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Research Article

An Analysis of the Migration of Turks of Bulgaria to Turkey in 1950-51 with the Turkey's Domestic and Foreign Policy of the Era

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Abstract

Movement of populations has been one of the main drivers of the history of humanity. For a geography which is at the crossroads of different cultures and civilizations such as Anatolia, this is much more relevant. Among the mass movement of migrations in Turkish history; migrations from Bulgaria, with their number of migrants and the time span, have a special place. Specifically; 1950-51 Migration, by giving us a chance to study political history of the early years of the Cold War at that geography, offers us a quite interesting study area.

In this article, migration of Turks of Bulgaria to Turkey in 1950-51 would be analyzed with a special attention to the Turkey's domestic and foreign policy of the era. In order to have a holistic understanding, first the background would be explained by studying on the situations of the respective countries during and in the aftermath of World War II. While looking to the aftermath of World War II, the process which led to the 1950-51 Migration would be studied in detail. Later, 1950-51 Migration would be studied with its implications on Turkish domestic and foreign policy. Connected to that, foreign aid issue too would be studied. Finally the conclusion would be made. The analysis shows that, 1950-51 Migration was a milestone event in the history of the Republic of Turkey which shaped Turkish domestic and foreign policy in the early years of the Cold War.

Keywords: Migration, Turkey, Bulgaria, Turks of Bulgaria, Minority, Cold War, Political History

Jel Codes: D74, F51, N90, N94, Y80, Y90

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Araştırma Makalesi

Dönemin Türk İç ve Dış Politikası Ekseninde 1950-51 Bulgaristan Türklerinin Türkiye'ye Göç Hareketi Üzerine Bir Analiz

Ahmet Can Karapınara

Öz

Nüfus hareketleri, insanlık tarihinin ilerleyişindeki başat itici güçlerden biri olmuştur. Farklı kültür ve medeniyetlerin kesişme noktasındaki Anadolu gibi coğrafyalar için bu daha da geçerlidir. Türk tarihindeki toplu göç hareketleri arasında; Bulgaristan göçleri, hem göçmen sayısı hem de zaman aralığıyla, özel bir yere sahiptir. Eğer daha spesifik olursak, 1950-51 Göçü, Soğuk Savaş'ın ilk yıllarının bu coğrafyadaki siyasi tarihini çalışma şansı vermesi açısından, oldukça ilginç bir çalışma alanı sunmaktadır.

Bu makalede 1950-51 Bulgaristan Türklerinin Türkiye'ye göç hareketi, dönemin Türk iç ve dış politikasına özel yer verilerek analiz edilecektir. Bütüncül bir anlayışa sahip olabilmek için öncelikle arka plan; ilgili ülkelerin II. Dünya Savaşı sırasında ve sonrasındaki durumları incelenerek açıklanacaktır. II. Dünya Savaşı sonrasına bakarken, 1950-51 Göçü'ne giden süreç detaylıca çalışılacaktır. Daha sonra 1950-51 Göçü, Türk iç ve dış politikasındaki yansımalarıyla ele alınacaktır. Bununla bağlantılı olarak, dış yardımlar meselesi de incelenecektir. Son olarak sonuç kısmına yer verilecektir. Analiz sonunda, 1950-51 Göçü'nün Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tarihinde kilometre taşı niteliğine sahip bir olay olduğu, Soğuk Savaş'ın erken yıllarında Türk iç ve dış politikasının şekillenmesinde önemli bir paya sahip olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç, Türkiye, Bulgaristan, Bulgaristan Türkleri, Azınlık, Soğuk Savaş, Siyasi Tarih

Jel Kodları: D74, F51, N90, N94, Y80, Y90

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1. Introduction

Migration is a phenomenon which is as old as humanity's itself. With the great losses of territory in the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the 19th century and the following migration of the Turkish-Muslim populations to the remaining Ottoman territories (especially to Anatolia) marked that geography's history. Beginning in the second half of the 19th century and up until the end of the 20th century; these demographic movements not only affected the people and the region which they emigrated from but also, affected the demographics, politics, culture and economy of the region and society which they immigrated to. In this context, given the number of people who took part and the time span it took place, movement of migration of Turks of Bulgaria has a special place. Beginning with the Ottoman defeat in the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War and taking the form of a mass population movement in times like 1912-13 Balkan Wars, this movement of migration deeply affected both Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. With the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923; this movement of migration had not ended but, especially after the end of the World War II when Turkey and Bulgaria joined opposing sides in the Cold War, gained a new ideological meaning to its existing ethno-religious character.

In this context, migration of Turks of Bulgaria to Turkey in 1950-51 has a special place. In these early years of the Cold War while the bipolar world order was starting to emerge and the tensions between sides was on the rise, when Turkey and Bulgaria joined opposing sides, the movement of migration of Turks of Bulgaria (which at that time was a 70 years old phenomenon) gained a new ideological character which was shaped between the dichotomy of the liberal West and the communist East.

In this article, firstly, in order to explain the historical background of the 1950-51 Migration, World War II and the situation in its aftermath in Turkey and Bulgaria would be studied. While doing this, special attention would be given to the Turkish foreign policy and Turkey's policies towards the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. Later, the course migration took would be studied. Regarding that, not only Turkish foreign policy but also, the migration's effects on the Turkish domestic policies, the way Demokrat Parti (DP) government handled the situation, the policies towards the migrants and the foreign aid issue too would be studied. Finally the conclusion would be made.

2. Background

2.1 World War II

World War II (1939-45), as it was for the whole world, was a very hard time both for Turkey and Bulgaria. Turkey, with its balance policy, managed to stay out of the war but, Bulgaria, which followed revisionist policies in the interwar years, joined the Axis powers in 1941. However on 08.09.1944 it was invaded by the Soviet Union and the next day regime change happened. During the time when Bulgaria was part of the Axis powers (1941-44), there was a mutual distrust in the relations between Turkey and Bulgaria (Bıçaklı, 2016: 172). Both sides were afraid of the possibility of a new front opening on their borders. Especially towards the end of the war, when Turkey cuts its diplomatic relations with Germany on 02.09.1944, Bulgaria saw this as a signal of a Turkish attack on itself (Bıçaklı, 2016: 170) and followed an even more sensitive approach towards Turkey (Bıçaklı, 2016: 170). Similarly, this time on 23.02.1945, Turkey's declaration of war on Germany was received in a negative way in Bulgaria (Bıçaklı, 2016: 170). The motivation behind this declaration of war was Turkey's desire to get out of its relative isolation which it fell at the end of the war. This very motive caused an understanding in Bulgaria which claims that, Turkey would have an unfair role in the post-war world order which it did not deserved given its balance policy during the war (Bıçaklı,

2016: 172). However wider developments in the international arena would affect the relations between Turkey and Bulgaria greatly. These new developments could be explained with the Cold War atmosphere.

2.2 Cold War

The relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union, which the tensions had started to rise even before the end of the war, reached its climax in terms of tension with the Soviet territorial and military demands on Turkish Straits and Eastern Anatolia in 1945. These demands which Turkey saw as a threat to its sovereignty, directed Turkey to reorient itself politically. From this angle, it becomes apparent that the Soviet Union was following the centuries old Russian imperial policies about the Russian sovereignty over Southeastern Europe (Çulha, 2017: 58). At the end of the war, Soviet Union had failed to shape the region the way it was desired by itself: The civil war in Greece had ended with the defeat of the communists in 1948, the relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were in a bad shape and with the DP coming to power in Turkey in 1950, Turkey's orientation towards the West gained a new and stronger momentum. In that regard, it was not possible for Bulgaria to follow an independent foreign policy from the Soviet Union since it was under Soviet control in the postwar era.

An article from the Royal Institute of International Affairs (better known as the "Chatham House") finds a similar structural phenomenon in this specific crisis between Turkey and Bulgaria. The writer of the article is not explicitly referred but, simply given as "M.P." (M.P., 1951: 36). According to M.P., the migration mostly affected the Turkish minority in the northeastern part of Bulgaria which corresponds to the provinces between Varna, Dobrich and Shumen (M.P., 1951: 34). The region has a strategic position at the intersection of the Danube River and the Black Sea. So, it is no surprise that the Soviet Union had a special interest in the security of the region (M.P., 1951: 34). The Chatham House article compares the population movement from Bulgaria to Turkey with the expulsions from Crimea and Caucasus to Central Asia and Siberia (M.P., 1951: 34). M.P. defines this as the "gigantic clean-up of the unreliable national elements along the Black Sea coast" (M.P., 1951: 34). So in that sense too, the structural changes in the world politics and its reflections in terms of the securitization of strategically important geographies (such as the Black Sea for the Soviet Union) is one of the main factors in explaining the migration of Turks of Bulgaria to Turkey in 1950-51.

2.3 Towards the 1950-51 Migration

While studying the course of events which led to the 1950-51 movement of migration, the changes in the domestic politics also comes as an important factor. The ideology of the newly formed communist regime in Bulgaria was aiming for a "one nation" which was in solidarity in the socialist cause (Çolak, 2013: 119). The general understanding in Bulgaria at that time was that; Turks, whom were the biggest minority group, should be assimilated for that purpose (Çolak, 2013: 119). When the regime established its power; arrests of the notables of the Turkish minority (Çolak, 2013: 119), nationalization the Turkish minority's schools in 1946 by putting them under control of the Bulgarian government (Çolak, 2013: 120) and the beginning of the collectivization policy in agriculture in 1949 (Çolak, 2013: 120) caused great anxieties in the Turkish community in Bulgaria. The main economic activity of the Turks of Bulgaria was agriculture and the forced collectivization policy of the state was seen as a threat to their traditional economic activities and the way of life.

In that regard, as part of its multifaceted approach, by showing the historical development of the position of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, the aforementioned Chatham

House article from January 1951 is quite interesting. According to the article, in the past Turkish minority of Bulgaria were seen as the Bulgaria's "model minority" (M.P., 1951: 30). This was due to the fact that the Turkish minority were not taking part in Bulgarian politics actively and were voting for the incumbent government in the elections just to make sure that they were safe (M.P., 1951: 30). It was a conservative community in its way of living and Bulgarian state too, was supporting this conservative attitude to protect status quo (M.P., 1951: 31). However this did not last long. The influence of the Kemalist regime in Turkey spread to the Turkish minority in Bulgaria and created a new generation of Turkish notables in Bulgaria who were in favor of emigration to Turkey (M.P., 1951: 31). For example, the Chatham House article attributes the signing of the 1925 Turkish-Bulgarian Friendship Treaty and its clauses regarding emigration to this new generation of Turkish notables and the mentality developed by them (M.P., 1951: 31). However the issue would gain unprecedented momentum following the foundation (and also the consolidation) of the communist regime in Bulgaria.

The period between 1945 and 1948 was the consolidation of the communist regime in Bulgaria and in this process; all political opposition was crushed (M.P., 1951: 32). In that period, Bulgarian government decided to "re-educate" (M.P., 1951: 32) its Turkish minority and took concrete steps such as the tightening its control on Turkish minorities' educational and religious institutions (M.P., 1951: 32). However the consolidation of the communist regime in an agricultural country, such as Bulgaria, would not be complete without reshaping the land tenure and the related legal framework. As stated above, the collectivization of the agricultural land created great tensions between peasantry and the state. Another contemporary, Schechtman even defines this as the Bulgarian government's desire to use Turkish land and houses for the colonization of these regions (Schechtman, 1952: 390). The opposition of the peasantry to this forced collectivization policy encompassed both Bulgarian and Turkish populations (M.P., 1951: 33). Yet, Turkish opposition was stronger since there was also an ethno-religious character in addition to the economic side of the issue (M.P., 1951: 33).

Although the notables of the Turks of Bulgaria applied to Turkey to migrate as early as 1947-48, the cabinet of the Turkish government on 31.05.1947 decided that, the mass migration should take place in a more favorable time in the future (Çolak, 2013: 120). With the establishment of the DP government in 1950 and its Western oriented foreign policy, events happened rapidly. In that regard, we see two different narratives which explain 1950-51 movement of migration. The first one put the emphasis on the Soviet Union which wanted to punish Turkey economically by starting a mass movement of migration via Bulgaria (Aslan, 2012: 332). The other narrative is a more historical one which takes the historical duration of the migration phenomenon (it was 70 years old at that time) into account. According to that narrative, the natural flow of the migration was stopped because of World War II and the subsequent establishment of the communist regime in Bulgaria (Aslan, 2012: 332). So, in 1950 when the migration wave started, it turned into a mass movement quickly (Aslan, 2012: 332). Although both narratives have a certain degree of explanatory power, the role of the forced collectivization in agriculture which started in 1949 in Bulgaria had an immense impact for the beginning of the movement of migration (Aslan, 2012: 332).

3. 1950-51 Migration

3.1 Turkish Foreign Policy

Turkish diplomat and the former ambassador Dr. Hüseyin Avni Bıçaklı defines 1950-51 Migration as the "Third Great Migration" after 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War and 1912-13 Balkan Wars (Bıçaklı, 2016: 299). In 1950, facing with the various oppressive policies beginning with the economic sphere and having demands to emigrate from Bulgaria to Turkey,

exit visas started to be issued to Turkish minority by the Bulgarian authorities (Bıçaklı, 2016: 300). This was the beginning of the 1950-51 Migration. As Bıçaklı stated, these migrants who were deprived from their financial belongings were putting Turkey into a dire situation (Bıçaklı, 2016: 300). The situation which the Turkish authorities defined as an "imposition" (Bıçaklı, 2016: 300) quickly turned into a diplomatic crisis. With the subsequent diplomatic notes, on 10.08.1950 Bulgarian authorities stated that 250 000 of its citizens want to immigrate to Turkey and Bulgaria would not prevent them in any way (Bıçaklı, 2016: 300). Not only this, but also the Bulgarian authorities stated that the Turkey's attitude was a violation of the 1925 Turkish-Bulgarian Friendship Treaty's articles on migration (Bıçaklı, 2016: 300). The Bulgarian diplomatic note was demanding Turkey to take the migrants in a short time, in three months (Çanak, 2014: 239). On 28.08.1950, the following Turkish diplomatic note on the other hand was stating that, 1925 Turkish-Bulgarian Friendship Treaty's articles on migration was guaranteeing the sale of the migrants' immovable properties but, Bulgarian authorities was violating that article (Bıçaklı, 2016: 301).

The Chatham House article from January 1951 too, states that the migrants were stripped off all their possessions except "a small bundle of personal clothing" (M.P., 1951: 33). Even Radio Sofia, were making news about the poor living conditions of the migrants on the border (on the Bulgarian side) which stated that the migrants did not have shelter nor furniture and was under threat of cold, disease and famine (M.P., 1951: 35). The Chatham House article concludes that these migrants were brought to the border only after "all their property had been confiscated" (M.P., 1951: 35) and this too was done in a "ruthless" (M.P., 1951: 34) manner with violence (M.P., 1951: 34). By doing that, the Bulgarian authorities were making sure that these migrants would not be "productively self-supporting in a short time" (Schechtman, 1952: 393). Hence; they would need aid from government and this would create an enormous crisis in their country of arrival, which is Turkey (Schechtman, 1952: 393). The other Turkish concern was about the short notice given by the Bulgarians since there might have been "those who could provoke unrest in the country" (Bıçaklı, 2016: 301) among the migrants. So Turkey was asking Bulgaria to take the time factor into consideration for the necessary security checks (Bıçaklı, 2016: 300-301).

When the Turkish authorities find Romani people among the migrants who do not have any visas, a new crisis emerged (Çanak, 2014: 239). So, Turkey according to the 2510 Settlement Act, stated that the migrant status could only be given to the people of Turkish origin and demanded from Bulgaria to take these people back (Çanak, 2014: 239). After the refusal of this demand from Bulgaria, Turkey closed its border on 07.10.1950 and it remained closed until the Turkish demands had been accepted (Çanak, 2014: 239). On 02.12.1950, the border had been opened again (Çanak, 2014: 239).

While the migration was continuing, with a decision taken on 16.04.1951, Turkey gave all of the migrants who came from Bulgaria after 01.01.1950 "settled migrant" status so that they could benefit from the state aids (Çanak, 2014: 239). However when Bulgaria started to send Romani people among the migrants again, the relations quickly deteriorated and Turkey closed its border second time on 08.11.1951 (Çanak, 2014: 239). While the diplomatic negotiations were continuing, on 30.11.1951 Bulgaria announced that all movement of migration had been stopped (Çanak, 2014: 239). Until 1968, there will not be any more (at least on a wide scale) immigration to Turkey (Çanak, 2014: 239). At the end of the 1950-51 Migration, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave the total number of the migrants as 152 755 in a statement from 01.12.1951 (Bıçaklı, 2016: 307). In the same statement, the actual reason behind Bulgaria's decision to stop migration was claimed to be the loss of work force in the agriculture (Bıçaklı, 2016: 307). The Bulgarian statements on the other hand, were accusing

Turkey for provoking anti-Bulgarian sentiments among the Turkish minority in Bulgaria (Bıçaklı, 2016: 307).

3.2 Turkish Domestic Policy

1950-51 Migration not only affected Turkish foreign policy but also, witnessed the beginning of a new era in the domestic area. During the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) administration, there was not a specific state policy towards the migration from Bulgaria (Pınar, 2014: 87). Assoc. Prof. Mehmet Pınar defines this as surprising since the same administration had done the population exchange with Greece (Pınar, 2014: 87). The explanation Pınar gives is that, CHP had not fully understood the situation in Bulgaria, the settlement of a large migrant population from Bulgaria was thought to be not possible and there was a desire to keep the balance of domestic politics intact (Pınar, 2014: 87). In that respect, what we see is a clear separation from the CHP's migration policy with the new DP government. Yet, focusing on the differences should not let us miss the bigger picture which has continuities.

These continuities were not mainly about political practices but, especially in terms of the discourse. A contemporary article from 1952, takes our attention to that overlooked aspect. For example on 13.11.1935, during the CHP administration, Minister of Internal Affairs Şükrü Kaya made statements regarding the necessity of "all Turks living abroad be installed in this country (Turkey)" (Schechtman, 1952: 387). Şükrü Kaya's statements were specifically addressing the Turkish minorities in Balkan countries (Schechtman, 1952: 387). Kaya's later statements not only confirm his previous statements but also further strengthen them with a nationalist tone. For example, a couple of months later, regarding the emigration of Turkish minorities, he stated that it is not compatible with the Turkish character "to live as a slave where the Turk previously was the master" (Schechtman, 1952: 387).

On a practical level; the DP government's approach to the issue, by taking the economic and cultural backgrounds of the migrants into account, was better organized (Pınar, 2014: 87). On the other hand, the DP government's approach was nationalist too, as could be seen from its approach to the Romani people among the migrants (Pınar, 2014: 87). When we look to the bigger picture, what we see is that the DP government succeeded in turning the migrant issue into a national issue (Pınar, 2014: 88). As stated above; in the settlement process of the migrants, the DP government mostly chose the regions which the agricultural activities were the dominant economic activity and also took many criteria into account such as the migrants' culture, language, way of lives and even the climate they used to back in Bulgaria (Pınar, 2014: 88).

In that regard, at the beginning of 1951, with the incentives given by the President Celal Bayar (Pınar, 2014: 83), Turkey Aid Association for the Migrants and Refugees (*Göçmen ve Mültecilere Türkiye Yardım Birliği*) was founded with the Turkish Parliamentary Speaker Refik Koraltan being the head of the association (Pınar, 2014: 84). The aim of the association was the 'rational distribution of the aids to the migrants' (Pınar, 2014: 84). Tax exemptions and also the construction of the mass housing projects for the migrants were also seen as the successes of the DP government in its migration policy (Pınar, 2014: 88). In this context, the DP government accused the previous administration, CHP, for not solving the migrants' land problems (Pınar, 2014: 85). The DP government with its dedication to make the issue a national one even considered the foundation of the Ministry of Migrant (*Göçmen Bakanlığı*) (Pınar, 2014: 86). However, the DP government's migration policy also became a point of contestation in the domestic politics. Until 1954, CHP was also seeing the migration issue as a national issue and was a supporter of the DP government's migration policy (Pınar, 2014: 88). However later, political anxieties and the accusations regarding the pro-communist sentiments among the migrants put the CHP in the opposing side of the government's migration policy (Pınar, 2014:

88). For example, CHP found the idea of the Ministry of Migrant as an "area of wastage" (Pınar, 2014: 86). On the other hand, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes saw the issue as "supradomestic politics" and even considered taking the migration issue from Romania into agenda (Pınar, 2014: 86). In that sense, Menderes's approach was similar to the former Minister of Internal Affairs Şükrü Kaya's approach to the issue. The DP's overall approach which is characterized by seeing the issue as a national and supra-domestic politics one is another signifier of its nationalist attitude.

4. Foreign Aid

Lastly, when we look to the foreign aid to Turkey for the migrants, it becomes apparent that it was an important issue for the Turkish foreign policy. Turkey received foreign aid worth 30 million Turkish Lira from the Marshall Aid and the 28% of the spending between 1950 and 1960 for the settlement of the migrants was made from there (Bıçaklı, 2016: 310). Apart from that, Bıçaklı gives the other main foreign aid organizations as The US Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) and the International Refugee Organization (IRO) (Bıçaklı, 2016: 311). Schechtman's list is wider than Bıçaklı's. According to Schechtman, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Red Cross societies of Belgium, Britain, Canada, India, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden and the United States too took part (or at least promised to take part) in such aid activities (Schechtman, 1952: 400).

On the other side, Assoc. Prof. Recep Murat Geçikli in his study finds out that, initially the US showed reluctance in its support and foreign aid to Turkey during the 1950-51 Migration (Geçikli, 2016: 33). Later the US; saw the issue as a threat to Turkish economy and national security, and started its foreign aid program via different institutions (Geçikli, 2016: 33). However, Geçikli defines the US foreign aid as the result of the US' position of "being not much interested but also could not stay indifferent" (Geçikli, 2016: 34). Bıçaklı too; states that the much of the spending, which were made for the migrants, were made by the Turkish government and the public (Bıçaklı, 2016: 311).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, 1950-51 migration of Turks of Bulgaria to Turkey was a reappearance of the Turkish-Muslim migration from Bulgaria to Turkey since the late 19th century but, this time with a new ideological face in the Cold War atmosphere. Without any doubts, happening in the first two years of the DP government when Turkey started to follow a pro-Western foreign policy with a new and robust momentum, brought Turkey even closer with the West. Just like the M.P.'s Chatham House article's structural analysis in terms of Soviet Union's securitization attempts regarding the Black Sea basin; the end of the migration movement from the Bulgarian side, is attributed to the Turkey's admission (what Schechtman meant with admission is the Turkey's signing of the protocol regarding the NATO membership, Turkey would officially be a NATO member next year) in the fall of 1951 (Schechtman, 1952: 401). At that point, it became apparent that the relations with Bulgaria were to be shaped within the dynamics of the Cold War and the friendly relations with Bulgaria became possible only during the detente period in the mid. 1960s.

However, even that could not stop Bulgarian government to apply a wide spread oppression and assimilation program to its Turkish minority under the name of the "Възродителен процес/Process of Revival" in 1980s, and the subsequent last big wave of migration in 1989. 1950-51 Migration not only affected Turkish foreign policy but, also had important implications in the domestic sphere. It was the event which crystallized the DP's migration policy. With its migration policy, the DP government followed a better organized program than the previous CHP administration. Yet the continuities in the discourses also

should not be overlooked. The nationalist tone, both as an ideology and also as a political tool for addressing the general public was used widely by the incumbent governments of both CHP and DP. At the same time, the DP's definition of the issue as a national and supra-domestic politics one was initially widely accepted. However, especially after 1954, changing political balance made CHP to reorient itself in the opposing side on that issue. With respect to foreign aid, although vast amounts of monetary and non-monetary aid were taken from different institutions, bulk of the spending was made by the Turkish government and the public. Taken all of these into account, 1950-51 Migration was a milestone event which shaped Turkish foreign and domestic policy in the early years of the Cold War.

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