

BOOK REVIEW

Nur Çetinođlu Harunođlu, Ayşegül Sever, and Emre Erşen, Turkey between the United States and Russia: Surfing on the Edge (Lexington Books, 2021)

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Turkey between the United States and Russia: Surfing on the Edge

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In *Turkey between the United States and Russia: Surfing on the Edge*, Çetinoğlu Harunoğlu, Sever, and Erşen aim to bridge the gap in the literature by discussing Turkish foreign policy toward Russia and the United States (US) at the same time; to reveal the components of the change and continuity of Turkey's relations with the US and Russia throughout history; to comprehend and demonstrate Turkey's stance in this triangle; and to shed light on the present-day discussions on the shift of axis in Turkish foreign policy. The research question of this study is whether the Turkish motivation behind the maneuvers to balance relations with the US and Russia has considerably changed or not during the post-Cold War period.

There are three main arguments in the study to answer the research question. Firstly, during the Cold War, Turkish foreign policy toward the US was shaped by fear of abandonment and fear of entrapment, and this situation is also valid for the post-Cold War period. Secondly, Turkey, which oscillated between the two fears, tended to offset their dealings the US by engaging with Russia politically and economically in the post-Cold War period. Thirdly, the maneuvers in Turkish foreign policy to balance off the US with Russia are essential for the continuation of Turkish foreign policy regarding this strategy, and constitute a model which includes balancing one great power off against another, and can be accepted as a tradition for Turkish foreign policy.

As a theoretical background, the concept of alliance politics proposed by Glenn H. Snyder, in which he points out the security dilemma in alliances and the 'fear of abandonment' and 'fear of entrapment' as two determinants of this dilemma, is utilized. The period from the Cold War years to 2020 is examined via this conceptual framework. Especially the relations between the US and Turkey are discussed within this framework.

The book consists of three chapters, with an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter, entitled *The Legacy of the Cold War in Turkey's Relations with the United States and Russia*, examines Turkey's relations with the US and Russia separately. The first seeds of fear

of abandonment were detected in this period. The chapter, which covers the Cold War period, is subdivided into ten-year periods on the relations of Turkey with the US and Russia. The Truman Doctrine is accepted as a turning point, and they argue that the 1950s were the years of close ties; the 1960s and 1970s were crisis decades; and the 1980s were the years in which Turkey-US relations were rekindled. During the 1960s and 1970s, there were ups and downs/many crises to cause Turkey's growing fear of abandonment by the US.

The second chapter, entitled *Interrogating an Ally*, scrutinizes the relations between Turkey and the US in the post-Cold War period. The chapter is subdivided into three, in the light of the ups and downs of the relations. The periods 1991-2002, 2002-2012, and 2012-2020 respectively are examined. The post-Cold War relations between Turkey and the US are defined as a time of uncertainty. The 2003 Iraqi Invasion is accepted as a turning point in the relationship between these two actors. Via this invasion, the authors argue that Turkey's fear of abandonment merged with the fear of entrapment, so Turkey did not approve the UN resolution on the invasion. In this period, disagreements between the US and Turkey strengthened Turkey's two fears. The oscillations between these two fears directed Turkey to cooperate with other countries, so as to counter-balance relations with the US, and generally affected Turkish foreign policy.

The third chapter, entitled *A Roller-Coaster Relationship*, examines the relations between Turkey and Russia in the post-Cold War period. The chapter is divided into three, considering the ups and downs of the relations. The periods 1991-2002, 2002-2012, and 2012-2020 are inspected. The chapter focuses on the areas of cooperation and conflict between them, and claims both states are in a multidimensional partnership, despite their geopolitical rivalry. It is argued that 2016, the failed coup attempt in Turkey, was a turning point regarding increasing tensions between Turkey and its Western allies, and the two fears.

The book concludes that Turkey is in a dilemma, in which it has good political and economic relations with Russia, while it confronts the US. It continues relations with the US by oscillating between the two fears. Despite their strategic, enhanced, model partnership with the US, Turkey approached Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, due to its fear of abandonment and at the same time entrapment by the US. These tendencies consolidated the discussion on Turkey's shift of axis.

The book has four strengths. Firstly, the book is well-structured and well-written. While the book's content is didactic and easy to follow, even though it includes too many issues from recent history, the book is written in plain language; thus, it is easy to understand. At the same time, since it covers many issues from recent history, it can be considered a comprehensive book in the literature on Turkish foreign policy. Secondly, the authors create a historical base for supporting their arguments, and demonstrate the historical legacy of Turkish foreign policy by analyzing the dynamics of relations between Turkey-the US and Turkey-Russia. This historical base eases comprehension of the historical dimensions of this triangular relationship.

Thirdly, regarding the usage of the theoretical background, it can be said that Snyder's theory of alliance politics and the concepts of fear of abandonment and entrapment are embodied well in Turkish-American relations. According to the authors, this study is essential

because Turkish foreign policy toward these two actors, Russia and the US, with a conceptual framework, is under-valued in the literature. Fourthly, even the comprehensive bibliography of the book is quite didactic, as it includes essential books regarding the literature on Turkish foreign policy, as well as books, articles from journals and magazines, and opinion columns from different newspapers and news media. Moreover, the memories of politicians and diplomats, official documents of the states involved, and the speeches of the political leaders constitute a significant part of the bibliography. The bibliography consists of three languages which are Turkish, English, and Russian. The variety of languages and sources strengthens the book's academic standing.

The book has two weaknesses. Firstly, the same subdivision is used in the second and third chapters. This issue creates consistency and integrity in the chapters. However, the same subdivision causes repetitions. It is possible to read the same arguments and cases in the second and third chapters. The second weakness of this well-structured book is that the methodology of the book is not expressed clearly in the introduction. It is possible to have an opinion regarding the book's research questions, arguments, aims, and importance, but the details of the methodology are not shared with the readers.

In conclusion, it can be said that the book fills a gap in the Turkish foreign policy literature by analytically analyzing Turkey's relations with the two main actors in a consistent conceptual framework. It sheds light on the recent developments in Turkish foreign policy. It provides data to grasp the shift of axis discussions in Turkish foreign policy, and predict Turkey's future foreign policy maneuvers. I strongly recommend this book to students of international relations who want to learn about the fundamental dynamics of Turkish foreign policy, and its recent history and debates.

