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BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY'S ROLE AND INFLUENCE IN THE EXCLUSION OF GREECE AND TÜRKIYE FROM NATO, 1948–1949

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ABSTRACT

When NATO was created on 4 April 1949 by the United States, Britain, Canada, and several Western European countries with the aim to contain the Soviet Union's expansion of power, it was rather peculiar that Greece and Türkiye were excluded, while their Mediterranean neighbour, Italy, was included in this new military organisation. As Greece suffered from the communist insurgents in the Greek Civil War (1946–1949), and Türkiye was unceasingly under Soviet military and diplomatic threat over the provinces of Kars and Ardahan and the Turkish Straits settlements (1946–1953), both seemingly had valid reasons for being included in NATO. However, Britain, one of the renowned founding members of NATO, determinedly repudiated to invite Greece and Türkiye to join NATO. This paper analyses the reasons for Britain to deny these countries NATO membership. The existing literature on this exclusion subject argues that the geographical location and the forthcoming Mediterranean Pact were two apparent

causes that influenced Britain to reject Greece and Türkiye's NATO membership. This paper however, investigates other rejection reasons that have yet to be studied by previous scholars. This paper offers an analysis of Britain's objections to Greece and Türkiye's NATO membership during NATO's creation years through the study of British primary historical records. The finding shows that Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin was eager to have NATO promptly formed, and he believed the proposal for Greece and Türkiye's inclusion in NATO would hamper this aim, since these two countries were in a dispute over Cyprus. Bevin reckoned that the bitter relationship between Greece and Türkiye over Cyprus would alarm the delegations, hence prolonging the discussions that would lead to further postponement of NATO's ratification. Thus, Bevin's *démarche* was not to propose the inclusion of Greece and Türkiye in NATO at the time.

Keywords: Bevin, Greco-Turkish, Cyprus issue, delays in NATO's creation, exclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is an intergovernmental military cooperation between 12 countries that was formed in Washington D.C. on 4 April 1949. The original 12 countries were the United States [hereafter the U.S.], Britain, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Portugal, the Netherlands, Iceland, Norway, and Italy. NATO's membership could be differentiated in two categories. The first is a group of seven countries that are considered the founding members due to their effort in negotiating and formulating the treaty—Britain, the U.S., Canada, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The second is a group of five invited members that were qualified to become members based on two considerations: firstly, countries that were facing political and diplomatic threats from the Soviet Union, namely, Italy, Denmark, and Norway; and secondly, countries that could provide valuable and strategic assets for NATO's military purposes, namely, Iceland and Portugal (Reid, 1977). In view of NATO membership considerations for Italy, Denmark, and Norway, it seems that the founding members should have also extended the membership invitation to Greece and Türkiye given that both these countries were also facing political and diplomatic threats from the Soviet Union.

In Greece, a major civil war erupted due to the conflict between the Greek Royalist government and the communist-dominated left-wing resistance, the EAM (*Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo*—National Liberation Front)/ ELAS (*Ellinikós Laikós Apeleftherotikós Stratós*—Greek People’s Liberation Army), which received military and political aid from the neighbouring communist satellite countries of the Soviet Union, that is, Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia (Mat Enh, 2010; FO371/73045, 1948). Although there was no apparent involvement by the Soviet Union in this Civil War, the Western powers, particularly the U.S. and Britain were convinced these communist satellite countries received instructions from Moscow regarding their assistance to communist insurgents in the Greek Civil War. This was due to the Soviet policy in Eastern Europe that preferred countries which bordered the communist countries which had non anti-communist governments (Mat Enh, 2010; Boyle, 1990). Britain and the U.S. “believed Moscow [the Soviet Union] would welcome a communist-controlled Greece if, as seemed likely, the Royalist government collapsed” (Dockrill & Hopkins, 2006). Meanwhile, in Türkiye, the Soviet Union strongly demanded for Kars and Ardahan, the provinces in northern Türkiye, to be returned to them. Apart from the issue pertaining to the provinces, the Soviet Union also put an immense pressure on Türkiye regarding the settlement of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits by forcing Türkiye to yield to their demands, which were: 1) allowing them a base for their navy vessels and 2) providing full authorisation in using the straits (Rubin, 1980).

Focusing on the commencement of the Cold War from the perspective of the British school, it can be argued that Soviet involvement in the Greek Civil War (1946–1949) and the Turkish Straits crisis (1946–1953) was a keystone in the introduction of the containment policy, namely, the Truman Doctrine in 1947 (Hussain, 2022a; Mason, 2010). Nevertheless, while crises in Greece and Türkiye paved the way for NATO’s existence, both were excluded when this new military organisation was founded in April 1949 (Hussain, 2018). It should be pointed here that Greece and Türkiye were significant for Britain with regard to its geostrategic and security interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Therefore, it was puzzling that both countries were declined membership by the founding members, particularly Britain. Britain’s determination to deny Türkiye and Greece entry into NATO appeared to be a contradiction in terms of its geostrategic and security interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The geographical location of Türkiye and Greece in the northeast of the

Mediterranean Sea made these two countries tremendously significant to Britain for a number of reasons: firstly, they were vital to British lines of communication with its colonial empire in the East (DEFE 5/3, 1947; Mason, 2015); secondly, they were vital as a linking route between Britain and its oil reserves in the Middle East (DEFE 5/3, 1947); and thirdly, both countries possessed a number of strategic bases for military facilities that could enhance British stronghold and predominance in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and the Eastern Empire (CAB 133/86, 1946; Syazwanis Shukri, 2019). Britain's persistence to keep Greece and Türkiye out of NATO was surprising when the aforementioned aspects are taken into consideration.

A substantial amount of previous work in written material can be found from the perspective of Britain on the exclusion of Türkiye and Greece from NATO during the negotiation years (1948-1949). This literature has considered two reasons: the first is the geographical location of Türkiye and Greece as the main justification for the founding members, specifically, Britain, not to suggest the inclusion of Greece and Türkiye in NATO. Scholars such as Athanassopoulou (2012), Baharçipek (2010), Gheciu (2005), and Gonlubol (1975) argued that the founding members claimed that Türkiye and Greece were regarded as geographically unfit to join the Western military organisation, which covered countries near to the Atlantic Ocean. According to McGhee (1990), the founding members had only considered NATO's membership for countries in the North Atlantic region, thus, Türkiye and Greece were deemed unqualified to become NATO members. Instead, Britain wanted to have Greece and Türkiye to be a part of its forthcoming plan, namely, a Mediterranean Pact (Athanassopoulou, 1996; Athanassopoulou, 2012; Baharçipek, 2010; Gheciu, 2005; Gonlubol, 1975; McGhee, 1990). These scholars argue that the matter of the geographical location of Türkiye and Greece and a Mediterranean Pact were the two considerations that shaped Britain's stance on not inviting these countries to NATO membership during initial negotiations for creating NATO between 1948 and early 1949.

Nonetheless, these aforementioned scholars have overlooked other reasons that also contributed to Britain's decision of not including Türkiye and Greece in NATO: Ernest Bevin, the Head of the Foreign Office, who was the Foreign Secretary, wanted NATO to be promptly formed, and he believed the Cyprus problem between Greece and Türkiye would jeopardise his desire. Previous scholars paid little

attention to the hostility between Greece and Türkiye over Cyprus, which, ultimately, cost them the opportunity of joining NATO. This Greco-Turkish Cyprus issue occurred in the remoteness of the Cold War considerations and was the consequence of the local dynamics between these two countries, thus contributing new knowledge to the available literature. The scarcity of existing literature on the perspective of Britain, as seen by the inner circle, especially when referring to the British Foreign Secretary, the Cyprus dispute, and the issue of NATO membership of Türkiye and Greece, means that there is a case for this study to provide important contribution of knowledge on the issue of Türkiye and Greece's omission from NATO. Previous debates were mainly concerned with the general view of Britain as a member of NATO. The broad nature of this literature has often led to misunderstandings about the position of Türkiye, Greece, and Cyprus in relation to British foreign policy. Thus, previous research has been inclined to underestimate and overlook the importance of the British Foreign Secretary's influence and the Cyprus dispute on events and circumstances that surrounded the decision-making on the exclusion of Türkiye and Greece from NATO membership during the initial negotiation years.

In consideration of the lack of thorough discussion of the omission of Türkiye and Greece from being invited to NATO membership and from Britain's point of view, the objective of this paper is to study this matter from Britain's perspective, specifically, Bevin, the Head of Foreign Office, who was also the Foreign Secretary. This paper will elucidate that Bevin was adamant on wanting to exclude Türkiye and Greece from NATO, albeit the geostrategic significance of Greece and Türkiye. This was because he was predisposed to the belief that such a proposal would pose another hindrance to the negotiation process, hence ruining his ambition in bringing NATO into existence promptly. To further illuminate this matter, the two correlated issues will be discussed. The first is the issue of the delays that occurred throughout the negotiations. The second is the issue of the Greco-Turkish Cyprus discord that arose by the end of 1948. By focusing on the issues of the delays and the local dynamics between Türkiye and Greece over Cyprus, this paper shows that there are more exclusion reasons on the British side besides the geographical matter and the new plan for a Mediterranean Pact that could be found in the existing literature.

Since the focal point of this paper is concerned with the question of the omission of Greece and Türkiye from NATO from Britain's

perspective, specifically, Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, who was the Head of the Foreign Office, cursory review of Bevin's background is necessary.

Ernest Bevin: From General Secretary of Transport and General Workers' Union (1922–1940) to British Foreign Secretary (1945–1951)

When *The Times* printed an account of Bevin's life and his character in an obituary, Bevin was defined as having "characteristically British qualities—courage, frankness, shrewdness, and practicality" (*The Times*, 16 April 1951). Bevin's self-confidence and character were perhaps built through tough experiences and harsh circumstances from childhood to adulthood. Bevin's early life story had been well-told by several scholars, for example, Bullock (1960), Weiler (1993), Stephens (1981), Murphy (1948), Radice (2008), and Saville (1993). All these writers came to the same conclusion that Bevin's childhood left a mark on him, developing his charismatic character. For instance, during his early life with his mother, Diana Mercy Bevin, who was of strong character and full of self-confidence, they lived in poverty and insecurity. These circumstances had a significant influence on the development of Bevin's character (Weiler, 1993). Stephens (1981) noted that the odd jobs Bevin undertook while living with his half-sister, like peeling potatoes for dinner and cleaning the family's shoes before going to school, would feature prominently in his future political career. Bevin showcased his potato peeling skills during the Shaw Inquiry, where he prepared dinner for the Judge and with his eye on the value of publicity had himself photographed peeling the potatoes, clad in a long apron (Stephens, 1981). Bevin turned his shoe-cleaning experience to an even better advantage, that is, he stated that he conceived most of his splendid ideas while cleaning his boots. For instance, Bevin told M. Molotov (the Soviet Foreign Minister) that an idea for breaking a deadlock at a Foreign Ministers' Conference had come to him while cleaning his boots that morning (Williams, 1952).

Bevin's first step towards his political career began when he joined the Bristol Socialist Society and became the secretary of the Bristol Right-to-Work Committee. His job experiences within this committee, such as leading deputations, organising demonstrations, and addressing speeches to the public, gave him valuable experience and knowledge about politics (Weiler, 1993). In the summer of 1910, a leader of the

Dock, Wharf, Riverside, and General Labourers' Union asked Bevin to organise a local relief effort for the striking Avonmouth Dockers and to organise the carters as a branch of the Dockers' Union (Radice, 2008). Even though Bevin was not a member of the Dock, he was selected on account of his reputation as a previous organiser of the Right-to-Work Committee campaign. Bevin's initiatives to call a meeting with the local carters led to the establishment of the Bristol Carmen's Branch of the Dock, where Bevin became its first Chairman.

According to Stephens (1981), "joining the Dockers' Union and becoming chairman of the Carters' branch was the most decisive step in Bevin's career. It set him on the path which ultimately led him to become the Foreign Secretary." Bevin played an active role throughout his membership in the Dockers' Union. Bevin was "the key figure in the series of union mergers which created the giant Transport and General Workers Union, whose first general secretary he became in 1921" (Stephens, 1981). Bevin held this position until 1940 and later became a member of Churchill's wartime coalition government as the Minister of Labour and National Service. After the Labour Party won the general election, the Prime Minister Clement Attlee assigned him the role of Foreign Secretary, a job he held until he resigned on 9 March 1951 due to his poor state of health. Bevin died on 14 April 1951, 36 days after his resignation.

As this paper argues the resoluteness of Bevin to bring NATO into existence as quickly as possible had propelled him to deny an invitation to Greece and Türkiye to join NATO during its formation, the delay problems which caused a hindrance in NATO's formation are important for discussion. Discussing the delayed matters and how Bevin reacted to resolve them will subtly prove the eagerness of Bevin in having NATO promptly formed. Hence, Bevin's refusal to bring up the matters regarding Greece and Türkiye's NATO membership was due to the fact that this would cause another delay to NATO's creation, which he wanted to avoid.

NATO's Arrangements Years, 1948–1949: The U.S. Hesitation, the Issue of the Delays, and Bevin's Manoeuvre to Overcome Delay Issues

The founding members took more than a year in negotiating and formulating the treaty of the new military alliance of NATO. The

negotiation process started in early March 1948 to late March 1949 and the signatory ceremony of the pact was held in early April 1949. The negotiation process was long and complicated because of two major circumstances – firstly, the U.S. delegations’ delaying attitude, and secondly, the differences in opinions between the delegations over Italian membership. These two circumstances dragged out the negotiations longer and the completion of this military treaty, which initially had been anticipated to be completed by 1 February 1949, had to be postponed to early April 1949 (FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, 1948, p. 317; FO800/454/Def-69, 1948). As stated by scholar Folly (1988), the British was disappointed with the procrastinating move by the U.S. after the Pentagon Talk.

It should be mentioned here that Bevin was the person who initiated and coined the idea of NATO (FO371/71458, 1948). Given the recent development of the Communist threat in Czechoslovakia, Norway, and Finland, Bevin was adamant that NATO had to be formed promptly (FO371/71458, 1948). However, the progress was retarded by four issues of delay. Firstly, after the Pentagon Talks, the U.S. refrained from initiating the next talk—The Washington Talks, swiftly. Secondly, the U.S. delegates procrastinated on the progress of the Washington Talks after it was initiated. Thirdly, the dispute over Article 2 of the treaty was another matter to resolve. Fourthly, the hurdle concerning the membership of Italy need to be addressed. Bevin expressed dismay at the U.S. delaying attitude by saying that he regarded their “attitude as most disappointing” (FO371/68068A/AN1547, 1948). Bevin, nevertheless, vehemently wanted to resolve the delays as he reckoned that “the morale of Western Europe might deteriorate” if the U.S. hesitated in supporting the military at this crucial time (FO371/68068A/AN1547, 1948).

It should be pointed out here that although Bevin did not participate or attend the Washington Talks himself, he monitored the talks closely through Sir Oliver Franks, the British representative at the said talks.. The method and manner that Bevin administered the Pentagon Talks, the Washington Talks and the last-minute talks in early 1949 by giving instructions to the British delegation could be found in the Foreign Office record of FO371 under the files 73072, 73073, 73074, 73075, 73077, 73081, 79221, 79222, 79228 and 79229. These records show the British delegations consistently sought Bevin’s advice on what to recommend and what to do in settling any arising conflicts. Therefore,

it is clear that every view, opinion, suggestion, opposition, and decision that was put up by the British delegation in the talks came from Bevin. Hence, the decisions made by the British delegation during the talks were apparently Bevin's decisions. It seems that Bevin was held accountable for the omission of Türkiye and Greece from NATO during NATO's creation years, as he believed the proposal to include these two Mediterranean countries would bring another unnecessary delay into NATO's creation.

As Bevin was eager to have NATO formed swiftly, he did the utmost possible to beat these delaying attitudes of the U.S. Regarding the first delay issue, there were three major reasons that influenced the U.S. not to call for the Washington Talks promptly. The first was the divided opinions among the U.S. State Department officials over the idea of NATO regarding to the disagreements between pro-new military pact, supported by Hickerson and Theodore C. Achilles (the Director of the Division of Western European Affairs) and anti-new military pact, led by George F. Kennan (the Director of the Policy Planning Staff in the U.S. State Department) and Charles E. Bohlen (the State Department Counsellor). The next issue was the U.S. wanted to give full attention to the presidential elections of 1948 first before concluding any new military pact, while the third reason was the issue of Palestine, in which Bevin proclaimed support for the Arabs instead of the Jews who were supported by the U.S. (FO371/68068A/AN1412, 1948; Hussain, 2018). In order to manoeuvre the U.S. refusal to call for the next talks, Bevin adopted diplomatic pressure on the U.S. by repeatedly sending messages to Robert A. Lovett (Undersecretary of State in the U.S. State Department) and his superior, George C. Marshall (the U.S. Secretary of State), as well as the State Department officials that kept rejecting NATO—Kennan and Bohlen, and explained to them the urgency for the prompt formation of NATO (FO371/73069/Z3941, 1948). Regarding the issue of Palestine, Bevin agreed to compromise on this issue which suited the U.S. preference (FO800/483/NA, 1948). Unfortunately, Marshall still believed that the finest time to continue the talks was after the presidential elections of November 1948 (FO371/73070/Z4673, 1948). Thus, there was nothing Bevin could do to change the delaying attitude of the U.S. at the time. Eventually, the recent development in Germany, which was the Berlin Blockade inflicted by the Soviet Union on 24 June 1948, managed to force the U.S. to abandon its hesitance and called for the next talks, namely, the Washington Talks (FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, 1948, p. 139).

Regarding the second delay issue, there were four delaying tactics adopted by the U.S. delegates. Firstly, the U.S. delegates remained silent throughout the first five talks by not offering any proposal. Secondly, the U.S. delegates refused to have a serious talk before obtaining information about the military capabilities of the Brussels countries. Thirdly, the U.S. delegates declined to make a clear statement regarding the U.S. military support for the Brussels countries before the talks could proceed to the other issues. Fourthly, the U.S. delegates deferred to carry on the talks until the French delegates abandoned their government's demand for short-term military, a succour from the U.S. to France, which involved an immediate manoeuvre of the U.S. military personnel and supplies to France (FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, 1948, pp. 229-231). Since Bevin had always insisted on having NATO formed without delay, he usually reacted promptly to each delaying tactic in order to prod the U.S. delegates to expedite the negotiation process. Bevin, however, could not do anything about the first delaying gambit because the Brussels and the British delegations in the talks just realised it after the fifth meeting (FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, 1948, pp. 148-182). For the second and the third delaying tactics, Bevin adopted a diplomacy *démarche* by welcoming military experts of the U.S. and Canadian governments to London so that they could see a complete picture of a permanent military committee of the Brussels powers themselves (FO371/73072/Z5616, 1948). To mitigate the fourth delay, Bevin sent his best negotiator, Mr. Gladwyn Jebb (Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office) to France and convinced Jean Chauvel (the Secretary-General of the French Foreign Office) and Robert Schuman (the French Foreign Minister) to cease to demand for short-term military aid to France (FO371/73075/Z6947, 1948; FO371/73075/Z6999, 1948). Bevin's effort was fruitful when France agreed to retract its insistence on short-term military aid. In an offer to solve the hurdle caused by the French government, Bevin demonstrated his persistence to nudge the U.S. delegates to put an end to their delaying tactics and to allow the negotiations to continue.

For the third delay issue, that is, the dispute over Article 2 of the treaty, the matter also caused the negotiations to extend further when the Canadian delegates insisted on including this article while the British delegates and their superior, Bevin, were against it. Article 2 of the Atlantic Pact was about a partnership among NATO members related to matters of economic, cultural, and social domains. Bevin

argued that this article duplicated the framework of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) and the machinery of the Brussels Treaty, which was just starting to function effectively (FO371/73081/Z9294, 1948). However, given that the negotiations had already entered the following year and were in the last stage of talks, Bevin adopted a tack of tolerance, which he agreed to comply with Article 2 to avoid the talks becoming longer just for a minor issue (FO371/79228/Z1741, 1949). Bevin's decision to forgo Article 2 could also be considered as manoeuvre in avoiding further delay in NATO's creation.

In addressing the fourth delay issue, the question of Italian membership was raised by the French delegates shortly after the issue regarding Article 2 was resolved. The French delegates complicated this matter further by linking these requests to Norwegian membership and threatened to withdraw from this military pact if their demands were refuted (FO371/79221/Z283, 1949). Britain was strongly "opposed to Italian membership on the grounds that it was not an Atlantic country and could be a liability to the alliance because of its domestic difficulties" (FO371/79221, 1949). Since this last-minute hurdle prodded the delegates to continue discussions, hence the resolution of the pact had to be postponed again, Bevin therefore adopted another strategy of tolerance by agreeing to retract Britain's opposition to Italian membership and also got ready to welcome the addition of Algeria in the NATO pledge in order to prevent further delay in forming NATO (FO371/79221, 1949). Meanwhile, the U.S. eventually accepted Italy into NATO and Algeria to be covered by NATO pledge because of the French ultimatum over its own NATO membership, which was considered by the U.S. "as nothing short of blackmail" (FO371/79229, 1949).

The readiness of Bevin to accept Italian membership and Algeria to be covered by the Atlantic treaty proved that Bevin was ready to compromise on any conflicting issue. In brief, throughout NATO's negotiation years, there were a number of delays that occurred. Every time this happened, Bevin would step forward with any appropriate solutions to overcome these unpleasant circumstances. Bevin was really keen to make sure NATO was successfully formed without any plausible delays. In dealing with obstacles that prevented NATO from being established swiftly, Bevin had repeatedly tolerated and compromised on arising problems. It seems that because of the long,

difficult, and complicated process of forming NATO, Bevin was willing to tolerate and accept Italy, leaving Greece and Türkiye out of NATO.

Since Italy, one of the Mediterranean countries, had secured its NATO membership, seemingly, the member countries' geographical location was no longer a matter of concern to Britain or Bevin. However, the main question was why Bevin did not invite the other two Mediterranean countries, Greece and Türkiye, to join NATO, too? As this paper argues that the Cyprus issue between Greece and Türkiye was another underlying justification for Bevin to exclude Greece and Türkiye from NATO, it is worth explaining the background of the Cyprus issue in order to understand how this matter affected the chances of both countries in becoming NATO members. Bevin's position in matters related to Cyprus, such as the future of Cyprus is also highlighted. The discussion on this matter will help to understand how Bevin had made the decision to not propose for Greece and Türkiye's NATO membership at the time this military pact was being discussed in Washington.

Bevin, Cyprus, and the Greco-Turkish Cyprus Issue

Britain became a sovereign power in Cyprus in 1878 when the Sublime Porte of Türkiye gave the island to Britain so that it could execute its duty of assisting the Sublime Porte in combating possible Soviet encroachment (Hill, 1952). Subsequently, in 1925, Cyprus was declared a British Crown Colony. Since becoming a sovereign power in Cyprus, Britain began to encounter opposition from the islanders who demanded self-determination. In addition to this demand, the biggest ethnic group in Cyprus, who were the descendants of Greece, that is, the Greek Cypriots, strongly demanded *enosis* (union) with their mother country, Greece. This demand became stronger in the 1940s when Greece pledged its support for the *enosis* movement. However, because of its location "which is at the crossroad of the sea routes of three continents - Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East" the island was regarded by Britain, specifically, Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister, as "an important British possession although it was a military backwater" (Ball, 2010). Therefore, Britain refused to succumb to *enosis* demand throughout the 1940s.

However, the future of Cyprus issue arose again when the Labour Party came as a new government in 1945. The Labour ministers, who

were also the Cabinet committee members such as Prime Minister Attlee, Foreign Secretary Bevin, and Colonial Secretary George H. Hall, became the new main characters in administrating the issues related to Cyprus together with the Foreign Office, the Chiefs of Staff (hereafter COS) and the Colonial Office. According to Hatzivassiliou (1997), “sometimes, the Cabinet committees dealt with the ‘Cyprus question’ directly without any input from the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, and the COS.” Most of the decisions on Cyprus were made by the Cabinet committees, namely, Foreign Secretary Bevin, not the Foreign Office, the COS, or the Colonial Office (Kelling, 1990). As both the Greek Cypriots and Greece imposed diplomatic pressure on Britain regarding *enosis* after World War II ended, this caused the newly elected Labour government to be in a dilemma, whether to remain in Cyprus or to give up Britain’s strategic value in Cyprus by returning Cyprus back to Greece.

In his early duty in managing Cyprus affairs, Bevin was hesitant to hand Cyprus back to Greece because the situation in Greece had worsened due to the Greek Civil War (Bullock, 1983). According to Hussain (2022b) “Bevin expected that Greece would not be able to guarantee Cyprus’ security if Cyprus was conceded to Greece at the time.” Bevin, therefore, preferred Cyprus to remain under British rule. Moreover, the opinion of the COS was that Britain’s stronghold in Cyprus could help in maintaining British predominance in the Middle East while securing “a strategic military defence if the future war with the Soviet Union broke” (CAB79/39, 1945), which made Bevin more determined in retaining British control of Cyprus and ignored the Greek Cypriots’ demands for self-determination, as well as for *enosis*.

It should also be mentioned here that the islanders of Turkish descendents, who were the second largest ethnic group in Cyprus, were strongly opposed to the Greek Cypriots’ movement for *enosis*. Since the Greek Cypriots were relentless in pursuing *enosis* (Joseph, 1999), this Cyprus colonial discord eventually developed into an ethnic discord between the islanders themselves, with the Turkish Cypriots favouring the partition of Cyprus, famously referred to as *taksim* (Stearns, 1992) instead of *enosis* with Greece. This ethnic confrontation became worse and more complicated when both of their mother countries, namely, Greece and Türkiye, were dragged into the dispute (Crawshaw, 1978). The involvement of Greece in this conflict began when it backed up the *enosis* movement championed by the

Greek Cypriots in July 1948 (Hatzivassiliou, 1997), while the Turkish government intervened four months later after Greece (Crawshaw, 1978).

As a result of these mother countries' interventions in the Cyprus conflict, the inter-governmental relationship between Türkiye and Greece continued to decline. It should be noted that the Cyprus dispute also affected Britain because of its status as a sovereign power in Cyprus during that time. This was apparently because of the decisiveness of Bevin to maintain British rule in Cyprus. It is worth pointing out here that the struggle over Cyprus between Greece and Türkiye coincided with a series of difficulties involving foreign affairs that were also handled by Bevin had occurred because of the economic depression at the beginning of post-World War II in Britain. These difficulties in foreign affairs included the declining status of Britain as a Great Power, the problem in maintaining Britain's military commitment to overseas theatre, the struggle in maintaining Britain's privilege in the Middle East, and the struggle against the U.S.' hesitation in forming NATO. Bevin was acutely aware of the struggle between Greece and Türkiye over Cyprus, and how serious the situation between them had become. If the British representatives in the talks were to propose for Greece and Türkiye to be invited into NATO, Bevin anticipated the proposal would inflict further delay in NATO's creation.

By the time Türkiye agreed to fight *enosis* together with the Turkish Cypriots, the presidential elections of 1948 in the U.S. had just come to an end and the delegates of the NATO talks had returned to Washington to resume the talks. A month prior to this, the Turkish Foreign Minister Necmettin Sadak had a meeting with Bevin (Britain), Marshall (the U.S.), and Frank K. Roberts (Bevin's Private Secretary). Sadak wanted to know whether Türkiye was in consideration in its inclusion in NATO. Roberts told Sadak honestly that the delegations did not discuss about that (FO371/72535/R12342, 1948). Sadak was disappointed and accordingly told them that Türkiye was really interested in joining NATO for its own safety and security (FO371/72535/R13293, 1948). Besides Türkiye, Greece too showed the same enthusiasm for NATO membership (FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, 1948, p. 321). For that reason, when the Washington Talks were resumed in late November 1948, Türkiye and Greece sent a formal request for their inclusion in NATO to the U.S. and the British governments (FO371/72535/R13409, 1948; FRUS, Western Europe,

Vol. III, 1948, pp. 294-295). The significance of the demand of Türkiye and Greece for NATO membership in late 1948 was twofold: the first is the requests were made at the time the talks for NATO arrangements suffered from bitter and prolonged discussions due to the complicated issue of Italian membership. The second is Türkiye and Greece were in an ongoing dispute pertaining to Cyprus. This paper acknowledges these matters as additional considerations which influenced Bevin to dismiss the inclusion of Türkiye and Greece in NATO, besides the widely found geographical issue and Mediterranean Pact, in the existing literature.

The Issue of Italy, the Delays, and Bevin's Stance not to Invite Türkiye and Greece to Join NATO

When the delegations of NATO talks discussed the question of Italy, Greece, and Türkiye would have been dragged into the discussion too, since these two countries are geographically located in the Mediterranean, as is Italy. However, the delegations only accepted Italy in NATO. Since the beginning of NATO arrangements, the U.S. delegates had never considered Greece and Türkiye to be entitled for NATO membership owing to their geographical locations which were considered too distant from the Atlantic area (FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, 1948, p. 65). However, it should neither be ignored nor forgotten that Italy was among the invited countries that became an original member of NATO when this pact was signed on 4 April 1949. Therefore, the justification regarding the geographical location could be in question, by referring to Italy, as a case in point.

Since the issue of Italian membership had already protracted the NATO arrangements, the U.S. delegates persistently disallowed Greece and Türkiye into NATO. This paper, therefore, espouses that these two matters had an influence on Bevin's stance not to propose Greece and Türkiye's inclusion in NATO. Bevin anticipated that any new proposal for membership, in particular, Türkiye and Greece might cause delay in NATO arrangements. Bevin's anticipation of the delay was apparent in his answer to Turkish Foreign Minister Sadak who came to London to seek explanation from Bevin about the reason why the latter did not instruct the British delegation to propose the inclusion of Türkiye in NATO. At the time, Bevin told Sadak that the talks in Washington were facing difficulty regarding Article 5 due to the insistence of the U.S. to tone down the wording that "would bind the United States

with the automatic commitment to go to war”, and how this matter protracted the negotiations (FO371/79225, 1949). Bevin explicitly informed Sadak that this delay was the reason he did not instruct the British delegation to suggest for the inclusion of Türkiye in NATO (FO371/78328/R1843, 1949). Bevin’s answer to Sadak substantiates argument in this paper that Bevin put his utmost priority on speed to allow the establishment of NATO without further delay, hence, the decision not to propose Turkish and Greek membership, albeit the secured Italy’s NATO membership as a Mediterranean country. Sadak subsequently asked Bevin why he was determined to have NATO arrangements move at speed, and Bevin’s response is recorded as follows:

We had decided to work on similar lines to those adopted in respect of the Marshall Plan, namely, to help ourselves in so far, we could and to seek aid from the United States to meet those requirements which could not be met from our own [Britain] resources (FO371/78328/R1843, 1949).

Based on Bevin’s reply, it is inferred that he envisaged the Atlantic treaty to help Britain in improving its economic problems and subsequently reinstating Britain’s prestige as a superpower country. It is worth reminding here that Britain had suffered from economic difficulties post-World War II era. This crisis affected Britain’s resources very badly and Britain could no longer afford its oversea military expenditure, hence its superpower status deteriorated (CAB131/1, 1946). This explicitly supports Bevin’s plan for NATO to be established without any unnecessary delay.

At the end of the conversation between Bevin and Sadak, the latter questioned why Italy was accepted if NATO membership was formulated based on geographical basis, and he could not understand why Italy was included and why Türkiye was excluded (FO371/78328/R1843, 1949). Bevin calmly replied to Sadak and said that he had no choice but to acquiesce to the eagerness of the French government to bring Italy into NATO after it managed to convince the U.S. to follow suit by putting an ultimatum that French would not become part of NATO if its demand was not fulfilled (FO371/78328/R1843, 1949). Other than Sadak, M. Mostras (the Greek Ambassador to London) also queried his government’s membership in NATO by asking J.W. Russell, an official at the Foreign Office. Russell’s answer to Mostras echoed Bevin when he mentioned the delay that could happen, and

he spoke the truth before Mostras that the probability of Greece and Türkiye being included in NATO was very slim (FO371/78328/R581, 1949). Seemingly, this matter validates further two arguments of this paper: the first is that geographical location was no longer Bevin's utmost concern when he compromised the membership of Italy. The second is the delays that happened throughout NATO arrangements which shaped Bevin's unsupportive attitude toward the addition of Greece and Türkiye in NATO.

This paper also argues that Cyprus discord between Greece and Türkiye also shaped Bevin's negative response toward these two countries' inclusion into NATO. This matter was evident during the Washington Talks in January 1949 which suffered setbacks due to Italian membership and the case of Algeria. Discussing the debates amongst the delegates over the issue of Algeria, and Bevin's perception of Türkiye and Greece which were in dispute over the future of Cyprus at the time, these circumstantial evidences subtly prove that the Cyprus dispute between Türkiye and Greece is another underlying reason, influencing Bevin to omit both Türkiye and Greece from NATO.

The Greco-Turkish Cyprus Problem and the Case of Algeria: An Analysis on Bevin's Stance not to Include Greece and Türkiye in NATO

Throughout NATO talks, most of the delegates, in particular the U.S. delegates, avoided to invite countries facing local or domestic struggles, such as Algeria, Italy and Spain as these were considered a liability instead of asset for NATO (FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, 1948, p. 165; FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, 1948, p. 66; FO371/73073, 1948). The U.S. and Canadian delegates resolutely rebutted the inclusion of Algeria under NATO's coverage "on the ground that it set a precedent for other colonial areas and posed the risk of drawing them into colonial conflicts" (FO371/79221, 1949). Seemingly, the U.S. and Canadian delegates were worried if the French delegates succeeded with their government's demand over Algeria, this would pave the way for other delegates and governments to request the same for their colonies too.

Even though the U.S. and Canadian delegates did not indicate precisely which delegates they were referring to, this paper however,

is likely to believe they were pointing to the British delegates and their government based on several facts. Firstly, the British government had vast colonies. Secondly, one of the British colonies, which was the Crown Colony of Cyprus, was undergoing political turmoil because of *enosis*. Thirdly, there was a plan by Bevin to utilise British bases in Cyprus for NATO military means (CAB129/23, 1948). It was apparent that the U.S. and Canadian delegates were anxious that Britain would request NATO's pledge to be covered to Cyprus as well as Algeria. If this were to happen, they were afraid that the U.S. and Canada would unavoidably be entangled with the Cyprus discord. As the U.S. and Canadian delegates were reluctant to accept countries suffering political unrest at domestic or international level, such as Algeria and Cyprus, therefore, the proposal for Greece and Türkiye (which were disputing over Cyprus) to be included in NATO at this stage of talks could be considered as untimely. The delegates would require extended time to discuss these countries' membership, hence protracting the talks further. Such a circumstances had already occurred previously when the French delegates brought up the question of Italy's membership in January 1949 talks (FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. IV, 1949, pp. 27-28).

It should be noted that Türkiye and Greece expressed their interest in NATO membership in late 1948 and early 1949 respectively. It is interesting to highlight here that these requests arrived at the time the delegates of the Washington Talks were struggling over the matter of Italian membership, also the Cyprus discord between these countries had heightened. Given that the issue of Italy and Algeria had already disturbed the smooth process of negotiations and caused the signatory of the treaty to be postponed, Bevin, therefore, believed that the support for Türkiye and Greece request for NATO membership would bring new delay to NATO arrangements. Bevin's anticipation of this delay was evident in his reply to Dirk Stikker (the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands) when the latter queried the reason Türkiye, Greece, and Portugal were excluded from NATO during their conversation at the Meeting of Consultative Council of the Five-Power Brussels Treaty in London between 27 and 29 January 1949. The answer by Bevin was as follows:

Mr. Bevin said there were some political difficulties here. He noticed Ireland was left out. He would not mind Ireland coming in and he was

open to discussion about Portugal, but he did think Turkey and Greece might present some difficulties. Switzerland also was a problem since, if we invited her, we might get a rebuff. He thought it most important to avoid that (FO800/448, 1949).

Even though Bevin did not mention precisely what “some political difficulties” were, it is understood that Bevin was referring to the ongoing Cyprus dispute between these two countries. If Bevin advocated these two problematic nations’ request for membership of NATO to be considered together with Italy, their Mediterranean neighbour, the other delegates, specifically, the U.S. and Canadian delegates would further discuss this matter or pressure the British delegates to discontinue the idea. Additionally, the U.S. Congress would not have approved Türkiye and Greece’s inclusion since the Congress had never considered these two Mediterranean countries as members from the very beginning of the talks and negotiations. This was evident in the reply of the three Senators, namely, Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, Senator Tom Connally, and Senator Walter F. George to Dean Acheson (the new U.S. Secretary of State) when the latter sought their advice regarding the question of membership of Italy in late February 1948. The Senators’ reply has been documented as follows:

The Senators were unanimous in their view that the wisest course at present would be not to have Italy an original signatory. They expressed considerable doubt as to the wisdom of having Italy in the pact at all. However, they were maintaining open mind upon this point. They thought that the presence of Italy in the pact would not be a help in putting it through the Senate, but would probably be a hindrance. The points that they raised were: First, the difficulty which this raised as to the pact’s regional character; second, the problems which it raised with regard to Greece and Turkey; third, the problem that with Italy in, Tito might be forced to closer relations with Russia (Department of State, 1949).

In summary, based on extensive archival research on British documents and records, it is evident that it was Bevin who portrayed unwillingness to invite another two Mediterranean countries, namely, Greece and Türkiye to become part of NATO during the period of its initial inception. The fundamental reason for Bevin’s refusal attitude

was because of his ultimate target to have NATO promptly created without prolonged delay. The analysis and discussion in this paper converges to prove that Bevin believed the inclusion of Greece and Türkiye would bring more delay to NATO arrangements because of the bitter discord over Cyprus, hence, Bevin's determination to leave Türkiye and Greece out of NATO's formative years. This manoeuvre and strategy was simply to avoid more delays in the conclusion of the treaty. It should be pointed here that the Bevin's reluctance to bring Türkiye and Greece into NATO did not mean that he had abandoned or taken for granted the significance of these Mediterranean countries to British geostrategic and security interests in the Mediterranean. This was evident when Bevin kept reminding the U.S. government about the need to provide assurance of security mechanism to Greece and Türkiye so that they could preserve their independence (FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. IV, 1949, 175-176; PREM8/1379/Part 1/2629, 1949; PREM8/1379/Part 1/3042, 1949; Shukri, 2019). It was apparent that Bevin did not disregard the importance of Greece and Türkiye. Hence his decision not to include these countries in NATO was simply because these two countries' membership was unsuitable and untimely for discussion thus to avoid further deferral of the signatory ceremony of this treaty. This was the rationale behind Bevin's avoidance at all costs and at any length.

CONCLUSION

After more than a year of talks, discussions, and negotiations, eventually, NATO was formed on 4 April 1949 without Greece and Türkiye. In the existing literature, the contention of geographical location of Türkiye and Greece, and the forthcoming plan of a Mediterranean Pact are two prime justifications in explaining the decision of the British government to omit these two countries from NATO, in spite of their significance to British geostrategic and security interest in the Mediterranean. Nonetheless, the scrutiny of this rejection through the viewpoint of Bevin who fervently desired to bring NATO into existence quickly has helped to demonstrate the relevance of the Greco-Turkish Cyprus issue to the matter at hand. This was also caused by the prolonged talks due to the U.S. hesitation, the difficulty involving the addition of Algeria and Italy, and how the U.S. and Canadian delegates reacted to this matter, which had led Bevin to come to the conclusion or an ultimate decision that the NATO membership of Türkiye and Greece was not significant or necessary

for discussion since the two nations were in disagreement over the future of Cyprus.

The Greco-Turkish Cyprus issue has been regarded by previous scholars as insignificant in understanding Britain's rejection attitude towards the inclusion of Greece and Türkiye in NATO. This elucidates the reason why previous scholars have made little attempt in inspecting the connection between the Greco-Turkish Cyprus problem and Britain's reluctance to have Greece and Türkiye in NATO during the period of its creation. It should be emphasised here that without taking the issue of delay in NATO arrangements into consideration, as well as Bevin's keenness in having NATO be formed at the soonest opportunity; also, the Greco-Turkish Cyprus dispute, it seems plausible that the issue of the geographical location of Greece and Türkiye and a Mediterranean Pact would continue to exist in the literature as the only two reasons to justify the decision of Britain not to invite Türkiye and Greece to NATO.

To reiterate, this paper objects the validity of these two justifications which cannot hold as Italy, a fellow Mediterranean country that was initially to be grouped together with Greece and Türkiye in a Mediterranean Pact, was included in NATO. Moreover, in view of the fact Türkiye and Greece were highly significant for British geostrategic and security interests in the Mediterranean, as well as the Middle East, Italy membership in NATO was unexpected. Therefore, this also suggests that despite the importance of Greece and Türkiye to Britain due to their geostrategic and security interests, and Britain being keen to avoid these countries from falling under Soviet dominance, Bevin aimed to have NATO promptly formed as his foremost priority at the time. Thus, this paper shows that the Greco-Turkish Cyprus conflict between Türkiye and Greece had hampered the prospect of the inclusion of these nations in NATO. This was because Bevin was of the opinion that the support for these countries to be included in NATO would lead to another postponement to the inception of NATO.

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