies to 'share the burden' in deterring adversarial powers like Russia, China, and Iran (NSS, 2017). NATO allies such as Germany and Turkey are increasingly perceived as underestimating the risk of energy and economic dependence on US adversaries (Pence, 2019). Furthermore, 'Turkey's purchase of a $2.5 billion S-400 anti-aircraft missile system from Russia poses great danger to NATO' (Pence, 2019). Distancing itself from the US, Turkey has dragged its feet on supporting various US-led regional initiatives in its neighbourhood since the Arab uprisings. According to the US Vice President (Pence, 2019):

> Turkey must choose: Does it want to remain a critical partner in the most successful military alliance in history of the world? Or does it want to risk the security of that partnership by making reckless decisions that undermine our alliance?

The rise of the AKP government in Turkey reflected a significant change in Turkey's foreign policy vision, threat perceptions, and international aspirations. Turkey has become a proactive player in multiple regions ranging from Europe to the Middle East, from the Caucasus to Africa, and from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. It opened military bases in Qatar and Somalia and supported various homegrown regional cooperation initiatives in

the Balkans, the Caucasus, Asia, and the Islamic and Turkic regions. Although Turkey's post-Cold War foreign policy activism did not initially conflict with the US, the Arab uprisings and the Syrian conflict revealed the rise of divergent threat perceptions within the US–Turkey alliance. Turkey prioritised its fight against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) over Islamic State (IS). Yet, the US allied with Syrian Kurdish militias led by the People's Protection Units (YPG) and the Democratic Union Party (PYD) which were denounced by Turkey as an affiliated branch of PKK terrorism. This undermined the alliance credibility and the US security guarantees in the eyes of the Turkish decision-makers. Failing to persuade the US to withdraw its support from the YPG/PYD and sell Turkey the US Patriot defence system, Turkey acquired the S-400 missile defence system from Russia. It also took the lead in opposing US-led anti-Iran and pro-Israeli initiatives at the United Nations and other international fora. The AKP's contestations of US hegemony and its regional leadership aspirations in the Islamic world undermined Turkey's pro-US stance during the Cold War.

Consequently, it is open to debate whether the primary axis of Turkish foreign policy under AKP is shifting away from the West. The main reasons for such a shift might be the changing value of the US alliance for AKP leadership, declining credibility of US/NATO security guarantees, and a fear of entrapment into a US-led conflict with Russia or Iran. According to Turan (2018, p. 1), the US–Turkey disagreements on multiple issue areas 'form an interactive cluster, within which each problem compounds the other, producing an atmosphere in which mutual confidence and the feeling of belonging to the same security community have eroded'. Following the alliance literature, a significant change in the domestic leadership, national threat perceptions and international aspirations and/or a decline of alliance credibility often lead to alliance abrogation (Leeds & Savun, 2007). The rise of the AKP leadership and the related change of foreign policy vision in Turkey might have increased the likelihood of abrogation in US-Turkey alliance. Nevertheless, the US–Turkey alliance persists. Hence, this article suggests that rather than alliance abrogation, the US–Turkey alliance provides a case study of alliance resilience and transformation. Accordingly, it studies the main determinants of the alliance in question in order to grasp why the alliance proves to be resilient in spite of divergent threat perceptions and worldviews during the Obama and Trump administrations.

Distinguishing between a transactional and an ontologically-motivated alliance, this study assumes that a transactional alliance is based on pragmatic cost-benefit calculations and it is less resilient in the absence of shared threat perceptions and worldviews (see Mukherjee, in this issue). Alternatively, an ontologically-motivated alliance holds constitutive and legitimating effects on the ally's agency and is more likely to persist in spite of divergent threat perceptions and worldviews (see Tamaki, and Helwig in this issue). Accordingly, an ontologically-motivated alliance is 'order-centric' in terms of consolidating lesser powers' statehood and legitimate actorness in the world order. Therefore, it goes beyond a threat-centric strategic partnership. This study aims to correct the tendency to relegate the US-Turkey alliance to a threat-centric partnership. It seeks to reveal the complex set of transactional and ontological motivations underlying the alliance resilience and transformation. First, it examines the historical foundations of the alliance and second, the main issues of the alliance management under Obama and Trump administrations. The last section discusses Turkey's perceptions of the US and explores the main driving factors behind the resilience of the US-Turkey alliance.

More than a threat-centric alliance

Turkey is a secular successor of the Islamic Ottoman empire situated at the crossroads of Islamic and Western civilisations (Shah, 2010). In terms of identity, it is a 'torn' (Huntington, 1997), 'liminal' (Rumelili & Suleymanoglu-Kurum, 2017), or 'cusp' (Altunışık, 2014) state that transcends the divide between Eastern and Western civilisations. Geostrategically, it is at the intersection of European, post-Soviet, and Middle Eastern 'regional security complexes' (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). It is astride some of the key North–South and East–West energy and trade routes, including the Russian, Caspian, Eastern Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Western markets (Austvik & Rzayeva, 2017). Furthermore, Turkey 'is situated at a geography that intersects multiple unstable strategic basins and needs to navigate through multiple risks' (Akçapar, 2016). Accordingly, its security culture involves the so-called 'Sèvres syndrome' (Jung, 2003) –named after an aborted Western treaty dividing the Ottoman empire into Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, and Greek statelets – that denotes a feeling of being surrounded by hostile and divisive forces.

Lacking its own 'backyard' or a 'regional basis from which to operate', Turkey has 'to play on diverse chessboards simultaneously, while always doing so as a guest in someone else's region' (Barrinha, 2014, p. 176). Its regional aspirations have been contested by Iran, Egypt, and Israel in the Middle East while Russia and Saudi Arabia have undermined Turkey's clout in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans (Erşen & Köstem, 2019). This complex neighbourhood initially led the founders of the Turkish Republic to adopt prudence in foreign policy and emphasise Turkey's strategic autonomy (Hale, 2013; Oran, 2011). Fearing Italian, Nazi, and Soviet invasion, Turkey avoided getting entangled in the alliances of the inter-war period and chose to remain neutral (Gulmez, 2017). It cultivated closer relations with both the Allied and the Axis powers during the Second World War (Barlas & Gulmez, 2018). Its survival strategy relied on 'playing one Western power off against another' (Oran, 2011). It abandoned that strategy when it became a NATO member in 1952 and took a pro-US stance during the Cold War (Hale, 2013, pp. 88–103).

In line with the 'balance of threat' theory (Walt, 1987), Turkey joined the US alliance in order to counterbalance and deter the Soviet claims over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits and the northeastern provinces of Kars and Ardahan (Kınacıoğlu & Gürzel Aka, 2018). Lacking the financial and military capabilities it needed to maintain its self-reliance, Turkey had to rely on the US security guarantees and financial assistance (Hale, 2013; Oran, 2011). Both the US wartime 'lend and lease' policy and the post-War aid schemes made Turkey's economic and military development heavily dependent on the US (Oran, 2011). In spite of their so-called 'Sèvres syndrome', Turkish decision-makers perceived the US as an ideologically friendly country in terms of standing against both European colonialism and Soviet aggression (Oran, 2011). This view of the US was shared by the founder of the Turkish Republic, Atatürk, who had invited a US delegation as an impartial arbiter to the 1922–1923 Lausanne Peace Negotiations on Turkey's independence (Oran, 2011). Therefore, the US alliance was perceived as the most viable option against the imminent threat of Soviet aggression. However, NATO initially vetoed Turkey's membership application because of concerns about cultural difference and military overstretch (Hale, 2013). The UK suggested Turkey to establish a Middle Eastern collective defence system but Turkey insisted on NATO membership because the US–Turkey alliance was more

than a threat-centric and strategic partnership (Oran, 2011). Turkey sought to consolidate its statehood and international recognition through its status as a NATO member (Kınacıoğlu, 2017). Moreover, Turkey's modernisation process and its transition to the multi-party democratic system in the 1950s were reinforced by its US/NATO alliance (Karaosmanoğlu, 2011).

However, because of Turkey's complex identity and pragmatic foreign policy, its alliance with the US fell short of the British–US 'special relationship' that relied on 'shared roots and common cause', a 'fraternal association', and 'mutual understanding' between the two 'kindred systems of society' (Marsh & Baylis, 2006, p. 173). Turkey's approach to the US alliance significantly differed from the Australian '100 years of mateship' with the US too (see Henry, in this issue). Despite its NATO membership, Turkey's alliance policy reflected an inherent tension and fluctuation between security dependence and strategic autonomy. It thus combined the European Cold-War strategy of security dependence with the Middle Eastern autonomy-based strategies. Perceiving a formal alliance as 'subordination', many Middle Eastern states pursued a flexible, transactional partnership with the US built on frequent threats of shifting their loyalty to the rival bloc (Snyder, 1990; Walt, 1987). Alternatively, Western European states emphasised their loyalty and security dependence on the US (Snyder, 1990). For its part, Turkey's approach to the US alliance was ambivalent because it switched back and forth between the Middle Eastern and European concerns (Hale, 2013). In particular, the impact of anti-Turkish lobbies – such as the Armenian lobby – on the US Congress undermined the credibility of the US alliance and Turkey's security dependence on the US (Oran, 2011).

Since the late 1950s, the Turkish governments have been frequently resorting to threats of abandoning the US alliance. For example, the Menderes government (1950–1960) which led the 'golden years of US–Turkey relations' – by opening up the Incirlik military base, signing security and economic cooperation agreements with the US, and taking an openly pro-US stance in foreign policy – began to consider the Soviet Union as an alternative partner when the US denied greater financial assistance (Hale, 2013; Oran, 2011). Two incidents in the 1960s led Turkey to declare that it may reconsider its allegiance to the US alliance (Guney, 2008). First, the US unilaterally withdrew the Jupiter missiles from Izmir (Turkey) without consulting Turkey (Guney, 2008). Second, US President Johnson sent a letter to the Turkish Premier warning that NATO might reconsider its defence commitment to Turkey in case of a conflict in Cyprus (Guney, 2008). The US warning prevented a possible Turkish military operation in Cyprus in 1964 but it significantly undermined NATO's credibility in the eyes of the Turkish foreign policy-makers. Both incidents increased Turkey's fear of abandonment against a Russian threat.

Accordingly, Turkey opposed an unconditional security dependence on the US. It developed economic and political ties with Third World countries in the 1960s and 1970s (Oran, 2011). It also grew frustrated with the political conditionality of US military aid that disallowed Turkey to use the US military equipment without the US approval. So, it sought to diversify its sources of financial and military assistance by cultivating closer relations with the USSR and the Islamic world (Hale, 2013). It also revised the existing cooperation agreements between Turkey and the US by bringing them under a single 'umbrella treaty'. According to the revised treaty, Turkey began to enjoy full sovereignty over the military bases. It disallowed the US to add or remove any equipment from the bases without

informing Turkey (Oran, 2011). Furthermore, it emphasised its right to restrict the usage of the bases and disallowed the US to use the military bases for an attack against a third country without Turkey's approval (Oran, 2011). Turkey's defiance towards its US ally increased in 1974 when Turkey conducted unilateral military operations in Cyprus (Oran, 2011). Turkey also resisted the US President Nixon's political pressures to stop opium production. Consequently, the US Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey between 1975 and 1978. In return, Turkey cancelled the US agreements and closed down the military bases.

Two external events in Turkey's Middle Eastern neighbourhood, namely the Iranian Islamic revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, led to the revival of the US-Turkey alliance. The 1980 coup in Turkey switched Turkish foreign policy back to a pro-US stance (Hale, 2013). Turkey re-opened the US bases and signed the 1980 Defence and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA, 32 UST 3323) with the US. Similar to the previous 'umbrella treaty', DECA stipulated that the military bases were under Turkey's full sovereignty and they could only be used for NATO operations (unless Turkey decided otherwise). In Turkish domestic politics, both pro-Soviet and anti-American leftist and Islamist political views were heavily repressed. Overall, Turkey's dual emphasis on strategic autonomy and security dependence on the US ensued throughout the 1980s. Turkish-American alliance transformed into a 'strategic' partnership and then, a 'model' partnership after the disappearance of the Cold War's systemic pressures.

'Strategic partners' in the post-Cold War era

With the lessened threat from Moscow, the 'balance of threat' thesis partially lost its explanatory power for Turkey's NATO membership in the post-Cold War era. Yet, Turkey's conflicts with its neighbours – for instance, with Iraq, Iran and Syria over the management of water resources and the fight against PKK terrorism, with Greece and Cyprus over the sovereignty of the Aegean and northern Cyprus, with Bulgaria over the rights of the Turkish minority – meant a continuing security dependence on the US. Turkey's need for economic and military assistance rose because of its political instability and economic crises throughout the 1990s. In addition to its security and financial needs, Turkey benefited from its continuing alliance with the US in its ideological project of Westernisation.

However, the disappearance of a 'common military interest' led the US to consider retrenchment from the Middle East and decrease US military presence and assistance in Turkey (Guney, 2008, p. 476). The rising fear of abandonment forced Turkey to actively support the US President George H. W. Bush's Iraqi operation. Perceiving the first Gulf War (1991) as an opportunity to have a greater say in Middle Eastern affairs, Turkey's pro-US Özal administration allowed the US to use its bases and closed down the Kirkuk–Yumurtalık oil pipeline to help the US operation (Sayari, 2004). However, the war proved very costly for Turkey in both economic and political terms, leading to an inflow of Iraqi Kurdish refugees and the emergence of a safe haven for PKK terrorism in northern Iraq (Hale, 2013). Turkish foreign policy-makers realised that Turkey's alliance with the US was severely constraining Turkey's regional aspirations in the Middle East where 'US interests were clearly delineated' (Aydin, 2009, p. 133).

Nevertheless, instead of abrogating its US alliance, Turkey chose to transform it into a multidimensional 'strategic partnership' that could complement the NATO's multilateral security cooperation. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, Turkey perceived the US alliance as a 'multiplier effect' for Turkey's clout in the post-Soviet Turkic Republics, the Balkans, and the Middle East. The US backed Turkey's candidacy to the European Union which became official in 1999 in spite of strong reservations in Europe. Turkey also benefited from its strategic partnership with the US in de-escalating regional tensions in the 1990s. For example, the US put heavy pressure on Turkey's adversaries and prevented a violent conflict between Turkey and its neighbours during the Imia/Kardak crisis with Greece, the 'S–300 missiles' crisis with Cyprus, and the crisis with Syria over the PKK (Ellis, 2008; Guney, 2004; Yalvaç, 1999). It also encouraged the Turkish–Israeli rapprochement that helped modernise the Turkish military, deter the expansion of radical Islam in the region, and capture the PKK leader (Altunışık & Martin, 2011).

Turkish policy-makers interpreted the US President Clinton's depiction of Turkey as a 'strategic partner' on a visit in 1999 as a reassurance that the US–Turkey alliance was getting stronger (Ovali, 2019). In their opinion, this was a strong signal to the European Union and the rising powers in the East about Turkey's continuing geostrategic significance in the post-Cold War era (Guney, 2005). It also helped Turkey receive IMF loans to solve the 2001 national banking crisis (Miller, 2006). However, Kay (2000) suggests that the reframing of US–Turkey relations as a strategic partnership undermined the meaning of the term 'alliance' (Kay, 2000, p. 18). Following Kay's argument, it clouded the ontological motivations behind the alliance while emphasising the transactional nature of the US–Turkey strategic cooperation. For Kay (2000), the US established many strategic partnerships with transactional motivations in order to justify its cooperation with non-Western countries that pursued competing worldviews and interests. Besides, the rise of the AKP government in November 2002 reinforced both Turkey's cultural distinctiveness from the West and its call for greater strategic autonomy in the global era (Sözen, 2010).

Until the Arab uprisings and the Syrian conflict, the AKP's foreign policy was heavily influenced by Ahmet Davutoğlu's vision about increasing Turkey's national clout in the former Ottoman lands and the Islamic world (Yalvaç, 2014). In the second Gulf War led by George W. Bush, Turkey took a defiant stance against the US. The Turkish Parliament rejected the US' usage of Turkish military installations and the transit of 60,000 US troops from Turkey to Iraq (Kesgin & Kaarbo, 2010). Apart from its costly experience in the first Gulf War, Turkey was alarmed by the US administration's support to Kurdish forces against Saddam Hussein's regime. It feared the rise of a Kurdish statelet that would threaten Turkey's territorial integrity (Aydin & Erhan, 2003). In response, George W. Bush warned about a possible US–Turkish military confrontation in case of a unilateral Turkish action against northern Iraqi Kurds (Guney, 2008, p. 479). This was followed by the 'Suleymaniyah incident' where US soldiers interrogated Turkish soldiers operating in Iraq by placing hoods over their heads (Guney, 2008). Those incidents did not only point to divergent threat perceptions but they also reflected the rising psychological distance and mistrust between the two allies.

Nevertheless, the strategic partnership remained resilient as Turkey gave active support to the war on terror and continued its active contributions to NATO and EU operations in stabilising, for instance, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Aybet, 2012).

Turkey also actively supported NATO's cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa through the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (Kardaş, 2013). Through the July 2006 document titled 'Shared Vision and Structured Dialogue to Advance the Turkish–American Strategic Partnership', the US and Turkey reiterated their commitment to work together for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Cyprus; to put an end to Iran's nuclear programme; to fight terrorism including PKK and its affiliates, and the illegal trafficking of people, drugs, and arms; to diversify energy routes and sources; to promote understanding, respect, and tolerance among religions and cultures; and to strengthen multilateralism (Ergan, 2006). Based on these shared interests, Turkey agreed to co-lead the US-led 'Greater Middle East' initiative that was aborted because of the reluctance of other regional powers (Altunışık, 2013, p. 164). Turkey started to share the general perception in the region about the US leadership failure in the Middle East (Altunışık, 2013).

Turkish foreign policy under Davutoğlu embraced a 'win-win' approach and a 'zero problem with neighbours' motto. Initiating peace processes to reconcile with Cyprus, Armenia, and the Kurds, Turkey sought to cultivate closer economic and political relations with regional powers in its neighbourhood (Sözen, 2010). That vision was not openly anti-Western but the AKP's policy initiatives concerning Hamas, Sudan, Iran, and Israel, among others, did not fully align with the West (Dursun-Ozkanca, 2019). Besides, Turkey-EU membership negotiations have been partially suspended due to Turkey's failure to recognise the Republic of Cyprus (Tattersall, 2013). While the EU's political pressures for Westernisation and modernisation in Turkey declined, Davutoğlu's efforts towards mediating between conflicting regional actors failed to create the intended effect. Muslim societies remained skeptical of the pro-Western Turkey whereas the West grew suspicious of a possible 'shift of axis' towards 'Islamisation' or 'Middle Easternisation' in Turkish foreign policy (Tür, 2019). The rise of the Arab uprisings, the Syrian conflict and IS increased Turkey's threat perceptions against its territorial sovereignty. Moreover, domestic crises such as the cabinet reshuffling of 2013, the public protests of June 2013 and the failed coup attempt of July 2016 increased the insecurity of the AKP regime. This led to a 'radical reset' (Keyman, 2017) in Turkish foreign policy. Davutoğlu's 'win-win' approach has been replaced by a security-oriented vision.

A closer look at the US-Turkey alliance management demonstrates that the divergence of threat perceptions between the allies have increased since 2009. While the AKP began to frequently denounce the US as a 'destabilising' force in the regional and global context, it did not abrogate the alliance. The following section discusses the key issues in the alliance management during the Obama administration (2009–2017) and the Trump administration (January 2017–2020).

Obama's model partnership and Trump's transactional alliance

In his speech at the Turkish Grand National Assembly in April 2009, Obama called the US–Turkey alliance a 'model partnership' for the Islamic world (Obama, 2009, April 6). For the AKP leadership, this meant a 'more comprehensive partnership' (Kınacıoğlu & Gürzel Aka, 2018, p. 151). In particular, Turkish-American model partnership implied a Muslim–Christian 'partnership for democracy' (Guney, 2005). Hence, Obama's 2009 Cairo speech and Erdoğan's 2011 call for secularism in Cairo reflected an initial ideological consensus

among the two allies. They both emphasised the importance of reconciling Islam with the West in the context of a liberal world order. In 2011, Obama named Erdoğan among his favourite leaders but the Turkish government's harsh reactions against the June 2013 protesters changed his view of Turkey as a model democracy (Crowley, 2016).

Studying the alliance management at the three key levels of declaration, armament, and action (Snyder, 1990), it is clear that Turkey's diverging threat perceptions and worldviews became visible during the Obama administration. At the declaration level, Turkey and the US accused each other of intransigence and unreliability. The AKP leadership openly accused the US of bolstering anti-Turkish terrorist groups following the Obama administration's decision to back the YPG/PYD in Syria. In an interview with Al Jazeera, Erdoğan accused Obama of 'having deceived' him and for his part, Obama accused the AKP leadership of dragging its feet in the anti-IS fight (Atilgan, 2017, April 20). Adopting an openly anti-Israeli stance related to the Palestinian issue in general, and the Gaza blockade in particular, Turkey accused the US of tolerating Israeli aggression (Altunışık & Martin, 2011). It also condemned the US' veto of the UN General Assembly resolution to upgrade Palestine's status to that of a non-member observer (Altunışık, 2013, p. 170). Finally, the AKP leadership accused the Obama administration of backing the US-based cleric Fethullah Gülen who was denounced by Turkey as the mastermind of the July 2016 coup attempt (Hale, 2018). Obama denied any involvement in the coup attempt and openly criticised the AKP's post-putsch state-of-emergency policies for violating democracy and human rights (Mason & Landay, 2016). He strongly emphasised that it was the US judiciary that would decide on the extradition of Gülen to Turkey (Mason & Landay, 2016). These antagonistic declarations sent a signal to other powers, both Western and non-Western, about the fragility of the US–Turkey alliance in the Obama era. Nevertheless, harsh rhetoric was not always matched by hostile action.

At the action level, Turkey contested the NATO's missile defence programme, the NATO–EU security cooperation and the troop surge in Afghanistan. Yet, it was careful enough not to directly threaten the unity of the NATO alliance (Kardaş, 2013). Rather than abrogate the alliance, the AKP leadership sought to influence the NATO's core missions in line with its 'aversion to taking military action against another Muslim nation' (Kardaş, 2013, p. 67). Thus, despite its initial resistance, Turkey agreed to support the Libyan intervention with 'non-combatant' units (Kınacıoğlu & Gürzel Aka, 2018, p. 152). It also agreed to host a NATO missile shield radar system in Kürecik, Malatya, in 2011. This was praised by the Obama administration as the most important strategic decision between the US and Turkey in the 2000s (Kınacıoğlu & Gürzel Aka, 2018). Finally, Turkey opened its bases for anti-IS operations led by the US and joined the anti-IS campaigns. These three strategic decisions reflect that despite its critical rhetoric, Turkey continued to rely on the US/NATO security guarantees.

However, the alliance management at the level of armament demonstrates a severe decline in the reliability of the US alliance under the Obama administration. Turkey's expectations of technology transfer were denied by the Obama administration because of human rights and democracy concerns (Sarı Ertem & Karadeniz, 2019). Accusing both the US and its European NATO allies of imposing a de facto arms embargo against Turkey, the AKP began to consider buying Chinese and Russian missile defence systems (Egeli, 2019; Kocamaz, 2019).

Apart from the declining credibility of the US alliance at the armament level, Turkey faced the 'alliance security dilemma', namely the dual fear of abandonment and entrapment (Walt, 1997). Turkey's threat perceptions in Syria differed from those of the Obama administration because Turkey considered Kurdish terrorism as the primary security threat (Guney, 2016). Yet, the US failed to meet Turkey's expectations around establishing a security zone in Syria (Guney, 2016). The fear of abandonment increased significantly with respect to Kurdish terrorism in Turkey. The Turkish government resented the withdrawal of NATO anti-missile missions from Turkey (Sarı Ertem & Karadeniz, 2019). It started to cultivate closer relations with Russia and Iran to prevent the rise of a Kurdish statelet on its Syrian border. Moreover, it feared exclusion from the Obama-led Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership deal (Kirişci, 2013). It warned its Western allies against the 'risk of pushing Turkey into the arms of those countries that challenge the Western economic order' (Kirişci, 2013, p. 6). In addition, emphasising its 'shared destiny' with Asia, Turkey became the first NATO country to become an observer and dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Parlar Dal, 2016).

Turkey's fear of entrapment in a confrontation with Russia, its main energy supplier, increased with the perceived failure of Obama's 'reset' policy (Guney, 2016). Turkey also resented Obama's rejection of the Turkey-Brazil deal to mediate the Iranian conflict (de Oliveira & dos Santos, 2018). Both Turkey and Brazil 'felt betrayed' and accused the West of trying to prevent their rising power in the region (de Oliveira & dos Santos, 2018). As non-permanent members of the UN Security Council, they vetoed the US-led Resolution 1929 that introduced new sanctions against Iran (Altunışık & Martin, 2011, p. 574). This led Obama to complain that 'the Turks had failed to act as an ally in the UN vote' (Kınacıoğlu & Gürzel Aka, 2018, p. 152). In return, the Turkish government criticised both the US policy of penalising non-compliant states and the legal case opened in the US against a Turkish state-owned bank, Halkbank for violating the Iranian sanctions (Turan, 2017).

Overall, the cohesion in the US–Turkey alliance in terms of coordinating strategic, economic and military actions towards shared objectives was deeply contested in the Obama era. Based on President Trump's realist rhetoric, the AKP initially expected Trump to take Turkey's security concerns more seriously (Kocamaz, 2019). Yet, the Trump administration proved to be far from unified and reliable (Toroğlu, 2019). At the declaratory level, Trump's approach to Turkey proved inconsistent. He announced the decision to withdraw from Syria by commending Turkey's regional leadership in fighting terrorism (Ergan, 2019). Then, he sent tweets and letters to Erdoğan threatening to 'obliterate the Turkish economy' in case Turkey launched a military offensive against the Syrian Kurdish forces (Reuters, 2019a). He also 'tweeted' that he was 'a big fan' of Erdoğan and wanted to boost US–Turkish economic relations (Deutsche Welle, 2019). He acquiesced to Turkey's military operation 'Peace Spring' in Syria to the surprise of many US Senators and sided with Erdoğan against French President Emmanuel Macron who called NATO 'brain dead' during the 2019 NATO summit (BBC, 2019). Disagreeing with the US Senators pushing for anti-Turkey sanctions, Trump blamed Obama for treating Turkey 'unfairly' and pushing Erdoğan to buy Russian S-400 missiles (Trump, 2019).

At the action level the alliance management under President Trump was problematic as the divergence in threat perceptions in Syria ensued between Turkey and the US. The US' decision to transfer heavy arms to Syrian Democratic Forces, which included YPG and PYD, increased Turkey's security concerns about a rising pro-PKK Kurdish autonomous entity

near Turkey's southern border. Failing to convince its NATO allies to intervene and create a no-fly zone, Turkey launched three military operations in Iraq and Syria, namely Operation Euphrates Shield, Operation Olive Branch, and Operation Peace Spring to establish a secure zone around its Syrian and Iraqi borders (Stanicek, 2019). These operations were not only prompted by the IS and pro-Kurdish terrorist attacks but they also reflected the AKP leadership's growing distrust of the West since the July 2016 coup attempt (Stanicek, 2019). Blaming the West for failing to help Turkey in its fight against coup plotters, the AKP regime started to reconsider its alliance with the West (Stanicek, 2019).

The AKP became increasingly critical of the US that failed to extradite Gülen and treated the PYD/YPG as a US ally. When Turkey was hit by a currency and debt crisis in 2018, Erdoğan denounced Trump for waging an 'economic war' against Turkey (Erdoğan, 2018a). According to Turkish Minister of Interior Affairs Süleyman Soylu, the West was systematically trying to curb Turkey's rising power by imposing de facto sanctions on Turkey and supporting anti-Turkey terrorist groups (2017). Furthermore, Erdoğan took a critical stance against the US hegemony and policies towards Iran, Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Venezuela in both domestic and international platforms. The AKP leadership emphasised the need to use middle power activism to balance the US in the Middle East (Soylu, 2017).

Turkey refused to back the US initiatives that were perceived as pro-Israeli and anti-Iran in the region. In May 2018, Turkey convened a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Istanbul and launched a successful diplomatic campaign at the UN against Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (Arik & Rezeg, 2018). In February 2019, instead of attending the US–Poland 'anti-Iran' summit, Turkey participated in a meeting with Russia and Iran over Syria (Demirtas, 2019). Emphasising Turkey's strategic autonomy, Turkish government adopted a 'hedging' strategy in terms of diversifying its strategic partnerships in the East. In addition, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu stressed that NATO was protecting only one-third of the Turkish airspace and that Turkey needed the Russian S–400 missiles to protect its national security (Seren, 2019).

In order to persuade the Trump administration to withdraw from Syria, prevent the US Congress' punitive measures against Turkey and to sell the Patriot system to Turkey, the AKP leadership tried both diplomacy and threats to close both the Incirlik base and the Kürecik radar station (Taylor, 2020). According to Cagaptay (2019), Turkey resorted to a 'double-track strategy' of 'manipulating Washington by playing on the theme that Moscow [was] willing to do more for Turkey regarding the YPG than [was] the US'. It threatened to veto the NATO defence plans for Poland and the Baltic states unless YPG/PYD was officially listed as a terrorist organisation by NATO. Yet, it quickly backed down out of fear of marginalisation by its NATO allies (Reuters, 2019b). In particular, it fears that the US–Greece defence agreement signed in October 2019 which ensures US access to three Greek air bases, may undermine the significance of Turkey's Incirlik base (Taylor, 2020).

Turkey's conflicts with other US allies in its neighbourhood such as Greece, Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia reinforce Turkey's fear of abandonment (Cagaptay, 2019; Tür, 2019). For instance, when NATO invited Cyprus to the NATO change of command ceremony Turkey boycotted the event (Cetin, 2019). Moreover, fearing marginalisation by the US-backed Eastern Mediterranean Gas corridor initiative – led by the EU, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, and Qatar –, Turkey signed a maritime border agreement with Libya that consolidated its territorial claims over the Eastern Mediterranean waters (Iseri, 2019; Iseri &

Bartan, 2019). It also established a drone base in Northern Cyprus to monitor natural gas drilling in the region (Iseri, 2019; Iseri & Bartan, 2019).

In addition to Turkey's fear of abandonment, Trump administration's Iran policy has raised Turkey's security concerns. In particular, the annulment of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran (BBC, 2019), the renewal of Iranian sanctions (CBS, 2019) and the US air strike killing Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani as a response to anti-US attacks in Iraq (Al Jazeera, 2020a, 2020b) increased Turkey's fear of entrapment into a war against Iran that is an important energy supplier. Turkish Foreign Ministry officially denounced the US unilateral military steps as provoking instability in the region (MFA, 2020).

Overall, Turkey's alliance security dilemma was high during both the Obama and Trump administrations. Turkey's purchase of the S–400 missile system from Russia, its military operations in Syria and its military agreement with Libya reflected its distancing from the US. Both the declining credibility of the US alliance and the diverging threat percep-tions between the AKP leadership and the US administrations play a significant role in explaining the rise of tensions in the US–Turkey alliance over the last decade. Besides, the AKP began to perceive a threat to its regime from the West which failed to support Turkey's fight against the Gülen movement and PKK (Erdoğan, 2017). A shared sense of belonging in a EuroAtlantic security community remained low given Trump's critical, inward-looking and pragmatic 'Jacksonian' stance towards NATO (Oğuzlu, 2017). The costs of the alliance have risen for Turkey in terms of constraining Turkey's security and defence policy under the AKP. Under these circumstances, what holds the alliance together? The following section explores whether it is possible to explain the resilience of the alliance with shared worldviews. It points to Turkey's shifting worldview under the AKP leadership, which raises questions about whether Turkey and the US are drifting apart.

Turkey's contestations of US hegemony in a new world order

Since 2002, the AKP has put greater emphasis on Turkey's strategic autonomy in the global context. According to Turkish deputy trade minister, the rise of Asia Pacific countries is a harbinger of a 'new world order' that will be advantageous for Turkey (Erdoğan, 2019). Similarly, both Turkish Minister of Interior and Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasised the need to readjust to the emerging 'multipolar order' whose 'geostrategic centre' would have shifted to the East (Çavuşoğlu, 2018; Soylu, 2017). Enhancing its strategic autonomy, Turkey aims to rebalance its commitments to the West and increase its self-reliance under the AKP leadership. It also seeks to remind the US that Turkey's deference cannot be taken for granted (Dursun-Ozkanca, 2019).

Being among the NATO's ten most powerful militaries and the OECD's 15 biggest econ-omies, Turkey is considered an emerging rising power (Öniş & Kutlay, 2017). Similar to other rising powers, Turkey supports regional indigenous organisations (Cooper & Parlar Dal, 2016). For instance, it initiated and supported numerous 'homegrown' dialogue and integration processes in the Balkans, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Black Sea, the Medi-terranean, and the Middle East (Parlar Dal, 2016). It also signed cooperation treaties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization of American States and the Association of Caribbean States and it became an observer in the African Union, the Association of Caribbean States, and the Arab League, among others (Parlar Dal, 2016).

According to Altunışık, Turkey's worldviews have been influenced by four major trends in the post-Cold War era: (1) Neotraditionalism that reinforces the Sèvres syndrome in Turkey, (2) Pro-Western liberalism that supports Turkey's EU membership and NATO alliance, (3) 'Social democratic constructivism' that redefines Turkey's role as a 'cradle of civilisations', and (4) the AKP's 'conservative constructivism' that views Turkey as a representative of the Islamic civilisation (2009, p. 171, 182, 190). Unlike the other three worldviews, the AKP government perceives 'the former Ottoman territories plus adjoining regions inhabited by Muslim and Turkic peoples' as its 'own civilisational basin' (Bilgin & Bilgiç, 2011, p. 182, 191). For the AKP, Turkey should strive to be more than a 'regional power within the Western civilisation' (Bilgin & Bilgiç, 2011, p. 182, 191). The AKP's worldview is 'decentring the West' as an axis of the Turkish foreign policy (Keyman & Aydın-Duzgit, 2009). For some, Turkey's post-Cold War vision relies on 'soft Euro-Asianism' that indicates a diversification of alliances in the East while maintaining a 'flexible' and 'loose' commitment to Turkey's Western alliance (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2009).

Accordingly, Turkey as a rising middle power resorts to a 'dual-track strategy' by contesting the US-led world order both 'from within' the West (as a NATO, OECD, WTO member, and an official EU candidate) and 'from outside' (as a leading member of the Global South and non-Western formal and informal organisations such as OIC, MIKTA, and G20). It resorts to cost-imposing strategies against the US by using alternative non-Western regional organisations and cooperation mechanisms such as the OIC. In addition, the AKP adopts a 'rhetoric of resistance' by denouncing the US unilateralism and Western 'double-standards'. Erdoğan stated that 'major powers such as the United States undermine the liberal international order!' (2018b). As it hosts over 3.5 million Syrian refugees and has become a top aid donor in the last decade, Turkey presents itself as a humanitarian and altruistic power as opposed to an 'imperialist, neocolonialist, demonised West' (Langan, 2017, pp. 1400–1411).

With his motto 'The World is bigger than Five', Erdoğan suggests reforming the UN Security Council to render it more democratic, equal, and multilateral (Parlar Dal & Oğuz Gök, 2014). He advocates better representation for marginalised, Muslim peoples in the Western-led global governance organisations (Parlar Dal & Oğuz Gök, 2014). Denouncing the UN's failure to prevent humanitarian crises in Asia and Africa, Erdoğan accused the US and other major powers of pursuing parochial interests at the expense of collective security (2018b). Turkey joins the critics of the US campaigns that are perceived as eroding the Westphalian principles of sovereign equality and non-intervention (Stephen, 2012). Overall, Turkey's distancing from the US did not only rely on diverging threat perceptions, but also on diverging worldviews.

The resilience of transactional and order-centric alliances

Why does the US–Turkey alliance persist despite the low credibility of the US security guarantees after the Cold War? Both the rise of contestations against the US hegemony and the establishment of a single-party government by the AKP in Turkey led to significant divergences in threat perceptions and worldviews within the US-Turkey alliance. Given its regional leadership aspirations based on strategic autonomy, Turkey can be seen as a critical or 'the least likely case' (Eckstein, 1975) for the resilience of the US alliances. If the alliance proves resilient in this most difficult case, it is more likely to persist in other cases too.

Several factors such as the high credibility of the alliance and a shared sense of belonging in a security community between the allies explain why an alliance persists (Walt, 1997). Turkey maintains the US alliance in spite of the low credibility of the US security guarantees, the perceived leadership failure of the US in the Middle East and the divergence of threat perceptions and worldviews between Turkey and the US. As Turkey's US alliance reflects a combination of transactional and ontological motivations since its eruption, both transactional and 'order-centric' arguments contribute to the resilience of the alliance.

According to the transactional view, the US alliance has served as a 'hedge' against alternative regional orders led by Russia or Iran. Turkey's security dependence on the US and the costs of abrogating the alliance prevail over the AKP's search for greater autonomy and a better status in the East. Turkey's energy dependence on Russia and Iran curtails the AKP's regional leadership aspirations. Furthermore, Turkey is uncertain about whether Russia would treat Turkey as an equal if it abrogates its NATO/US alliance (Turan, 2018). It failed to play an important role during the Arab uprisings as it found itself 'punch[ing] above its weight' and overinvolved in complex regional affairs (Öniş & Kutlay, 2017, pp. 176–177). Also, it lacks both a coherent vision of an ideal world order and the political will to assume global responsibilities (Parlar Dal, 2018). Accordingly, Turkey's 'double-track' strategy and its contestations of the US hegemony can be interpreted as merely a warning to the West. Turkey would not have pursued a rapprochement with Russia had the US actively supported Turkey's autonomy-based strategies, its defence industry and its fight against PKK and Gülen (Erşen & Köstem, 2019).

Alternatively, an ontologically-motivated alliance relies on an 'order-centric' nature that transcends the pragmatic motivations of transactional and threat-based alliances. By maintaining the US alliance, lesser powers like Turkey seek to benefit from the constitutive and legitimating effects of the alliance on their agency. Alliance abrogation means higher uncertainty and risk in terms of the emergence of alternative regional and global orders. Hence, Turkey does not abrogate the alliance because the alliance legitimates Turkey's agency in the current world order as a rising middle power. Rather than preventing it, the US alliance helps Turkey assert its national role in world politics as an actor that transcends the East-West divide. For example, Turkey co-sponsors the UN Alliance of Civilisations project with Spain and it has become 'the only country that co-chairs three distinct Friends of Mediation groups at three major international institutions', namely, the UN, the OIC and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (Akçapar, 2019, p. 6). It has recently launched the 'Asia Anew' initiative in August 2019, emphasising its role as 'the westernmost Asian and the easternmost European country' (Demirci & Cam, 2019). It participates in both the Western-led 'Geneva process' and the Russian–Iranian–Turkish trilateral 'Astana process' about the Syrian conflict. In this context, Turkey's alliance with the US is embedded in Turkey's national role conception as an actor of world politics that is in between the East and the West. Hence, the US alliance's legitimating 'order-centric' effects on Turkey's multifaceted foreign policy contributes to the resilience of the alliance.

Given the rise of contestations against the US hegemony under the Trump administration, one of the most critical questions on the prevailing world order pertains to the resilience and transformation of the US alliances in the post-Cold War era. Shifting the focus to Turkey's perspective and its 68-year-old formal alliance with the US, this study shows the extent to which a middle power can assert its strategic autonomy and contest the US hegemony without entirely undermining its formal alliance. Compared to other allies

and partners of the US, the case of Turkey is unique in terms of switching back and forth between Middle Eastern autonomy-based strategies and European security dependence and loyalty on NATO. Turkey is therefore a perfect laboratory for studying the dual fear of entrapment and abandonment in the context of alliance politics. As Turkey's approach to the US alliance reflects a mixture of transactional and ontological motivations, the Turkish case helps transcend both an exclusivist focus on transactional alliances and the East/West dichotomy in world politics. Overall, the study suggests exploring the 'order-centric' effects of the US alliance in order to better grasp the resilience of the alliances in the post-Cold War era.

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