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**Turkey's role in providing safety in the Black Sea Area; the unique position
of the Turkish army in the country's life**

A brief summary of a PhD study

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The choice of subject, formulating the main research aspects

1. The main reasons behind researching the problem

In May 2004; ten countries, - including Hungary - has joined the European Union. Most of them were NATO-members as well. It seems probable that even within this decade the two new NATO-members, Romania and Bulgaria will also join EU. A new geopolitical system is in the making. We avoid using here the word 'European', or 'Asian', as these categories do not cover the meaning of the new power centers. We can have Russia as the best example to this, which geographically but also on the basis of her culture, and mainly on her economical, political and social aspirations should certainly be characterized as 'European', - yet she will not join this group in the foreseeable future. On the other hand she will certainly play a dominant role in shaping the future of Asia.

In the past fifteen years political science feverishly tried to understand the new international power-structure, security political situation, created as a result of the implosion of the former Soviet Union. As elsewhere in the world, also in Hungary, a multitude of studies examined every aspect of the end of the bipolar era, - and the ascendance of the USA to the position of the singular super-power. As a result of the brutal manner of the Bush administration in exploiting its historical possibility, - Europe constantly and with dismay looking at the US. This in return may result in a mistaken perception that everything in this world is important from an American viewpoint only, and everyone should toe the line to avoid the wrath of the US administration declaring that 'who is not with us is against us' But all this is wrong, and mistaken. US administrations come and go and even their concepts change.

For a country like Hungary – apart from siding with the hegemonic of the times – it is equally important to follow, to examine, and to understand the roles of the long-term political, geopolitical trends that are affecting her neighborhood.

The Black Sea region, - geographically quite close to Hungary, - is a kind of text-book example of every possible international problem. One could say that by the disappearance of the Soviet Union it became the Sea of Problems. Turkey, so far the only NATO-member safeguarding western interests in the region is the most important player in the process of searching for new political, economic ways and even identity.

Now, after the demise of the Soviet Union, parallel by pushing for her most important quest i.e. reaching the full European country status by becoming EU-member, - is suddenly confronted by totally new possibilities, new avenues to become the pivotal power of the region in both political and economic sense.

It is important to remember that of military point of view this kind of leading role de facto already exists. She has the largest non-American military power in Europe, while demographically it takes about ten years by the present growth-rate to become the most-populous country in the EU. But of course, only if and when the so much coveted membership materialized.

By the time of closing this research the debating of the Turkish membership became extremely heated, as after so many years of postponements the time has arrived to make concrete decisions whether Turkey can start the final phase of negotiations that can result in a full membership, - even if the procedure may take a very long time.

Or can (dare?) Europe deny Turkey what she was promised and what the Turks feel they deserved.

2. Formulating the research problem

'Handling' a crisis can only be successful if we are prepared, and we know the best forms and ways of reacting to them.

There is a vast array of works, research studies and papers detailing every conceivable aspect of the crisis in the Balkans. Our area of interest however, - despite of the fact that the two areas are overlapping each other to a quite considerable extent, - is much less in the limelight of interest of researchers or scholars. Thus the result is that there is a very limited number of works were made so far as efforts not just to understand what exactly has happened, what is happening there, and what are the possible or probable outcomes, and most importantly; what are/could be the consequences to our security.

Therefore given the strict limits of this paper I opt to leave aside the problematic of the Balkans that is well documented already elsewhere. I focus rather the far less mentioned aspects of the Black Sea region and Turkey.

I do believe that it is timely to prepare a **detailed research** on these 'peripheral' areas of political studies. To investigate and examine their present situation, their chances for development, social problems, foreign relations. It is time to make an effort to mark the possible avenues of development to draw the attention to the various pitfalls, and also to examine that to what extent can sub-regional co-operation be a means of lessening the tensions. Or can it be an effective tool for promoting common, effective development strategies among the member states.

However the fundamental role in deciding the future of the region will be played by Turkey. Her choice of future role will effect the whole region in almost every sense. Thus the focus of our research must be the understanding of the complex elements of the Turkish social, political, and economic development. All this in a moment of history when Turkey and the Turkish society in under fundamental changes. These changes are so deep and wide that they can result in a totally new Turkey using her regional influence parallel by the European interests.

On the other hand however, several other scenarios are also possible. These would render the Black Sea area one of the most important sources of danger in international relations in the 21st century.

This is why I thought **timely** and **necessary** to carry out a research that helps us to **understand** the **forces and movers** shaping the present and the future of Turkey and the whole region.

The historic changes in the countries of the Black Sea region can not be of course viewed and/or explained in relation of Turkey only as the now unfolding global power-game between the USA, Russia, China, and the EU will be fundamental in the outcome, while the lesser players like Turkey, Ukraine, Iran or other countries can foster their interests only by siding with some of the main players. But for Hungary Turkey bears a special importance; as the Turks aspiring for the EU-membership, could represent best the European, and within this the Hungarian interests in the region. And this takes us back to our basic concept: **From security policy aspect, Turkey will play a decisively important role in the 21st century from European as well as from Hungarian point of view.**

Therefore I find it necessary to **investigate and evaluate** the social, political, and economic changes in Turkey, and the very special **role of the Turkish army** in these changes.

The first we have to understand is the special and unique way as the outdated and defunct Ottoman empire was transferred into a modern, secular state and in which the army plays such a peculiar role in the society's life, as in no other country. Therefore we must make a special effort to understand the society-organizing, and society-formulating role of the army as the present fundamental changes in these relations induce changes in the society itself. From scientific point of view the most controversial aspect of such researches is the parallel time-frame of events. Every science prefers to investigate things of the past; events, histories, activities etc. which are closed chapters by now.

In social sciences however one must accept the dangers resulting from studying present-day events. The reason is, the urgent need to find the right answers. I do strongly believe that the role of science is not primarily to explain the past properly, - but at least so importantly it is to find the right answers or alternatives to fundamental questions regarding present and indeed the future.

3. Hypotheses

1. The peculiar role of the Turkish army in shaping the history and the society was the result and connected to a special historical situation the country was in both externally and internally. Thus this unique leading and organizing role of the Turkish military in the life of the society during the past eighty years, is such a unique and non-reputable flow of events that can not serve as a model for other countries. And, more importantly, it is quite likely that by the changing of the circumstances that have underpinned it, - it will change itself too.
2. After eighty years of indirect, but still basically military rule, the military leadership now quickly making way to the democratic forces, as the would-be EU-membership is looked upon as a price that is worth anything. But in a paradoxical way all this doesn't necessarily results in the strengthening of democracy. Rather it can happen that such unwanted forces, - that had been oppressed so far by the efforts of the army, -can now surface, like Islam fundamentalism, pan-Turkish aspirations, or Kurdish efforts for separation.
3. If the EU-demanded democratization would lead to such disaster-scenarios, it could also change Turkey's role in the security situation in the are. The country that is situated between the three most dangerous conflicts of our times; could change her present political role as a broker of regional peace, and instead, following some real or perceived interest would take side in the conflicts thus contributing to the instability in the region.
On the other hand the long over due modernization of the Turkish society can not fall prey to such dilemmas
4. Across the whole Black Sea region our study can reveal enormous tensions, open or tacit hostilities, that can erupt at any time. Most of the hostilities have such complex character that any political solution seems unlikely. All this leads us to maintain that the region is going to be one of the main sources of danger during the 21st century. With the increased role in the world energy supply this can get even worse in twenty to thirty years from now. The area is going to mean danger for the whole Europe, for the EU, and also for Hungary. This is why we must

follow the events in Turkey, and in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea areas. It is a matter of national security.

Research method

Although **empirical methods** are always part of any kind of research, but the specific character of politology makes it necessary to use different methods in certain problems. Certain questions have to be examined with multiple methods, like **historical, documentary**, or **press-analysis** as well. The different approaches must be **synthesized**.

But apart from the desk –work an important source is in my work, is the manifold and complex information obtained in the various **international and security policy conferences**, I am privileged to participate. Not only the conference materials are useful, but I always try to obtain **personal views and the opinions** from experts and diplomats of these countries involved.

As to the **printed and electronic press**, it is fundamentally important to approach it with the element of healthy criticism, as any material dealing with international relations reflects always strongly the views and interests of its writer.

The structure of the research

The thesis consists of **six chapters**:

In the **first chapter** besides the purpose, the methods and the limitations of the research, I detailed my working hypotheses. There is also a part on the specific role of Islam, and also the different forms of Islam, resulting in different characteristics in different countries. This has been fundamentally important as the Islam in Turkey is totally different, and this difference is the basis of the specific characteristics of Turkey, including that peculiar relations between the army and society.

I also try to introduce here the rapidly changing, developing Turkey, searching for her new role and future in the totally changed international environment of the post-Soviet world.

The **second chapter** details the specific role of the military in the Turkish society. This is a totally unique and specific role. As a result of the peculiar historic circumstances, the military became not only the defender of the modern Turkey, but gradually transformed into the leading force in political and moral sense, the source and upholder of democratic values. Unlike other military regimes in Latin America and elsewhere it doesn't end up in a military dictatorship. On the contrary, the military from time to time acts as the savior of democracy against the corrupt politicians. To understand this military we have to understand the role of the legendary Kemal Atatürk and his legacy, - kemalism. Kemalism that became the basis and un-questionable tenet of modern Turkey. During the past eighty years this changed Turkey from a backward feudal state to a modern democratic country. But now new challenges emerged, questioning everything.

In the **third chapter** I examine the geopolitical circumstances. Turkey sees her position as a country sitting in the focus of the three worst danger-zones in our times, whereby almost every major international crisis is happening either on or near her borders. I try to understand

and expose those extremely complicated and interdependent problems that result in the so many and visibly un-solvable political, social and ethnic hostilities.

These conflicts are not only making the regional powers confronting each other but also the world's leading powers have conflicting interests as a result of in these areas both in global matters and in energy and raw material questions.. Maybe today these controversies are not too apparent yet, but their intensity will grow fast and parallel by the growth of the region's role and importance in the energy supply of the world..

For Turkish politics and security policy the relations to the USA have always had the utmost importance. Thus these problems, and those related to the Middle-East are especially dealt with.

In the fourth chapter I discuss the problematic of the relation between Turkey and Europe. The zeal by which Turkey is coveting the EU-membership makes these questions hotly debated, sometimes even at extreme level.

Is Turkey a European country, to start with? What will (would be) the consequence of their membership? Will it mean Europe flooded by the Islam? Should we accept it as a bitter price but what Europe has to pay for reasons of security policy, demography, or economics? Or is it a necessary part of development what offers advantages for each member, - albeit midst of new rules of the game?

What does (what did) Turkey to become 'European'? (or rather to become more acceptable for Europe) Not less but the fundamental transformation of her constitutional system. A full scale reform of the whole social structure. And all this in a rush, jut to convince the skeptics in the EU.

However the first worrying signs have already emerged: Turkey must widen democracy to an unprecedented level, and extend human rights when everywhere else in the world these got limited as a result of the drive against terrorism.

In the fifth chapter the fundamental changes in the role of the military are dealt with which has been so far the leading force in the society.

We have seen what a unique role the military played in Turkey's history during the past eighty years. First the successful war, liberating the country strenghtens its acceptance by the society, then with the leadership of Kemal Atatürk it is the force behind converting the whole society into what is the modern Turkey. And the military maintained this latter role even after the death of Kemal: it remained the defender of those reform and the democracy. Thus in a unique way, parallel by the traditional role of the defense of the realm, the military also undertook the safeguarding of the kemalist system of society as well. While such a domestic role of the military usually ends up as a military dictatorship, it did not happen in Turkey.

Today the feverish will to become acceptable by the EU, - and also as a result as a growing domestic pressure, - all this resulted in a race in re-drawing the whole legal system. This in return has fundamentally changed the legal and social framework of the Turkish society. The privileges of the military has been abolished step-by- step, as well as its means for the controlling of the society.

Apart from the inevitably positive changes one has to remind itself to the security situation of the country which warrants the existence of a strong military force. Therefore I summarize the recent and most important elements of development in the Turkish military first, - then I list the most important external and internal threats Turkey has to face.

Summary: The strategic future of Turkey from an European perspective; and the future role of the Turkish military.

Here I return to the **hypotheses** formulated in the onset, investigating what could be proved by the research and what not.

Also here is formulated that apart from the **practical results** of my work, which are those elements that I consider as

new scientific achievements.

The first of these is, that the real problems related to Turkey's accession to the EU will be rather different from what is so hotly debated nowadays at every level, i.e. whether the EU will be able to accept further masses of Turkish migrants or whether it would convert Europe into Islam.

The stark reality is, that a new, global power- game is unfolding, and it is quite likely that by the second/third decade of this new century the Black Sea region is becoming the new hotspot of power and energy politics of the major and lesser players.

This and the next ten years of the EU and of Turkey may open up many new possible avenues. Obviously many future scenarios are imaginable. It is not possible today to say, that if and when the Turkish accession happens, what form, which variation the events will take. I tried to draw up a few of the possible avenues and also investigate the consequences of each variation.

At the end of the day my conviction and conclusion is that both for Europe (Hungary included) and for Turkey the best scenario would be the full membership and integration to the EU.