

The Analysis of Diplomatic Relations between Turkey and Greece Until 2021

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the diplomatic relations between Turkey and Greece which are constantly changing. The relationship between the two are volatile, where the relationship of cooperation and conflict occurred alternately over the years. Turkey and Greece have a dark history due to war, but in 1999 they decided to open diplomatic relations after implementing disaster diplomacy. However, the relationship between the two tends to lead to disputes over the territory of Cyprus, Aegean Sea, and Mediterranean Sea. Also land border problems due to global migration because both are neighboring countries. Although the relationship between Turkey and Greece often heat up, the two also carry out bilateral cooperation, especially in the economic field. This paper aims to analyze and explain the reasons behind the dynamics of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Greece since the opening of embassies in the two countries until now. To analyze this paper, rational choice theory and the concept of national interest are used based on a neorealism perspective.

I. Introduction

Turkey and Greece are neighbors country in the European Region. Turkey, whose capital is Ankara, is named the "Country of Two Continents" due to its location which is divided between two continents, namely Europe and Asia. Because its location is the great peninsula, Turkey is a bridge for these two continents. Geographically, Turkey is quite strategic because it is surrounded by seas, including the Black Sea, the

Mediterranean Sea, and the Aegean Sea. Turkey also being a cross country for the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, and the eastern Mediterranean. [1] While Greece, with its capital city Athens, is a peninsula and mountainous country located between Eastern and Central Europe on the Balkan Peninsula. Greece is a country with the longest coastline in Europe, bordered by the Ionian Sea, the Aegean Sea to the east, and the Mediterranean Sea to the south. [2]

Based on the location of Turkey and Greece where both country are linked to the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, it is becoming the center of conflict for both countries because of their respective interests.

The relationship between Greece and Turkey had been existed for quite a long time, but are not going well. These two countries had quite a dark history. Before the outbreak of World War I, the Turks had invaded the Greeks, but turned out to crime against humanity, which genocide with the systematic killing and ethnic cleansing of the Greeks. [3] After the incident, they led to what is now Greece. In 1919 a war broke out between Greece and the Turkish National Movement until 1922 which was later dubbed the Asia Minor War. [4]

Their relationship were in conflict again after the ethnic conflict occurred in Cyprus. There were armed conflicts between ethnic Turks-Cypriots and ethnic Greek-Cypriots in 1963-1964 and 1974 due to Turkey's invasion of Cyprus and a military coup. [5] This shows that disputes and rivalries between Greece and Turkey had existed for a long time. The dark history between these two countries has

resulted a relatively disharmonious relationship between Turkey and Greece.

Although the history of relations between Turkey and Greece has not been harmonious and tends to conflict, the two countries have finally decided to establish diplomatic relations. In the summer on 1999 a successive earthquakes strike in Istanbul, Turkey on August 17 and Athens, Greece on September 7 which caused severe damage and thousands of people died. [6] These two countries then gave each other assistance which was later referred to as Disaster Diplomacy. [7]

Disaster diplomacy has had a good influence on relations between Turkey and Greece. The two countries then opened diplomatic relations. Turkey has one embassy in Athens and four consulate generals in Thessaloniki, Rhodes, Komotini and Athens Greece. [8] Greece has one embassy in Ankara and three consulate generals in Edirne, Istanbul, and Izmir, Turkey. [9]

Diplomatic relations between Greece and Turkey are volatile. This is because the conflict history, but then they worked together to solve common problems. However, relations between the two countries did not run well.

Dispute and conflict occurred while they try to build the cooperation and relationship. There are six central aspects of the relationship between Turkey and Greece, which are domestic politics and political leadership, Turkey's relationship with the European Union, defense economics, the conflict with Cyprus, minority rights, and the background of the dispute that has never been resolved. [10]

The problems of Greece and Turkey have never been resolved until now because of migrant problems, the Cyprus conflict, misunderstandings, and fighting over each other's rights in the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean Sea is rich of natural gas, oil and hydrocarbon resources. [11] While the Aegean Sea, Turkey and Greece are often claim over maritime boundaries. [12] Both Turkey and Greece compete to claim drilling rights in the sea and are often at odds over each other's maritime boundaries.

Due to diplomatic relations between Turkey and Greece continue to changes and develop until 2021, in this paper the author is interested in discussing the dynamics of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Greece.

II. Conceptual Framework

In explaining the problems in this paper which will analyze the dynamics of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Greece, the author uses a neorealism perspective by using rational choice theory and the concept of national interest. One of the important figures who sparked this perspective was Kenneth Waltz in his book entitled Theory of International Politics. [13]

A. Rational Choice Theory

According to the neorealism perspective, the state is the main and only actor who is also referred to as a rational actor because in making decisions and cooperating must be based on logic and benefit the national interests of the country. [14] According to rational choice theory, the state in making decisions will be based on rational choices. [13] So this theory is based on rationality. This means that the state will weigh the pros and cons and the benefits to be gained from the decision. This advantage is intended to achieve the national interest of a country.

In this case, rational choice theory in the perspective of neorealism is used to discuss the reasons why actors make

rational decisions among the available choices. So that decisions are made based on alternative choices that are most beneficial to the interests of the country.

In the perspective of neorealism, the world is described in a state of anarchy so that the state does not always get the desired benefits. [15] Therefore, it is necessary to rationally consider the advantages and disadvantages that will be obtained because all countries will compete to fulfill their respective national interests. This theory explains why actors take actions and decisions.

B. Concept of National Interest

Every actor's decision is motivated by the goal of achieving the national interest. Hans J. Morgenthau likens the national interest or national interest as a tool for a country to gain power so that it can control other countries. [16]

The relationship between national interests and power is directly proportional and interrelated. According to neorealists, when the state aims to pursue power and to achieve power using the national interest as an instrument, there will be competition, competition, and even conflict in an anarchic world. [17]

III. Analysis

Diplomatic relations between Turkey and Greece had been established since 1999. This was marked by the opening of embassies and several consulate generals in their respective countries. The relationship between the two countries has never in good term. Greece and Turkey have a volatile relationship. They have diplomatic relations and cooperate, but disputes, competition, misunderstandings, and conflicts often characterize their relationship.

The earthquake shook Turkey and Greece in 1999 made those countries who had been at loggerheads since 1919 cooperate through Disaster Diplomacy. Turkey and Greece provide each other with economic assistance, medical personnel, and medicine. [7] Furthermore, Turkey and Greece held bilateral cooperation through the High-Level Cooperation Council (HLCC) on 14-15 May 2010 in Athens, 4 March 2013 in Istanbul, 6 December 2014 in Athens, and 8 March 2016 in Izmir which was attended by Prime Minister Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs respectively. [18] Bilateral cooperation in the economic field made Turkey a major export partner of Greece in 2012-

2014. Based on data at the end of 2014, the bilateral trade volume between the two reached 5.6 billion USD. The two countries also invest in each other (foreign direct investment). [19]

However, in 2016 a dispute occurred between Turkey and Greece due to the issue of global migration which became a hot issue in the European Union. In the journal written by Birce Demiryontar, until 2015 1,032,408 Syrians had migrated to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea, with 80% of migrants entering Greek territory. This caused chaos on the Greek border because of its messy asylum system. [20] The European Union then intervened to overcome this problem by strengthening the agreement (EU-Turkey Statement) in March 2016 because Turkey is a vital country in the migration route for Greece. This agreement is the second readmission agreement between Turkey and the European Union which discusses the return of illegal immigrants and migrants who exceed the European border to Turkey. [21]

Then in 2018, planes carrying Greek diplomat and Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras bound for Iran were banned to refuel at Rhodes Island. Turkey claimed

the island is a demilitarized zone. In addition to prohibiting landing, Turkey also banned the aircraft from flying in their airspace. [22] This incident made diplomatic relations between the two quite heated. In the same year, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other ministers of the two countries met each other on the sidelines of international events to discuss cooperation. In addition, the Prime Minister of Greece, Alexis Tsipras, also received the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, at the NATO Summit and UN General Assembly which were held on 11-12 July and 25 September 2018. President Erdogan also received PM Alexis Tsipras' visit to Turkey on 5 -6 February 2019 well. [23]

The dispute between Turkey and Greece occurred again in February 2020 when President Erdogan officially opened the border with Greece and allowed refugees and asylum seekers from Syria to cross the border into Europe. Two weeks since the opening of the border, there have been 147,132 asylum seekers who to refuel had crossed the Turkish-Greek border. [24]

The conflict between Greece and Turkey is further complicated by the problems in the Mediterranean Sea. In

August 2020 Turkey claimed to have found an energy source in the Mediterranean Sea Region and continued energy exploration activities in the region. Greece denounced the move because the area drilled by Turkey is claimed as part of the Greek continent. Relations between the two countries became heated after each sent warships to the Mediterranean Sea Region. [25] There have also been tensions between Turkey and Greece over maritime boundary disputes (Exclusive Economic Zones) and drilling rights. At the same time, Turkey also sent diplomatic notes to the embassies of Greece, Israel, and the European Union to ask Turkey for permission before carrying out activities in the Eastern Mediterranean region. [26]

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis urged Turkey to find a solution to reduce the tension in the Mediterranean Sea Region can be resolved diplomatically. The two countries then agreed to hold a diplomatic dialogue to resolve disputes regarding their maritime conflicts. [27]

The earthquake hit Izmir, Turkey and the islands of Samos and Crete, Greece on October 30, 2020 made the relations between Turkey and Greece

improve. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis contacted President Erdogan by telephone to express his condolences. Greek Foreign Minister, Nikos Dendias, also contacted Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, who promised to provide assistance to Turkey to overcome the impact of the earthquake. [28] This then gave birth to Disaster Diplomacy which was established in 1999.

But in February 2021, their relations were heating up because Greece sent fighter jets to the Aegean Sea in the Eastern Mediterranean. As a result, Turkey accused Greece of harassing their ships in these waters. Through the Ministry of Defense, Turkey conveyed that four Greek F-16 fighter jets had harassed the Turkish *Cesne* Ship in the North Aegean Sea. However, this allegation has been denied by the Greek Ministry of Defense, which states that its Air Force is undergoing military training and is not near the Turkish ship. However, Turkey actually responded to this by continuing the hydrographic survey until March 2, 2021 in the Aegean Sea. To solve this problem, the Foreign Ministers and Ambassadors of Turkey and Greece held a meeting in Athens on March 16, 2021 to discuss issues in the

Aegean Sea. This meeting was held formally as a form of negotiations between the two countries. [29]

Based on the chronology of relations between Turkey and Greece mentioned above, it shows that diplomatic relations between Turkey and Greece are volatile. However, compared to cooperation, the relationship between the two is more likely to lead to disputes and conflicts. Based on the perspective of neorealism, this world is anarchic, it will give birth to competition between countries to lead to conflict to gain power so that it can fulfill the national interests of the country. [17]

Turkey and Greece who fought each other for the territory of Cyprus in 1963 until now the aim is to control the territory and natural resources of the country. Until finally Cyprus was divided into two regions. Both of them are also fighting over territorial areas and maritime borders in the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. This is because both have enormous underwater energy resources. Both of them are competing to dominate it until there is often friction that causes tension in their diplomatic relations.

As the main actors in International Relations, Turkey and Greece make

their decisions based on rational choice theory as rational actors. Where the state as a decision maker will make decisions from the available alternative options that will benefit the country to the maximum by considering the benefits and losses received in order to fulfill the goals and national interests of the country. [13] Either decisions that lead to cooperation or even cause conflict between the two. The decisions taken are rational choices that justify the decision maker's actions and decisions are something that brings benefits to the country.

Those can be seen from Turkey's decision to cooperate with Greece when it was hit by an earthquake in 1999 and 2020 through disaster diplomacy. Even though at that time the relationship between the two was heating up due to disputes in the Mediterranean Sea. The conflict in this area is also based on the wealth of natural resources and underwater energy. Both Turkey and Greece are competing with each other for control of the Mediterranean Sea region to this day.

IV. Conclusion

The chronology of relations between Turkey and Greece mentioned above shows that diplomatic relations

between Turkey and Greece are volatile. Historically, the two have had conflicts, so they collaborated when an earthquake occurred by conducting disaster diplomacy. However, until 2021 the relationship between the two is likely to lead to disputes and conflicts rather than bilateral cooperation. The dispute between Turkey and Greece is inseparable from the national interests of their respective countries.

In International Relations Turkey and Greece are the main actors according to neorealism perspective. The state as a rational actor will make decisions based on the goals and national interests of the country. This decision is based on rational choice theory, namely by considering the advantages and disadvantages that will be received by each country. Both Turkey and Greece will choose a decision that benefits their country to the maximum.

Even though Turkey and Greece have often clashed leading to conflict, neither of them has expelled an ambassador or a diplomat. This actually becomes a "tool" as a negotiation for both parties when a dispute occurred.

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