



The Role of Turkey As a NATO Partner

By U.S. Army War College

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The Role of Turkey As a NATO Partner By U.S. Army War College

Turkey is strategically one of the most essential members of the NATO alliance. Lying astride the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, and between Europe and Asia, Turkey is the pivot point for pressures and counterpressures from both East and West. The Republic of Turkey was founded by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923 after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. With tenacity and exceptional singleness of purpose, Ataturk scrapped traditions long held sacrosanct by Ottoman society and forced the Turks to adopt a more westernized way of life. Ataturk instituted the reforms which coalesced the Turks into a proud, loyal, and nationalistic nation. The Turks have a traditional hatred for the Russians, hence of international communism. A charter member of the United Nations, Turkey has been an effective proponent of collective security and is a loyal member of NATO. The long-standing and emotion-packed Turko-Greek feud over Cyprus has caused international repercussions and lessened Turkey's effectiveness as a NATO partner. Turkey's predominantly agricultural economy provides one of the lowest per capita incomes in Europe. Although generally weak and currently heavily dependent upon foreign aid, Turkey's economy does have growth potential. Aware of the fact that she blocks the route of Russia's historic aspirations for expansion into the Middle East, Turkey maintains a military force of nearly half a million men and expends almost one-third of her annual budget for defense. Turkey is vital to the defense of NATO and the free world; indeed she is truly the "anchor" for the southern flank of NATO's defense line. If the Russians gain control of Turkey, they achieve access to the Mediterranean and gain control of the Middle East. If they control the Middle East, they can dominate Africa and outflank NATO and conquer the nations of Western Europe.

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