

УДК 327.84(485+480):351.74(479)

Narmina GARAYEVA, PhD Student

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6579-5332

e-mail: nana.garayeva@gmail.com

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine

THE SOURCES AND DYNAMICS OF TURKEY'S ANTAGONISM TOWARDS THE EURO-ATLANTIC ASPIRATIONS OF SWEDEN AND FINLAND

Background. Since 1949, NATO's membership has increased from 12 to 31 countries through nine rounds of enlargement. Allegedly, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization door remains open to any European country in a position to undertake the commitments and obligations of membership, and contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area. Yet, any decision to invite a country to join the bloc is taken by the North Atlantic Council on the basis of consensus among all Allies. This dichotomy has attracted particular attention following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which "encouraged" historically non-aligned Finland and Sweden to apply for NATO membership. Apparently, the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of both Nordic countries have immediately encountered strong Turkey's antagonism. While Finland has become a NATO Ally on 4 April 2023, as of December 2023 Sweden has been holding merely an official invitee status. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has highlighted that NATO's priority is for Sweden's accession to be completed as soon as possible as well. Although President Erdogan submitted Sweden's accession protocol to the Turkish parliament for ratification in October 2023, there is an ongoing discussion on the reasons why the process has been held up by official Ankara.

Methods. For the purposes of this study, the following methods of cognition have been used: document research method and content analysis based on interpretation and explanation, as well as prognostic method.

Results. Turkey's antagonistic stance towards NATO's Nordic enlargement has mainly embodied its denouncement of Finland's and Sweden's alleged practice of providing political, financial and military support to terrorist (according to Turkish legislation) groups and also their discriminatory policies over Turkey's arms procurement. In parallel, it has signaled the readiness of the ruling team to increase stakes at the negotiating table on wider foreign policy and security engagement with the NATO Allies.

Conclusions. Self-positioning of Turkey as a non-conventional NATO Ally pursuing an autonomous policy, trying to have its own national security concerns better accommodated by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its member states, has been a critical factor for the intent of effective derailing of the process of Sweden's (and initially Finland's) accession.

Keywords: NATO enlargement, NATO membership, Erdogan, Turkey, Sweden, Finland.

Background

The launch of Russia's large-scale aggression against its sovereign neighbor, Ukraine, in late February 2022 has triggered the historic transformation of the political and security self-identity of the two Nordic countries – the Kingdom of Sweden and the Republic of Finland. Amid the brutal warfare being unfolded in the very heart of Europe both Stockholm and Helsinki have reconsidered their long-standing vision of military non-alignment in favor of joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. On 16 March 2022, the Swedish government initiated consultations with all the political parties represented in the Riksdag to deliberate on the changed security environment. As a result, the Prime Minister Andersson announced in mid-May her government's intention to formally apply for the country's membership in NATO (Basu, 2022). Similarly, in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Finland has re-assessed its security policy situation. Based on the comprehensive analysis of the security environment in the Baltic Sea region and Northern Europe, the Finnish government, after preliminary consultations with the Eduskunta, conveyed a proposal to President Niinisto on the decision to bid for Finland's membership in the Alliance. On 18 May 2022, the Swedish and Finnish Ambassadors to NATO simultaneously handed over the official letters of application by their respective countries on joining the bloc to the Secretary General Stoltenberg (NATO, 2022). The latter warmly welcomed these requests, saying "this was a good day, at a critical moment for Euro-Atlantic security".

The strategic choice of Stockholm and Helsinki has either found strong support among "core" NATO member states. In a statement on 18 May 2022, President Biden of the United States welcomed the historic applications from Finland and Sweden for membership in NATO and expressed readiness to working with the US Congress and other NATO Allies to quickly bring the two countries into

the "strongest defensive alliance in history" (White House, 2022). Earlier, on 16 May 2022, Foreign Secretary Truss of the United Kingdom reaffirmed commitment to offer Finland and Sweden every assistance during the process of their accession, which would "strengthen the collective security of Europe" (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2022). Likewise, French President Macron expressed support for the sovereign decisions coming from "two very close European partners", whose robust defense capabilities would "reinforce the security and stability of the Baltic Sea region as well as that of Europe as a whole, and of the Euro-Atlantic area" (Elysee, 2022). In a similar spirit, Federal Chancellor Scholz of Germany acknowledged the announcement by the governments of the two Nordic nations that they were exercising their "sovereign right to a free choice of alliance" and were applying for membership of NATO as a "historic step for the defense alliance and for Europe" (Bundesregierung, 2022). Meanwhile, the diametrically opposite stance of Turkey has put at risk the military-political alignment of both Sweden and Finland. Given the consensus decision-making in NATO, Ankara's reluctance to support their accession process has questioned the spirit of solidarity and cohesion among the Allies.

As the Russia – Ukraine war continues, NATO enlargement has not been lacking particular academic interest. Some scholars have already managed to address implicitly the antagonism of Turkey towards the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Sweden and Finland. In May 2022, Galip Dalay in his research commentary for the German Institute for International and Security Affairs made an attempt to decipher Turkey's geopolitical balancing and anti-Westernism in its relations with Russia (Dalay, 2022). He particularly argued that despite Turkey's attempt to leverage Stockholm's and Helsinki's membership bids does not stem from opposition to the NATO enlargement as

© Garayeva Narmina, 2023

such, this episode would further decrease the level of trust between Turkey and many Allies. In September 2022, the Finnish Institute of International Affairs published a briefing paper by Toni Alaranta looking at NATO's Nordic enlargement and Turkey's reservations (Alaranta, 2022). The author mainly discussed the signing of the trilateral Memorandum of Understanding, through which Turkey dropped its initial objection to Finland's and Sweden's NATO membership, in the context of Ankara's wider strategic interests. Another research article focusing on NATO – Turkey relations through the lenses of the enlargement policy was published in the spring 2023 edition of *Insight Turkey*, a leading journal covering a broad range of topics related to Turkish domestic and foreign policy issues and global affairs. Its author Arif Bagbaslioglu analyzed Ankara's stance and cautious attitude towards Finland and Sweden's NATO membership applications, having claimed that NATO's decision-making procedure has had a positive impact on Turkey's relations with candidate countries (Bağbaşıoğlu, 2023).

Besides, the topic has been occasionally addressed in wider regional and global studies. In October 2023, the fifth collective volume of *Great Power Competition* was published focusing on the complex threats and challenges confronting US national security and foreign policy in a post-Ukraine invasion environment. In particular, Nicholas J. Kramer in the chapter entitled "Navigating the Middle Ground: The Central Region's Middle Powers" Response to the Russo-Ukrainian War' touched upon Turkey's motivation behind delaying Sweden's and Finland's accession to NATO for months and acting as a lone outlier for trans-Atlantic unity (Kramer, 2023). Earlier, Cihan Tugal in his contribution to "Natopolitanism: The Atlantic Alliance Since the Cold War" referred to Russian aggression's pushing Sweden and Finland – perceived to be longtime harborers of Kurdish militants – toward NATO as a "golden opportunity" for Turkey in terms of concession-seeking (Anderson, 2023). Finally, Goeran B. Johansson in his quadrology "The Authoritarian Eurasian Superpowers Challenge the US-Led Liberal World Order" of 2022 dubbed Turkey a "very uncertain card" acting independently outside NATO (Johansson, 2022). In particular, he linked the isolated stance of official Ankara with the fact the country has been since 2013 a dialogue member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is not a NATO-friendly organization. Yet, while the developments in and around the complex issue have been widely covered in media, it has been poorly studied so far. In order to address this gap, whereas Finland has been finally part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization since April 2023, this research looks at the initial roots and dynamics of Turkey's reluctance to support NATO enlargement.

The purpose of the research is to explore the genuine motives behind Turkey's reluctance to clear the way for Sweden to become part of the Western military-political bloc.

Methods

This study has been conducted with the use of specific (particular) methods of cognition, including document research method and content analysis based on interpretation and explanation, as well as prognostic method. Document research method refers to the explicative analysis of international agreements, legislative acts, press-releases of government agencies etc. Content analysis as a tool of researching communication patterns has been used mainly to look into public statements by

President Erdogan and also rhetoric of other top-level officials to explore the motivation behind the stance of official Ankara towards the latest NATO enlargement case. The prognostic method has been employed in order to explicate the prospects for Sweden's accession as far as Turkey's initial antagonism is concerned.

Even before Sweden and Finland formally applied to join the world's biggest military alliance, the media with the reference to diplomatic sources had started reporting Turkey was intending to block their "fast-track" application review. Its government accused mainly Stockholm of harbouring members of Kurdish militant groups (the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its affiliations in Syria and Iraq) as well as followers of the Fethullah Gulen movement it considers a terrorist organization responsible for the 2016 coup attempt. Besides, Ankara objected the 2019 decisions by the Swedish and Finnish governments to ban arms exports to Turkey over the latter's military operations in Syria (Henley, 2022). As early as 18 May 2022, addressing the meeting of the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) parliamentary group, President Erdogan said NATO enlargement was meaningful to Turkey only to the extent that the nation's sensitivities are respected: "Asking us to support the NATO membership while providing every kind of support to the PKK/YPG terrorist organization amounts to incoherence to say the least" (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2022a). This only statement has already called into question the prospects for a fundamental transformation of the European security landscape, which could symbolize the largest expansion of NATO in recent decades and double the length of the Alliance's geographical border with Russia.

Since 21 May 2022, the communication in the Ankara-Stockholm-Helsinki triangle has been activated at the highest political level to address pending Turkey's "ok" on NATO enlargement. In the phone conversation with Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson of Sweden President Erdogan pointed out that the political, financial and weapon support her country had been providing to terrorist organizations should be brought to an end, whereas the restrictions imposed by Sweden on Turkey in defense industry following the Operation Peace Spring in Syria, should be lifted as well (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2022b). Without going deep into concerns on the Finnish side, Recep Tayyip Erdogan conveyed to President Sauli Niinisto of Finland his vision of Turkey's natural right to expect respect and support for the country's legitimate and determined struggle against a real threat to its national security and the security of its citizens: "A mentality that disregarded terrorist organizations which posed a threat to an Ally within NATO would not comply with the spirit of alliance and friendship" (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2022c). Finally, on the same day, the Turkish leader spoke by phone with the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, having similarly raised the lack of Sweden's and Finland's solidarity with his country on fundamental issues, combatting terrorism in particular (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2022d). In this way, the success of NATO membership bids of the two Nordic countries got surprisingly correlated with their attitude towards Turkey's vital and national security interests.

On 23 May 2022, the Turkish Presidency's Directorate of Communications published a statement, which set forth specific expectations from Sweden in terms of awaiting NATO accession (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, 2022). The "number one" condition from Ankara's perspective was providing

concrete assurances by official Stockholm, under the collective security principle of NATO, about the termination of political support for terrorist organizations. Allegedly, the political support used to be expressed *inter alia* in meetings of Swedish authorities at the ministerial level with members of the terrorist organizations Turkey is fighting, namely the Kurdistan Workers' Party/Democratic Union Party (the Syrian wing of the PKK) – PKK/PYD – and the Fethullah Gulen Movement (FETO). In fact, Ankara has been requesting the extradition of PKK/PYD and FETO followers from Sweden since 2017 but never heard back from the counterparts in Stockholm. Meanwhile, the Swedish government announced its decision to allocate 367 million USD to support the PKK/PYD through 2023 only and has supposedly provided military equipment to terrorist organizations, whose activities keep on posing risks and threats to the Turkish national interests. Hereby, the agency emphasized the incompatibility of Sweden's Euro-Atlantic aspirations and its continuing arms support for the PKK/PYD, in particular via supplies of anti-tanks and drones, which have been reportedly captured during counter-terrorism operations conducted by Turkish forces.

The concerns of official Ankara appear justified given the long-standing conflict in southeastern Turkey between Turkish security forces and the PKK, which has been the embodiment of Kurdish separatism for decades. In recent years, Turkey has focused on preventing the political autonomy of the Syrian Kurds after their success in the Syrian conflict (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2021). Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Workers' Party was recognized by the United States of America as a foreign terrorist organization under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) back in 1997 (U.S. Department of State, 2023); it has been either listed under EU autonomous measures to combat terrorism set out in Common Position 2001/931 (CP931) since 2002 (European Parliament, 2016). At the same time, the Turkish government claims Sweden and Finland have created a conducive environment for terrorist groups, whose existence poses a direct threat to Turkey's national security. For instance, a PKK/PYD "representative office" has been operating in the Swedish capital city since April 2016, whereas local authorities have been authorizing rallies of its supporters. In Finland, the terrorist organization's activities have been less visible, however the PKK/PYD favoring rhetoric has been periodically voiced under the slogans of defending free speech in the country. In both Sweden and Finland, schools linked to Fethullah Gulen accused by Ankara to have been behind 2016 failed coup attempt, continue to operate (Bozkuş et al., 2022), which similarly proves "legitimacy" of Turkey's claims.

Another item in the agenda Sweden has been expected to follow was lifting an arms embargo running counter to the "spirit of the alliance" *per se*. The restrictive measure was imposed by official Stockholm against Turkey after the Operation Peace Spring, which was launched in northern Syria by the Turkish security forces in 2019 aimed at exercising the country's rights stemming from international law in the Eastern Mediterranean and ensuring its border security. According to President Erdogan, the military campaign was initiated with the declared objective of creating a safe zone in the Kurdish-held territories along Turkey's southern border. The Operation Peace Spring started shortly after the sudden and controversial withdrawal of the US troops stationed alongside their Kurdish allies (Solace Global, 2019). The international community condemned Turkey's actions and expressed

concern that the so called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other insurgent elements could use the growing instability to regroup and rearm, which has largely jeopardized the counterterrorism efforts of the previous five years. In particular, EU member states have taken a hard line, threatening to suspend arms sales to Ankara, combined with unilateral arms embargoes imposed by *inter alia* Finland, France, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Finally, the statement by the Turkish Presidency's Directorate of Communication referred to the importance of collective cooperation in the fight against terrorism as a "framework requirement" for the alliance members and candidate countries.

On 25 May 2022, the consultations were held in Ankara between the Turkish delegation led by Presidential Spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin and Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal, and their Swedish and Finnish counterparts. The agenda of the tripartite meeting covered, in particular, the emerging security environment following the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war, NATO membership bids of Stockholm and Helsinki, and Turkey's security concerns and expectations. The Turkish side voiced to State Secretary to Swedish Prime Minister Oscar Stenstrom and Permanent State Secretary of Finland Jukka Salovaara the responsibility of potential NATO Allies to take immediate steps in order to address the security concerns of the current ones: "NATO is an alliance of security; therefore, its most fundamental duty is to address the security concerns of its members in an equal and just manner" (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2022e). Meanwhile, official Ankara reiterated that the ones of Turkey are related to the presence of PKK and its Syrian extensions (PYD/YPG) and FETO on the territory of the European countries, including individual NATO Allies as well Finland and Sweden specifically. In this way, Ankara's further commitment to the Alliance's open door policy has been made conditional to principled steps and tangible guarantees from Stockholm and Helsinki as against terrorist organizations' organizational and financial propaganda in their media and also affirmative responses to extradition requests made in the past decade.

In turn, the Alliance "community" has continued to lobby the search for an agreement on the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of both Sweden and Finland. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, during his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos of 24 May 2022, said their decision to seek NATO membership demonstrated that "European security would not be dictated by violence and intimidation" and also stressed that NATO enlargement has been a historic success "spreading freedom and democracy across Europe" (NATO, 2022a). Meanwhile, the Chiefs of Defense of Finland and Sweden were invited to attend in person the NATO Military Committee meeting on collective defense, which took place on 19 May 2022 in Brussels. The meeting mainly focused on exchanging views on the dramatically altered security environment in view of Russia's invasion of Ukraine as well as the further adaptation of the Alliance accordingly (NATO, 2022b). Earlier, representatives of both Nordic countries participated in an unprecedented multilateral meeting of chiefs of defense on behalf of nearly 40 nations, which was held upon Washington's invitation at Ramstein Air Base in western Germany. The objective was to collectively discuss ways of supporting Ukraine amid the ongoing war launched by Russia (Smolar et al., 2022). The above signaled the optimism of the NATO Allies about overcoming quickly the

Turkish obstruction on the way to another wave of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization enlargement.

Following patient and persistent negotiations, a trilateral memorandum was signed on 28 June 2022 by the foreign ministers of Turkey, Finland and Sweden under the auspices of NATO Secretary General. According to the agreement reached on the sidelines of the Madrid Summit, as prospective NATO Allies, Finland and Sweden *inter alia* pledged not to provide support to YPG/PYD, confirmed that the PKK is a proscribed terrorist organization, and also committed to prevent activities of the PKK and all other terrorist organizations and their extensions, as well as activities by individuals in affiliated and inspired groups or networks linked to these terrorist organizations (NATO, 2022c). In doing so, Helsinki and Stockholm committed to a set of concrete steps, such as addressing Turkey's pending deportation and extradition requests of terror suspects as well as investigating and interdicting any financing and recruitment activities of the PKK and all other terrorist organizations and their extensions. As a result, Turkey confirmed its long-standing support for NATO's Open Door policy and agreed to support at the 2022 Madrid Summit the other NATO Allies in their decision to offer Sweden and Finland membership. On 4 July 2022, Finland and Sweden completed accession talks at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, and the following day the then 30 NATO Allies signed the Accession Protocols for both.

Since the Accession Protocol for Finland was subsequently ratified by each of the NATO Allies according to national procedures, on 4 April 2023 Finland became NATO's newest member upon depositing its instrument of accession to the North Atlantic Treaty with the United States at NATO Headquarters in Brussels (NATO, 2023). A few weeks earlier, on 17 March 2023, Recep Tayyip Erdogan met at the Presidential Complex with President Sauli Niinistö of Finland, who arrived in Turkey for a working visit. Speaking at a joint press conference, President Erdogan said Helsinki had since the NATO Madrid Summit taken sincere and tangible steps to fulfill its commitments under the trilateral memorandum (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2023). Accordingly, in response to the progress made to address Turkey's security concerns, the Grand National Assembly – the last among the parliaments of 30 NATO Allies – ratified the Accession Protocol for Finland on 30 March 2023. Apparently, unlike Sweden, Finland showed greater sensitivity by mostly avoiding on its territory such incidents as anti-Islam demonstrations of right-wing extremists or anti-Turkey rallies of PKK sympathizers (Boyras & Yeşiltaş, 2023). Above and beyond, Finland had taken concrete steps to crack down on groups seen by Ankara as "terrorists" and free up defense exports, and, in return, received Turkey's support for its membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Meanwhile, although NATO Allies signed the Accession Protocol for Sweden on 5 July 2022, until all of them have ratified Sweden's application for NATO membership, it has merely the status of an invitee country. So far 28 of NATO's 30 member states have ratified the Accession Protocol for Sweden in their national parliaments with the ones of Turkey and also Hungary still pending. Now the Nordic country is being gradually integrated into the NATO's political and military structures, however, until its bid to join the Alliance has been approved by all the NATO Allies, its Secretary General is not authorized to invite Stockholm to join the North Atlantic Treaty, which is NATO's founding document. The nature of the ongoing

Turkey's hostility to Sweden remains the same – Ankara is expecting Sweden to support it in addressing its own security concerns over combatting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The visit paid by Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson of Sweden to Turkey in early November 2022 gave some hope for reinvigorating the admission talks. However, President Erdogan particularly referred to the presence in Sweden of PKK/PYD/YPG and FETO followers, not being deported or extradited to Turkey for years (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2022f). Later the world witnessed the far-right politician publicly burning the Holy Quran during an Islamophobic protest in front of the Turkish embassy in Stockholm. The incident has been considered in Ankara as a hate crime nurtured by Islamophobia, which "expanded" the timeframe of Sweden's NATO membership process.

Results

What are the genuine motives behind Turkey's antagonistic stance on this particular NATO enlargement? Number one would be an attempt to strengthen the hand within the ongoing dialogue on counter-terrorism as part of wider foreign policy and security engagement with the NATO Allies and EU partners. Basically, the collective West and official Ankara have been facing significant contradictions when it comes to their interpretation of the global terrorism sources. In particular, Turkey strongly rejects the arguments, set out by US officials since the Obama administration, that PKK which is a listed organization has nothing to do with PYD and YPG, which makes it legally impossible for Washington to take steps against PYD and YPG (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2022e). Meanwhile, the EU takes a similar approach: while the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has been listed under EU autonomous measures to combat terrorism, neither the Democratic Union Party (PYD) nor its People's Protection Units (YPG) have been added to the list of persons, groups and entities to which the sanctions regime applies (European Parliament, 2016). The controversy remains existential: Turkey refers to the intelligence reports of Western countries saying PYD and YPG are PKK's Syrian extensions, whereas the Western counterparts themselves consider YPG units mainly to have been instrumental in stopping Da'esh/ISIS advances in Syria and pushing back the extremists.

Apparently, the United States have been in the focus of Turkey's maneuvering over Sweden's and Finland's NATO membership applications. Apart from expecting Stockholm and Helsinki to reconsider their lax approach to PKK, halt any kind of support for YPG, and also lift the arms embargo, Ankara has used the NATO enlargement case as a tool to raise these issues on NATO's agenda, inducing Washington particularly to revise its Syria policy. On the one hand, the Syrian Kurdish YPG, the backbone of American-led Global Coalition against Da'esh/ISIS, has been allegedly armed by the United States and politically supported by the US and the EU alike. On the other hand, in the eyes of official Ankara, YPG is clearly affiliated with PKK – a terrorist organization, promoting "separatist ethno-nationalism". Moreover, the Turkish government might have attempted to get, if not support, but at least the "green light" for another military operation against YPG in northern Syria, which – in case of success – would help create a 30-kilometer deep buffer zone between Syrian government-held territory and Turkey's border and also dramatically alter the front lines of Syria's civil war, which have been largely static since an October 2019 cease-fire deal ended Turkey's Operation Peace Spring (Wilder,

2022). The security zone would enable resettling up to 1 million Syrian refugees, block Kurdish militants from entering Turkey and also entrench Turkish influence in Syria for years to come.

The rhetoric of official Ankara and Recep Tayyip Erdogan particularly may have been relevant in the context of presidential and parliamentary elections, which took place in Turkey in May 2023. Despite opinion polls assuming an opposition success, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Parti) and its allies won a majority in the parliamentary elections, whereas incumbent Recep Tayyip Erdogan was re-elected for a third term as President of Turkey in a second-round run-off with 52,14 % of votes. Allegedly, most of the Turkish people have been united in their enmity of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which launched an insurgency against the Turkish state in 1984 with the resulting conflict costing nearly 40 thousand lives. There is no wonder that President Erdogan and the AKP might have used this nationalistic sentiment and boasted of anti-PKK campaigns in order to rally for votes (Bilginsoy, 2022). Turkey has held up Sweden's (and initially Finland's) application to join NATO, claiming that the former provides a safe haven for Kurdish terrorists (Fella, & Walker, 2023) while the ruling team was campaigning on the need for a strong government to crack down on militant groups. Therefore, official Ankara's single-mindedness on the NATO enlargement case may have stemmed from political tasks of President Erdogan and the AKP on the eve of the 2023 elections, especially amid the skyrocketing inflation and economic collapse in the country which have been drastically challenging their electoral support.

Turkey's attempt to leverage Stockholm's and Helsinki's membership bids to extract some gains similarly refers to the FETO case. The demands voiced by the Turkish side address *inter alia* the extradition of persons allegedly affiliated with the Fethullah Gulen movement (designated by Turkey as a "FETO" terrorist organization and accused of organizing the bloodiest coup attempt in the modern history of the country). Official Ankara likewise decries the financial assistance, allegedly provided to FETO by persons residing in Sweden and Finland (Alaranta, 2022). According to the Turkish Minister of Justice, as of June 2022 the status of extradition files was pending for six FETO members in Finland and 10 FETO members in Sweden (Berker, 2022). This comes as no surprise that the Madrid Memorandum explicitly obliged both the Nordic countries not only to refuse from providing any kind of support for the organization described as FETO in Turkey, but also to unambiguously condemn all terrorist organizations perpetrating attacks against Turkey. Meanwhile, the requirement might have served as another instrument to push Washington, which refers to Finland and Sweden as longtime and stalwart partners, for reconsidering its policy falsely portraying the official Ankara's response to FETO as a crackdown on dissent. This mainly refers to the refusal of the United States to extradite Fethullah Gulen, the exiled Turkish cleric, who allegedly orchestrated the 2016 defeated coup, in which 251 people were killed.

Likewise, Turkey might have bargained for external preferences and concessions in the arms industry from Sweden and Finland themselves, other key Western actors and, above all, the United States. Apparently, this was specified in the trilateral memorandum of 28 June 2022 which Turkey, Finland and Sweden having confirmed that there would be no national arms embargoes in place

between them. Stockholm particularly pledged to change its national regulatory framework for arms exports in relation to NATO Allies. In addition, Ankara might have in some way counted on the restoration of military-industrial cooperation with the United States. This refers to the Ankara-Washington tensions amid the controversial experience of procuring the Russian S-400 air defense missile system by Turkey in 2017. In response to this hard-to-imagine decision given Turkey's NATO membership, Washington excluded the country from the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program in 2019, claiming Turkey cannot have both the Russian-built system and the fifth-generation fighter (Garamone, 2019). Later in 2020 the United States imposed sanctions on the Turkey's Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB) and its management pursuant to Section 231 of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) for knowingly engaging in a significant transaction with Rosoboronexport (ROE), Russia's main arms export entity (U.S. Department of State, 2023a). Therefore, Turkey's delay of the NATO membership bids of Sweden (and initially Finland) might have been a source of bargaining power for lifting the restrictive measures.

Last but not least, Ankara might have expected to see some progress on the Turkey-EU agenda, including the revival of the membership negotiation process with the European Union, modernization of the Customs Union, and visa liberalization for its citizens. The country was granted EU candidate status back in December 1999 and remains a key partner for Brussels in many areas of joint interest, i.e. migration, counterterrorism, public health, climate and regional issues. However, despite the accession negotiations had been launched in October 2005, they have been at a standstill since June 2018 amid EU's concerns on the alleged deterioration of democratic standards, the rule of law, the judiciary independence and respect for fundamental rights in Turkey. Ahead of his visit to the Lithuanian capital Vilnius for the NATO Heads of State and Government Summit of July 2023, President Erdogan *inter alia* referred to Turkey's experience of waiting at the EU door for decades: "First clear the path to the EU in front of Turkey and then we will clear the path in front of Sweden" (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2023a). Therefore, although any attempts to link Sweden's NATO accession to Turkey's EU membership have been rejected in Brussels and individual European capitals, official Ankara may consider it possible to "green-light" Sweden's NATO membership bid in exchange for progress on its own application to join the EU.

Discussion and conclusions

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has demonstrated how fragile the security architecture in Europe is. No wonder, it has immediately nudged Sweden and Finland – historically pursuing military non-alignment – to re-assess their security policy situation. In light of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, after thorough and inclusive democratic processes, Stockholm and Helsinki made landmark decisions to seek membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, whose essential purpose is to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its members through political and military means, and to guarantee the freedom and security of all member countries. Apparently, now as NATO Allies, the Nordic countries would be covered by the collective defense obligations set out under Article 5 of the NATO's

founding treaty, which would strengthen their security and deter antagonistic actors from using military force against both. Despite following the 2022 Madrid Summit of NATO Leaders, both Finland and Sweden completed accession talks, the Accession Protocol for the former only was subsequently ratified by each of the then 30 NATO Allies according to their national procedures. As a result, Finland sharing an 800-mile border with Russia became a full member of the bloc on 4 April 2023, whereas Sweden has merely retained its Invitee status, allowing its representatives to participate as observers in Allied meetings.

Whereas most of the NATO Allies have demonstrated steadfast and unequivocal commitment to Sweden during the accession process and beyond, official Ankara has not explicitly welcomed the sovereign intention of this Nordic country to join the bloc. On the contrary, Turkey has put forward a set of reservations allowing it to derail Sweden's NATO membership bid, citing particularly one of the key elements of the Alliance which is unwavering solidarity and cooperation in the fight against terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations. The reservations ranging from taking much more rigorous action against the groups, designated by Turkey as terrorist organizations, to lifting a national arms embargo have not only mirrored the immediate Turkey's expectations from Stockholm *per se* in terms of addressing its own security concerns, but signaled an attempt to bring NATO's "frontman", the United States, to the negotiating table on pressing issues. Moreover, they go hand in hand with the country's resolute search for political autonomy, increased room for maneuvering, and strategic decoupling from the West. At the same time, during the NATO summit in July 2023, the Turkish leader pledged to promptly submit Sweden's accession protocol to the parliament for ratification and finally did so on 23 October 2023. This has promised some progress over moving swiftly on Sweden (alongside Finland) joining NATO, given the robust defense capabilities of both would reinforce the stability of the Nordic region as well as that of Europe as a whole, and of the Euro-Atlantic area.

References

- Alaranta, T. (2022). NATO'S Nordic Enlargement and Turkey's Reservations. *Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA Briefing Paper)*, 349. https://www.fiaa.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/bp349_natos-nordic-enlargement-and-turkeys-reservations.pdf
- Anderson, G. (2023). *Natopolitanism: The Atlantic Alliance since the Cold War*. Verso Books.
- Bağbaşıoğlu, A. (2023). NATO's Enlargement Policy and Türkiye's Position: A Key NATO Ally. *Insight Turkey*, 25 (2). <https://www.insightturkey.com/commentary/natos-enlargement-policy-and-turkiyes-position-a-key-nato-ally>
- Basu, Z. (2022, May 16). *Prime minister says Sweden will formally apply for NATO membership*. Axios. <https://www.axios.com/2022/05/15/sweden-nato-application-finland>
- Berker, M. (2022, June 29). *Türkiye expects Sweden, Finland to extradite PKK, FETO terrorists*. Anadolu Agency. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/turkiye-expects-sweden-finland-to-extradite-pkk-feto-terrorists/2625689>
- Bilginsoy, Z. (2022, November 14). *Why Istanbul blast has political implications*. Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/nato-middle-east-business-syria-turkey-d79beca5a78ecb853bbd5bd8ca0aa3e4>
- Boyraz, H. & Yeşiltaş, S. (2023, March 30). *Why Did Turkey Ratify Finland's but Not Sweden's NATO Bid?* Politics Today. <https://politicstoday.org/why-did-turkey-ratify-finlands-but-not-swedens-nato-bid>
- Bozkuş, M., Kir, B., & Amuyeva, Ü. (2022, May 24). *On Turkey's stance towards NATO enlargement policy*. Anadolu Agency. <https://bit.ly/39VTO9K>
- Bundesregierung. (2022, May 17). *Finland and Sweden apply for NATO membership*. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/scholz-nato-environment-finland-sweden-2040444>
- Dalay, G. (2022). Deciphering Turkey's Geopolitical and Anti-Westernism in Its Relations with Russia. *German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP Comment)*, 35. https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2022C35_Turkey_RelationsRussia.pdf
- Elysee. (2022, May 16). *Finland and Sweden apply for NATO membership*. <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2022/05/16/finland-and-sweden-apply-for-nato-membership>
- European Parliament. (2016, June 23). *Answer given by Vice-President Mogherini on behalf of the Commission*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2016-000843-ASW_EN.html?redirect
- Fella, S., & Walker, N. (2023, July 7). *Turkey under Erdoğan: recent developments and the 2023 elections*. House of Commons Library. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9806>
- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. (2022, May 16). *UK welcomes Sweden and Finland's NATO membership plans*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-welcomes-sweden-and-finlands-nato-membership-plans>
- Garamone, J. (2019, July 17). *U.S. Begins Process of 'Unwinding' Turkey From F-35 Program, DOD Officials Say*. U. S. Department of Defense. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/1908351/us-begins-process-of-unwinding-turkey-from-f-35-program-dod-officials-say/>
- Henley, J. (2022, May 18). *Turkey blocks early vote on Sweden and Finland joining NATO*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/18/sweden-and-finland-formally-apply-to-join-nato>
- Johansson, G. (2022). *The Authoritarian Eurasian Superpowers Challenge the US-Led Liberal World Order*. Books on Demand.
- Kramer, M. (2023). Navigating the Middle Ground: The Central Region's Middle Powers' Response to the Russo-Ukrainian War. In A. Farhadi, M. Grzegorzewski, A. J. Masys (Eds), *The Great Power Competition*, 5, 75–110.
- NATO. (2022, May 18). *Finland and Sweden submit applications to join NATO*. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_195468.htm?selectedLocale=en
- NATO. (2022a, May 24). *NATO Secretary General at Davos: 'freedom is more important than free trade'*. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_195753.htm
- NATO. (2022b, May 19). *Allied Chiefs of Defence discuss collective defence*. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_195550.htm?selectedLocale=en
- NATO. (2022c, June 28). *Trilateral Memorandum*. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/220628-trilat-memo.pdf
- NATO. (2023, April 4). *Finland joins NATO as 31st Ally*. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_213448.htm?selectedLocale=en
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. (2022a, May 18). *NATO's enlargement is meaningful to us only to the extent that our sensitivities are respected*. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/137931/-nato-s-enlargement-is-meaningful-to-us-only-to-the-extent-that-our-sensitivities-are-respected>
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. (2022b, May 21). *Phone Call with Prime Minister Andersson of Sweden*. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/137996/phone-call-with-prime-minister-andersson-of-sweden>
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. (2022c, May 21). *Phone Call with President Niinistö of Finland*. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/137995/phone-call-with-president-niinisto-of-finland>
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. (2022d, May 21). *Phone Call with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg*. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/137997/phone-call-with-nato-secretary-general-stoltenberg>
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. (2022e, May 25). *Remarks by Presidential Spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin Following His Meetings with Delegations from Sweden and Finland*. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/spokesperson/1696/138059/remarks-by-presidential-spokesperson-ibrahim-kalin-following-his-meetings-with-delegations-from-sweden-and-finland>
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. (2022f, November 8). *We want to improve our bilateral relations with Sweden in every area*. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/141584/-we-want-to-improve-our-bilateral-relations-with-sweden-in-every-area>
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. (2023, March 17). *We have decided to initiate the approval process of Finland's NATO accession protocol in our Parliament*. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/144299/-we-have-decided-to-initiate-the-approval-process-of-finland-s-nato-accession-protocol-in-our-parliament>
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. (2023a, July 10). *Türkiye has always supported NATO's open door policy*. <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/147660/-turkiye-has-always-supported-nato-s-open-door-policy>
- Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications. (2022, May 23). *Directorate of Communications posts on Sweden's Application for NATO Membership*. <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/english/haberler/detay/directorate-of-communications-posts-on-swedens-application-for-nato-membership>
- Smolar, P., Vincent, E., & Wieder, T. (2022, April 27). *War in Ukraine: U.S. and allies show strength in numbers at Ramstein Air Base*. Le Monde. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/04/27/war-in-ukraine-u-s-and-allies-show-strength-in-numbers-at-ramstein-air-base_5981766_4.html
- Solace Global. (2019, October 18). *Turkish Operation Peace Spring: A New Syrian Frontline?* <https://www.solaceglobal.com/report/turkish-operation-peace-spring-new-syrian-frontline>
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2021). *SIPRI Yearbook 2021*. Oxford University Press.

U.S. Department of State. (2023). *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*. <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations>

U.S. Department of State. (2023a). *CAATSA Section 231 Imposition of Sanctions on Turkish Presidency of Defense Industries*. <https://2017-2021.state.gov/caatsa-section-231-imposition-of-sanctions-on-turkish-presidency-of-defense-industries>

White House. (2022, May 18). *Statement by President Biden on the Applications to NATO by Finland and Sweden*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>

briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/18/statement-by-president-biden-on-the-applications-to-nato-by-finland-and-sweden

Wilder, C. (2022, July 11). *The Deteriorating Security Situation in Northeast Syria*. New Lines Institute. <https://newlinesinstitute.org/state-resilience-fragility/the-deteriorating-security-situation-in-northeast-syria>

Отримано редакцією журналу / Received: 06.12.23

Прорецензовано / Revised: 21.12.23

Схвалено до друку / Accepted: 23.01.24

Нарміна ҐАРАЄВА, асп.

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6579-5332

e-mail: nana.garayeva@gmail.com

Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка, Київ, Україна

ВИТОКИ ТА ДИНАМІКА АНТАГОНІЗМУ З БОКУ ТУРЕЧЧИНИ ЩОДО ЄВРОАТЛАНТИЧНИХ ПРАГНЕНЬ ШВЕЦІЇ ТА ФІНЛЯНДІЇ

Вступ. Починаючи із 1949 р., кількість держав – членів НАТО зростає в межах дев'яти раундів розширення із 12 до 31. Існує думка, що двері Організації Північноатлантичного договору залишаються відкритими для будь-якої європейської країни, здатної взяти на себе зобов'язання, що випливають із членства в НАТО, та сприяти безпеці в євроатлантичному регіоні. Проте рішення про запрошення будь-якої країни для приєднання до альянсу приймається Північноатлантичною радою на основі консенсусу між усіма союзниками. Ця дихотомія привернула особливу увагу після початку повномасштабного вторгнення Росії в Україну в лютому 2022 р., що "заохотило" історично позаблокові Фінляндію та Швецію подати заявки на вступ до НАТО. Однак євроатлантичні прагнення обох скандинавських країн відразу наштовхнулися на потужний антагонізм з боку Туреччини. Усе ж Фінляндія стала членом НАТО 4 квітня 2023 р., а станом на грудень 2023 р. Швеція мала офіційний статус запрошеної держави. Генеральний секретар Єнс Столтенберг підкреслює, що пріоритетом організації є якнайшвидше завершення процедури вступу до нього Швеції. Хоча президент Ердоган передає протокол про приєднання Швеції до турецького парламенту для ратифікації в жовтні 2023 р., досі триває дискусія щодо причин гальмування процесу з боку офіційної Анкари.

Методи. У межах запропонованого дослідження були застосовані такі методи пізнання: метод вивчення документів і контент-аналіз, що ґрунтуються на тлумаченні та поясненні, а також прогностичний метод.

Результати. Антагоністична позиція Туреччини щодо скандинавського розширення НАТО стала своєрідним відображенням її "протесту" проти надання з боку Фінляндії та Швеції, як стверджують, політичної, фінансової та військової підтримки терористичним (відповідно до турецького законодавства) групам, а також їхніх дискримінаційних підходів щодо турецьких оборонних закупівель. Паралельно вона засвідчила готовність провладної команди до підвищення ставок за столом переговорів навколо ширшої взаємодії з державами – членами НАТО з питань зовнішньої політики та безпеки.

Висновки. Самопозиціонування Туреччини як нетрадиційного союзника по НАТО, що здійснює автономну політику, а також її прагнення забезпечити врахування власних міркувань національної безпеки з боку Організації Північноатлантичного договору та її держав-членів у найефективніший спосіб стало критичним фактором у намірах щодо фактичного зриву процесу приєднання Швеції, а також попередньо Фінляндії.

Ключові слова: розширення НАТО, членство в НАТО, Ердоган, Туреччина, Швеція, Фінляндія.

Автор заявляє про відсутність конфлікту інтересів. Спонсори не брали участі в розробленні дослідження; у зборі, аналізі чи інтерпретації даних; у написанні рукопису; в рішенні про публікацію результатів.

The author declares no conflicts of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; in the decision to publish the results.