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# CONTEMPORARY TURKISH - RUSSIAN RELATIONS

## *FROM PAST TO FUTURE*

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EDITORS

İlyas TOPSAKAL, Ali ASKEROV





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## PREFACE

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The historical experience of relations between Turkey and Russia has gone through different stages. The first attempts at diplomatic relations, which date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, have developed over time and have begun to determine the geopolitical balance of power in the region. At the same time, certain regions have gained importance in the context of Russia and Turkey relations (a context in which strategic interests have been an area of constant search for compromise solutions): Central Asia, the Balkan Peninsula, the Caucasus region and the Middle East. Along with this, the historical roots of Turkey lie in the Eurasian region among the Turkic peoples of Russia, and the confessional values of Orthodox culture originated in the Byzantine Empire. From this point of view, Russian-Turkish relations can be seen as an intertwinement of a large number of sensitive issues and difficult compromise solutions.

The regional mutual influence of Russia and Turkey seems to be a long process that developed during the period of the Ottoman and Russian Empires. At the stage of the formation of the Moscow state, Ivan the Third understood the importance of the participation of Russian merchants in the markets of Istanbul and sent a letter to the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid the Second on August 31, 1492, asking for free movement and trade. Having received a positive answer, Ivan the Third decided to send his ambassador to the Ottoman court in 1495, and thus diplomatic relations between İstanbul and Moscow began.

Subsequently, the strengthening of the Russian Empire and its active participation in European politics led to a direct clash between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. Until the conflict of interest during the first World War, Russia and Turkey experienced the difficulties of a large multinational poly-confessional state in different ways, overflowing with ideas of constitutional reforms and democratic transformations. Following the end of First World War, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the change of state formation, i.e. the republic, once again pushed Soviet government and Turkey into a dialogue and consolidation efforts in the region: the Turkish War of Independence under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the straits questions, diplomatic friction with the West at the Lausanne Conference and the support of diplomats from Ankara by the Soviet delegation.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century largely predetermined the foreign policy orientation of the Republic of Turkey. In 1952, Turkey and Greece became members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization at the NATO Summit in Lisbon. As a result of the confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, Turkey and Russia been forced to build relations through the prism of the foreign policy agendas for a long time. The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought Russia to the level of the state and it began to build its foreign policy strategy based on national interest. As a result of V. V. Putin's speech at the Munich conference on February 10, 2007, he set the task of creating a "multipolar world" as an objective. At the same time, Turkey continued to be an active participant in European politics, counting on fully-fledged integration into the European Union, but did not receive a specific answer and was forced to postpone the decision. In this regard, Turkey at a certain point made an independent decision to refuse to participate in

the process of European integration and to develop its independent foreign policy strategy in the region. The catalyst for this decision was an unsuccessful coup attempt on July 15, 2016. Regional and global challenges caused by the Syrian crisis and confrontation of the international coalition in the Middle East have posed new challenges to Russian-Turkish relations. The attempts to consolidate the opinions and visions of specialists in various spheres of relations between Russia and Turkey relations have led the authors to highlight these aspects in regional interactions of various countries.



## INTRODUCTION

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Contemporary Russian-Turkish relations are an integrated system of economic, political, cultural, humanitarian and scientific research areas. In this regard, there are few subjects in Turkish-Russian relations which can be studied without the help of an interdisciplinary approach. In the context of cultural interactions, Russia and Turkey have a significant historical background, and as it is expected they have different perspectives in this research area.

Russian-Turkish relations during the post-Soviet stage in the field of political interaction can be seen in the works of contemporary orientalists O. A. Kolobov, A. A. Kornilov and F. Ozbay. The authors in their studies paid attention to the issues of political dialogue, military-technology and trade-economic cooperation (O. A. Kolobov, 2004). In addition, analyses of the post-Soviet period of Russian-Turkish relations were made in international conferences (Urazova, 2004). The research by S. M. Ivanov (S. M. Ivanov, 2000) assesses Russian-Turkish relations by searching for common and distinctive features in historical development. Moreover, speeches of key politicians of the two countries have also been studied in detail. Additionally, agreements, protocols, programs and cooperation agreements have been analysed.

Research in the field of cultural similarities and differences were also involved in the agenda in Russia and Turkey (N. G. Kireev, 2001). The work of N. G. Kireev "Between Europe and Asia" puts Turkey (as an example of Muslim culture), at the center of the study, which proclaimed the path of development through modernisation and Westernisation. A joint study of Russian and Turkish researchers, which is a collection of articles, was published in 2003 under the editorship of G. Kazgan and N. Yu. Ulchenko with the title "Russian-Turkish relations: history, current state and prospects" (G. Kazgan, N. Ulchenko, 2003). The issues of culture and art are most succinctly reflected in Y. A. Miller's book of "The Art of Turkey" (Y. A. Miller, 1965), and also the development of cinematography in the work of A. A. Guseinov "Turkish Cinema: History and Contemporary Problems" (A. A. Guseinov, 1978). T. P. Dadashev's work of "Enlightenment in Turkey in modern times (1923-1960)" (T. P. Dadashev, 1972) paid attention to the issues of education and enlightenment, and the research work of A. K. Sverchevskaya "Soviet-Turkish cultural ties (1925-1981)" remained as a fundamental study in the field of cultural interactions (A. K. Sverchevskaya, 1983).

The diplomatic relations between Russia and Turkey in the post-Soviet period became the subject of official publications of the two countries. The Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Russia - Turkish Bulletin, the publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation "Diplomatic Bulletin" and "Russian Foreign Policy: Collection of Documents". In the source space of Turkey, analytical materials of the Eurasian Strategic Research Center ASAM on the pages of Stratejik Analiz and the Turkish Center for Asian Strategic Studies TASAM in the context of publications on the pages of Stratejik Öngörü are of interest. The joint foreign policy interests of Turkey and Russia in the Middle East have expanded the scope of research to materials of the Middle East Center for Strategic Studies ORSAM on the pages of Ortadoğu, the Center for the Study of Politics, Economics and Society SETA in analytical publications, as well as on the pages of the magazine Kriter and a number of other centers.

In the field of trade and economic interaction, the work of V. N. Koptevsky titled “Russia-Turkey: the stage of trade and economic cooperation” (V. N. Koptevsky, 2003) can be considered as an important contribution. Besides this, in the work of Urazova E.I., she assessed the trade and economic policy of Turkey in the context of historical Turkic kinship and ethno-confessional community (E. I. Urazova 2003). Documents and materials reflecting the state of trade and economic relations are presented on the official resources of the ministries and departments of the two countries and this makes it possible to analyze the dynamics of changes in this area.

Cooperation for energy sources started in 1987 aiming to build the «Blue Stream» project in 1997. After this agreement, Russia became a leader of gas export for the Turkish region and protected its leadership up to last few years. The TANAP project, which aimed to export energy sources from Azerbaijan to the European market through Turkey, influenced the prices and Turkey’s Russian Gaz export decreased. As a measurement of dynamics, the decrease of Russian Gaz supplies in Turkey was 44% in 2014, 66% in 2005 and 55% in 2011. At the same time, Turkey became the biggest Gaz Stock station in Europe and earned its strategic importance.

Turkish policy which aims to develop its own military-industrial complex has opened up new opportunities for technological interaction with Russia. The agreement on the purchase of the Russian S-400 air defense system Triumph was an important step in the implementation of its own foreign policy agenda. Turkey and Russia have created a new vector of possible cooperation and technology export. In this aspect, Turkey’s awareness as a NATO member of the need for comprehensive development of military-technology support is an indicator of readiness for various forms of mutually beneficial cooperation. The sanctions policy of Western partners aimed at limiting possible exporters did not become a barrier for Turkey.

Thus, Russia and Turkey, which have their own strategic objectives in Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkan Peninsula, and the Middle East during the post-Soviet building of bilateral relations, give great importance to the balance of interests in every aspect. In this regard, Turkey and Russia have had a remarkable amount of interactions in political, economic, cultural and humanitarian matters.

Within the framework of a detailed analysis of the historical background and the current state of Russian-Turkish relations at the post-Soviet stage, a project of Istanbul University was implemented with the involvement of foreign specialists in the form of a collective study on the topic of “Contemporary Russian-Turkish relations: from the past to the future”.

# CHAPTER 1

## TURKISH RUSSIAN RELATIONS IN THE SOVIET AND POST SOVIET PERIOD

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### ABSTRACT

The first official meeting between the Ottoman Empire and Grand Principality of Moscow was established in 1492. Ottoman Empire had continued the relations with Tsardom of Russia via Crimean Khans in the Crimea and its surroundings, which are the vassal states of the Ottoman Empire. However, when the Tsardom of Russia 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries progressed and had power in Eastern Europe and Asia, it struggled with Ottoman Empire and gradually invaded most of the Ottoman territories. Russia suppressed the Ottoman Empire by defeating the Ottoman armies in the wars, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, consecutively, and controlling the Black Sea and Balkans. The great states in Europe such as England, France, Germany protected Ottoman Empire against Russia. Ottoman Empire was defeated heavily against Russia in the Ottoman-Russian War in 1877-1878, and the empire had to give its lands in East Anatolia and Balkans to Russia after the war. In the World War One, Ottoman Empire and Russia have been in the opposite blocks. Since Russia was experiencing the Bolshevik Revolution during the war, Russia retreated from the war and focused on its internal issues. As Germany was defeated in World War One, Ottoman Empire had also been defeated, therefore withdrew from the war by signing the Armistice of Mudros. Afterwards, Ottoman Empire had been broken down, and Kuva-yi Milliye (meaning National Forces) in Anatolia has established the Republic of Turkey (29 September 1922) by winning the War of Independence. Soviet Government that was established on 7 November 1917, supported the War of Independence in Anatolia. In Soviet times, Turkish-Russian relations often negatively but rarely positively continued. As threats against the Republic of Turkey increased in Stalin period, Turkey has joined the NATO, so that Turkey has guaranteed itself against Russia. After this date, Turkish-Russian relations have been established focusing on economic interests, and Turkey reconfigured its security and geopolitical strategies as a part of NATO.

**Keywords:** Russian-Turkish relations, Ottoman Empire, Soviet - Turkish relations

Ottoman Empire (also known as Ottoman State) was a Turkestan state which ruled in the Eastern Europe, Balkans, Caucasus, Anatolia, Middle East and Northern Africa between 1299-1922. Osman Gazi, who is the founder of the Ottoman Empire and the ancestor of the Ottoman Dynasty, was descendant of Kayı tribe of the Bozok sub-branch of the Oghuz Turks. The state was established in Söğüt district of Bilecik Province. The date of establishment of Ottoman Empire is widely accepted as 1299. However, according to some historians like Halil İnalçık, Ottoman Empire achieved its characteristics and qualities of state after the Battle of Bapheus in Yalova in 1302, not in 1299.

Although we mention the date of 1492, when the Moscow Principality and the Ottoman State contacted each other through their envoys, as the beginning of the historical process of Turkish–Russian relations, relations -between these two nations date back earlier. The northern wing of the Turkic migrations from east to west, which goes back to the era in B.C., always forced the Slavs and Turks to coexist, especially in the sub-forest areas of the Ukrainian steppes. For this reason, Lev Nikolayevich Gumilyev mentions the similarities of these two co-existing people in his work *Ancient Turks*, especially in the Ukrainian region.<sup>1</sup> The existence of the Turkic states in the region that began with the Huns in the 4th century AD, continued with the Avars<sup>2</sup> (AD 558-619), Khazars (AD 558-965), Pechenegs (AD 860-1091), Cumans (Kipchaks), and Ogurs (Bulgars; AD 630-864), which were formed after the breakup of the Gokturks<sup>3</sup> (AD 552-745). This political structure continued its dominance in the region with the Turkish Mongol emperor Genghis Khan (1162-1227) and his sons.

The Ottoman State emerged as a social, political and economic power in Anatolia and the Balkans. The state had its most powerful period in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Russians began to gain strength in the 16th century, and in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries they gained a political advantage over the Ottoman state. In addition, as the Russians aimed to expand their borders to Caucasus in the south, they fought with the Ottoman State continuously.

Russia's aim was to dominate the Black Sea, the straits, and the Mediterranean trade zone in order to be effective politically and economically. In the meantime, the Ottoman Empire had to defend these areas. It is also known that the Ottoman Empire helped the Turkistan khanates in Central Asia in order to prevent Russia progressing to the Caucasus and the Black

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1 For detailed information see; Nev Nikolayeviç Gumilyef *Eski Türkler*, (Translated by Ahsen Batur), Selenge, İstanbul 2002.

2 In 558, Avars settled along the Danube River and became neighbor to Slavs. They raided in Central Europe. In 619, they surrounded the İstanbul and failed, then the state weakened and was broke down.

3 Gokturks was the first state which Turks' name was used in history. It has been established by Bumin Qaghan in 552 and collapsed by Karluks and Uyghurs in 745.

Sea. This is why the powerful Grand Vizier Sokullu came to Astrakhan in 1568 to stop Russia, and wanted to realize the goal of facilitating logistical transportation to the Caspian Sea by joining the Volga and Don Rivers with the Or Canal.



Figure 1: Ottoman Empire in the 15-16-17 centuries<sup>4</sup>.

The first diplomatic relations between the Ottoman State and the Russians was established during the reign of Sultan Bayezid II, who ruled from 1481 to 1512, when Ivan III Vasilyevich – also known as Ivan the Great, who reigned from 1462 to 1505 – sent his ambassador, Alexis Golovkastof, to Istanbul to liberalize the trade of Russian trade ships in the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean (İnalçık, 1992). Connected to this, and considering their power and status, the Ottomans did not accept the Duchy of Moscow as their direct respondent but notified them that they would conduct their relations through the Crimean Khanate, which was subject to Ottoman rule. Especially with the weakening and collapse of the Golden Horde State (Saray, 1989), and the collapse of its successor khanates in the

4 <http://www.iranpoliticsclub.net/maps/maps09/index.htm> date accessed: 14.01.2017.

fifteenth century, first the Khazan Khanate in 1552 and then the Astrakhan Khanate in 1556 (Saray, 1991) were defeated by the Russians. Based on these events, the Russians began to dominate Western Turkistan. By the end of the sixteenth century, Russian Tsardom became a great state threatening Sweden and Poland in the west with the wealth and power it gained in the east. The Astrakhan campaign and the Or Canal project launched by Sokullu Mehmet Pasha in 1568 failed due to the negligence of the Crimean Khan and logistical impossibility, and the expansion of Russia to the east and south could not be prevented by the Ottoman Empire (İnalçık, 1992).<sup>5</sup>

It can be considered that the project of joining the Don and Volga Rivers, which is planned by Sokullu Mehmet Pasha and opening a door to Turkistan, was intended to stop the Russians who were emerging as a new power and could be a future threat to the Ottoman Empire's sovereignty in the north. According to Inalçık, this project was planned at the time of the Kanuni era and aimed at stopping the Russians, who came from the north (İnalçık, 1948). The pressures on Muslim peoples in Astrakhan<sup>6</sup> and its surroundings during the Kanuni period (reigned 1520-1566) continued in the era of Ottoman ruler Selim II (reigned 1566-1574) (Fig.2). Continuing to fight the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean for pilgrimage and trade routes, the Ottomans returned to the north in early 1568 and launched the Astrakhan campaign in order to prevent threats from Russia. After these preparations, which continued throughout the winter, they came to the area, a little north of Astrakhan, in August 1569. This area was discovered by the ancient Greeks to be the mostshallow ground that the Don and Volga Rivers cross over before they flow into two separate seas (Özcan, 2013). The excavation of the canal started at the area between the Ilovlya branch of the Don River and the Kamsyshinka branch of Volga (now called the town of Petroval). The excavations continued for three months continuously and one-third of the channel was opened. About 30,000 Nogay Tatars were hired to work on the canal works. The historian Pechevi<sup>7</sup> says that, although there was no lack of security, food and equipment, the Tatars had spread a rumor among soldiers that winter comes to the region three months earlier, and that it would not be possible to work in the unbearable cold; therefore, the soldiers returned. Despite the edict of the Ottoman ruler Selim II, which ordered the army to spend the winter in Astrakhan, the army disobeyed the order and withdrew.

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5 Also see: detailed information on Astarkhan campaign; See Kamalov (2011) and Kurat (2011).

6 Astrakhan is a city in southern Russia. The city lies on 2 banks of the Volga River, close to where it discharges into the Caspian Sea. Today, there are 5 big cities in the region. These are: Akhtubinsk, Kamyzyak, Kharabali, Narimanov, and Znamensk.

7 See Bayka (1981).



**Figure 2: Astrakhan Region, Russian Federation**

After the Ottomans left the Astrakhan region, they were not interested in the region for about a century. However, during this time, the Crimea Khanate, under the aegis of the Ottomans, continued to control Russia and to receive taxes on behalf of the Ottoman State from Russia in accordance with existing agreements. In fact, Crimean horsemen burnt down Moscow completely in 1571 to prevent Russia gaining strength. In 1552, Russia attacked the Khazan Khanate, in the east and captured the capital Kazan; there was a great massacre. The main purpose of the Russian expansion of their territory to the south, which was a threat to the Ottomans, was to acquire land for agriculture and to make it possible for poor Russian villagers to have access to fertile lands. In 1502, the Crimean Khanate broke the power of the Great Horde by conquering Saray – the last fortress of the Golden Horde – and gained control over Khazan and the territory around it. The people affected by this turmoil were placed in Perskop city (Safargaliyev, 1960). Therefore, the lands between Ryazan and the Crimean khanate remained empty and these lands not owned by anyone; they were called Dikoye Pole (wild field). Kazakhs and peasants from Russia started to settle in these empty lands. Before

long, the Kazakhs started to settle in Dnepr at the borders of the Crimean Khanate (Oreshkova, 2005). Hoping to protect itself from the pressure of the Crimean Khanate, Moscow built “ostrogs”<sup>8</sup> and fortresses. The Russians completed building Belgorod, the most important southern defense line – some 800-km long – in 1653. This border line not only secured the south but it also expanded the Russian border about 100 km down to the land of the Crimean Khanate. This process caused the Russians to learn about the surrounding region along the Ukrainian lands. In addition, the Russians settled these lands by building ostrogs. Even if the Russian armies lost the wars against the Ottoman armies, they became the true owner of the region because they settled in this area. Based on these events, Ukraine became one of the most important migration areas for Russians. Nonetheless, the Turks did not see the Russians as a serious threat in the sixteenth and for most of the seventeenth centuries; therefore, did not plan to conquer the Russian territories to keep it under control (Oreshkova, 2005).

From 1654 onwards, under the influence of the Cossacks<sup>9</sup>, the Russians captured most of Ukraine and seized places with strategic importance from both the Crimean Khanate and the Ottomans. In the meantime, Hetman Doroshenko, the king of Ukraine, abandoned Ottoman patronage and began to be under the patronage of Russian. This caused the Ottoman army under the command of Mustafa Pasha, including the forces of the Crimean Khanate, to march into Ukraine’s capital, Cyhyryn city, in 1678. It was the beginning of a new era in the history of the two neighboring states when they began to fight directly (Kurat, 2011). According to the Bahchesaray Agreement<sup>10</sup> (3 January 1681) signed between the Crimean Khanate and the Russians after this war, which ended with an absolute victory of the Ottoman army in 1681, the Russians agreed that they would continue to pay taxes to Crimea. The Ottoman State continued to refuse to accept the Russians as their direct interlocutor in this period, and conducted their relations through the Crimean Khanate (Saray, 2014).

However, the Ottoman raids into Poland and Russia did not have the potential to fix the distorted economic order (the taxation system; timar<sup>11</sup> and iltizam<sup>12</sup>). For this reason, according to the general opinion of the Russian historians, despite the victories between 1676-

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8 Ostrog is a term (Russian) for a small fort, commonly wooden and generally non-permanently manned.

9 Cossacks had been a group of predominantly East Slavic-speaking people who became called as individuals of democratic, self-governing, semi-military communities, preponderantly located in Ukraine.

10 Bahcesaray Aggrement was signed in Bahchesaray, which ended the Russian-Ottoman War (1676–1681), on 3 January 1681 by Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and the Crimean Khanate. This is the first agreement signed between the Ottoman State and Russia.

11 A timar was land, granted by the Ottoman sultans, between the 14th and 16th centuries, with a tax revenue annual value of fewer than 20 000 akces.

12 An iltizam was a form of tax farm in the fifteenth century in the Ottoman Empire.



1681, the Ottoman state gave up its interest in Ukraine and Russia and turned its attention to Central Europe, leaving the region to the governance of the Crimean Khanates. A. L. Nordin-Nayokin, who was the foreign relations officer of Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich, believed that the peace achieved with Poland had to also be reached with the Ottomans, and he warned the Russian Tsar accordingly (Oreshkova, 2005).

When the Ottoman Empire was defeated at the apex of its power in Vienna in 1683 – with the encouragement of the Pope – Austria, Poland, Russia, Venice and Malta formed the Holy League. The battles against the Holy League, which lasted for 16 years, severely damaged the Ottoman Empire and weakened its power. In 1699, with the Treaty of Karlowitz, the Ottoman Empire admitted defeat and withdrew from the war. Poland also signed an agreement that it accepted Russian sovereignty over the territory of Kiev and Smolensk in return for Russia joining the Holy League.<sup>13</sup> For the Holy League, Russia launched two campaigns in Crimea under the command of Prince Golitsin between 1687 and 1689, but could not succeed in capturing Crimea, and had to retreat after suffering major defeats (Kurat, 2011). This alliance against the Ottoman Empire was a new foreign policy by Russia. Russia would continue to advance into Ottoman Black Sea ports.

Since Tsar Peter I (reigned 1682-1725) attached great importance to maritime trade, he besieged the Castle of Azak located at a key point on the Black Sea with a large Russian army in the spring of 1695. Although the Ottoman troops repelled the Russian attacks at first with the strong resistance of soldiers and the support they received from the sea, Peter I took over the castle on 19 July 1696 (Gürsel, 1968). In doing so, the Russians gained direct access to the sea trade, the importance of which they had previously noticed. The Castle of Azak, invaded by Russians, was also important for transporting the possessions that Russians obtained in the 17th century to various places of the world via the Black Sea, Aegean Sea, and Mediterranean Sea. Now, Russian merchants would be able to carry their fur and valuable chemical materials from Siberia to the important ports of the world.

The Ottoman State signed the Treaty of Karlowitz with the Austrian, Venetian, Polish, and Russian states of the Holy League on 23 January 1699 (Özcan, 2001). One year later, with the arrival of the Russian representatives to Istanbul, the “Istanbul Treaty” – as a continuation of the Treaty of Karlowitz – was signed with Russia on 13 July 1700. As a result of this agreement, the Russians, who had previously contacted with the Ottoman State through the Crimea Khanate, made a bilateral agreement with the Ottoman Empire, and succeeded

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13 Polnoe sobraniye zakonov rossiskoy imperii, Vol. II, No: 864, Snp. 1830.

in holding the important Azak Castle (Kurat, 2011). In addition, by holding a strategic commercial center that would lead to the warm seas of the Mediterranean, Russian Tsar Peter I made a move that could be influential in international politics. It was also important for Russia to make this agreement at a time when the Holy League was weakened. Russia had also acquired land by benefitting from this weakness.

The Ottoman Empire gathered an army under the command of Baltacı Mehmet Pasha<sup>14</sup> in 1711 in order to stop Russia's movement along the Caucasus and the Black Sea. The Ottoman army besieged the Russian army on the edge of the Prut River. However, no war began between them, and Baltacı Mehmet Pasha lifted the siege by accepting the offer of Tsar Peter I (reigned 1682-1725), and the Prut Agreement was signed on 21 July 1711.<sup>15</sup>

According to the agreement, Azak Castle, previously held by Russia, would be returned to the Ottoman State. Moreover, all castles on Ottoman-Russian border constructed by Russia would be destroyed, and the Russians would stop interfering with the affairs of Poland and the Cossacks of the Crimea. In addition, Charles XII of Sweden would be able to return to his country and Russia would not prevent it. Apart from Russian merchants, there would be no Russian ambassador in Turkey, the prisoners of war would be returned to the Ottoman State, and Russia would pay taxes to Crimean Khanate as it had done in the past (Kocabaş, 1989). The Prut treaty can be considered as official proof that the Turks were still militarily strong; however, Turkish army was mentioned as a disorganized army in the resources at that time. Again, the agreement was even more important to the Russians, as Russian diplomacy had succeeded in making an agreement with the least loss and without fighting (Saray, 1998). Peter I prevented the possible destruction of the Russian army by maneuvering when he was trapped by the Prut River (Kocabaş, 1989).<sup>16</sup> Although Turkish historians consider this agreement to be an important event due to the success of the Russians in their dealings, Russian historians are not convinced that their country signed a very successful treaty, because all of the previous achievements of the Russians were taken back through this agreement, and

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14 Baltacı Mehmet Pasha was an Ottoman statesman who served as grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire from 1704 to 1706, and as Kaptan-ı Derya (grand admiral of the Ottoman Navy) in 1704.

15 For detailed information on Prut war and peace, see: Akdes Nimet Kurat, *İsveç Kralı XII. Karl'ın Türkiye'de kaldığı zamana ait Metinler ve Vesikalar*, Rıza Coşkun Matbaası, İstanbul, 1943; Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Prut Seferi ve Barışı*, II Vol., TTK Basımevi, Ankara 1953.

16 There are few different views on why Baltacı Mehmet Pasha signed this treaty. Although some resources argue that Catherina, the spouse of Peter, visited Baltacı Mehmet Pasha's camp with jewelries and that Baltacı showed weakness to Catherine and the jewelries (Samiha Ayverdi, *Türk-Rus Münasebetleri ve Muharebeleri*, Kubbealtı, İstanbul, 2012, p. 203), some other important studies state that Catherine never visited Baltacı Mehmet Pasha's camp but she sent jewelery as presents and those jewelries were recorded and taken as state treasury. For detailed information see: Afyoncu (2015).

they had to evacuate the Zaporizhia<sup>17</sup> region; thus Peter I could not realize his goal of reaching the Black Sea coast. Moreover, with the border agreements made with the Russians – first in 1720 and then in 1724 – the border lines of both sides remained the same (Nikiforov, 1952).

The Ottoman State sent Nishli Mehmet Aga to Russia as a middle-ambassador to discuss the issue of Iran and the pressures on the Muslims living in Russia, who are under the patronage of the Ottoman State. Kapıcıbaşı Nishli Mehmet Aga was the first among ambassadors to Russia who wrote a *sefaretname*<sup>18</sup> (recounting the journeys and experiences of an Ottoman ambassador in a foreign country). He left Istanbul in October 1722 and returned on 17 February 1723. The ambassador conveyed a proposal regarding the attack on Iran and the partition of Iran. He also demanded that legal rights be given to Muslims living in the region and an end to their persecution (Unat, 2008). After the Vienna defeat, the Ottoman State had to compromise on the Russian project of placing a Russian population on the Caucasus and Ottoman border. However, the Ottoman State recovered in a short time and managed to stop its losses temporarily by establishing a balance in foreign policy. The psychological superiority due to Prut victory in 1711 had an important place in this success.

The peaceful period between the Ottoman State and the Russian Tsardom ended in the period of Russian Czarina Anna Ivanovna (1730-40). The Russian Czarina, making an agreement with Austrian emperor Karl VI, waged war against the Ottoman Empire in 1736 when they attacked the Castles of Crimea, Özi, Azak, and Khotyn. In the same year, the Austrian state declared war against the Ottoman Empire based on the agreement with Russia (Uzunçarşılı, 2011). The Ottoman army succeeded in this struggle against the two great countries in the course of almost three years, centering primarily on the Austrian front. With the Treaty of Belgrade<sup>19</sup> (18 September 1739) signed with Austria, the Ottoman State took back the lands it had previously lost. The agreement with the Russians consisted of fifteen articles and one conclusion part (Uzunçarşılı, 2011). According to this agreement, Russia was to withdraw from the territories it had invaded previously and the Castle of Azak was to be destroyed and the land was made neutral. The independence of the Kabardins<sup>20</sup> territories was recognized.

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17 Today corresponds to Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, as well as large part of Zaporizhia and Oblasts and a certain part of Kherson and Donetsk Oblast.

18 *Sefaretname*, the book of embassy, was a type in the Turkish literature which was closely related to *seyahatname* (the book of travels), but was specific to the recounting of journeys and experiences of an Ottoman ambassador in a foreign, usually in Europe.

19 Treaty of Belgrade achieved by the Ottoman Empire that ended a four-year war with Russia and a two-year war with Austria. According to the Treaty of Belgrade, Russia won back Azak Castle, also was prohibited from maintaining a fleet on the Black Sea, and trade on the Black Sea could be conducted only in Turkish vessels. Russia returned Wallachia and Moldavia to the Ottoman control.

20 Kabardins are the largest one of the twelve Adyghe (Circassian) tribes (sub-ethnic groups).

It was decided that the Russians would stop attacks on Cossacks and that the Crimean Tatars (İnalçık, 2008) would stop their raids on Russia. The Russians were not allowed to have naval vessels and merchant ships in the Black Sea (Afyoncu, 2010). The Belgrade Agreement in 1739 was made at the request of Austria and its ally Russia. In these wars, the Ottoman State defeated the Austrian army in Niš and took back Belgrade, however, it was not very successful against the Russian army, so it had to retreat from Khotyn and Bender. When Austria withdraw from the war, Russia was alone and had to retreat from the war against the Ottomans. As a result of these wars, the Ottoman Empire had been successful militarily; however, its financial health deteriorated because of debts to Europe, especially to France. Moreover, the Belgrade Agreement marked the beginning of the process in which Europe would have a role as an important factor in the relations between Russia and the Ottoman State.

After the Belgrade Agreement with the Russians, it was decided to reciprocally send ambassadors. In this respect, Mehmet Emni Efendi was sent to Petersburg with the title of Governor of Anatolia (Unat, 1989). Emni Efendi, who set out in 1741, was responsible for resolving the issues on the implementation of the provisions of the Belgrade Agreement. Emni Efendi, who was a successful diplomat, also discussed issues such as the exchange of captives and referring to the Russian tsars as emperors in protocols. Emni Efendi returned to Istanbul in 1742 and wrote a sefaretname on this travel (Turan, 2012).

In the period of Czarina Yelizaveta Petrovna (reigned 1741-1762), there was no war between Russia and Turkey and relations were peaceful. Relations between the Ottoman State and the Russian Tsardom continued at the diplomatic level. In the meantime, Dervish Mehmet Efendi, who travelled from Istanbul to St. Petersburg in 1754, conveyed the edict of the Sultan to Czarina Elizabeth to inform her of the Ottoman ruler Osman III's (1754-1757) accession to Ottoman throne. Mehmet Efendi, who wrote his journey as a sefaretname, returned with the letters of the empress in 1755 (Unat, 1989). When Mustafa III (1757-1774) ascended to the Ottoman throne, he sent Shehdi Osman Efendi in 1757, who had previously traveled to Russia as part of Mehmet Emni Efendi's entourage, with the title of Şikk-ı Sani Defterdarlığı (a title of high-ranking finance officer) to inform the Russian state of his accession to throne. Returning from St. Petersburg in 1758, Shehdi Efendi gave information and detailed descriptions on the state of Russia by writing a sefaretname (Unat, 1989).

Russian Czarina Catherina II (reigned 1762-1796) had elected Stanisław Poniatowski as the king of Poland to succeed King August III (Uzunçarşılı, 2011). With Polish refugees taking refuge in the Ottoman lands, the Russians chased after them and massacred both the refugees and the Muslims. As a result, Ottoman ruler Mustafa III declared war on Russian in 1768

(Kurat, 2011). The chancellor of Catherina II, M. I. Vorontsov, stated in his report dated 1762 (Oreshkova, 2005) that Russia could not be safe if the Crimea remained as part of the Ottoman State. Crimea was the most important way for Russians to reach the Mediterranean through the Black Sea. Therefore, after the Russian intervention in Poland and Sweden, it was also very important strategically for the Russians to keep Crimea under their patronage. In 1769, the Russian State Council took the first step to have the territory of Crimea by recognizing the independence of Crimea. Russian historians interpret this event as a political decision taken in terms of the balance of power in the world and emphasize that it was very accurate. Because, according to Russian historians, the annexation of the Crimean territory could have stirred the reaction of other Western states. Russia would be forced to go into a war that she was unprepared for and could lose completely the land gains against the Ottomans. The Russian-Turkish war began in 1768 and lasted until 1774. The Turks, defeated both on land and at sea, had to enter peace negotiations with the Russians. Peace negotiations were started in Focshani and Bucharest, but no agreement could be reached due to the excessive demands of the Russians. However, as a result of the increase in Turkish defeats, a truce was concluded on 10-21 July 1774 in Küçük Kaynarca (today Kaynardzha) (Muahedat Mecmuası, 2008).



Figure 3: Ottoman Empire in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>21</sup>.

21 Website of Harvard University <http://dighist.fas.harvard.edu/courses/2015/HUM54/exhibits/show/suleymaniye/item/1357> date accessed: 14.01.2018.

The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca is one of the most burdensome treaties in the history of the Ottoman Empire in terms of its conditions.<sup>22</sup> A turning point for the Ottoman Empire, this agreement consists of twenty eight articles and two separate provisions. It allowed the Russians to take vast lands between the Dnepr and Dniester rivers and set the Kuban River as the border. The Russians, who separated the Crimea from the Ottomans and ensured its independence, had the right to control the Crimea and the Kerch Strait (Kurat, 2011). The Russians, who controlled the Crimea, had the right to control the Kerch Strait, the most important place on the Black Sea. A history of Crimea (Russian Sefaretname 1771-1775), written by Necati Efendi – part of the entourage of Silahdar İbrahim Pasha – deals with the wars of Russia against Crimea and narrates the Ottoman–Russian war between 1768-1774, especially on the Crimean front. It was decided to send an envoy from the Ottoman State to Russia, and Russia to the Ottoman State, to discuss the problems arising out of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. For this purpose, the Babiali (literally “sublime porte” or Ottoman government) sent Çavuşbashi Abdülkerim Efendi to Russia in 1775 as an ambassador with the title of Governor of Rumelia. Mehmet Emin Nahifi Efendi, the poet and high-ranking military officer (müşir), served as an emissary of Abdülkerim Pasha and explained in his sefaretname the struggles regarding the settlement of the problems arising after this agreement (Bay, 2014).<sup>23</sup>

The Russians increased their activities towards Crimea after Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. With respect to the Crimea issue, the Aynalıkavak bond of arbitration (Aynalıkavak tenkihnamesi in Turkish) was signed between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, with the mediation of France and England, on 21 March 1779 (Saray, 1998). The treaty emphasized that the Crimea was independent and the dominance of the Ottoman State over the Crimea was reduced gradually (Uzunçarşılı, 2011). The Crimea issue between the Ottomans and the Russians continued to be important, and finally Catherina II invaded Crimea in 1783 with an army of seventy thousand soldiers led by Potempkin. The Ottoman State, however, failed to respond to this situation due to its economic and military inadequacy and accepted the situation implicitly (Uzunçarşılı, 2011; Solovyev, 1830).

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22 The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca was a peace treaty signed on 21 July 1774, in Küçük Kaynarca between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. According to the treaty, Turkey abandoned control of the northern coast of the Black Sea. Russia gained the right to keep a fleet on the Black Sea and rights of protection over the Christian people of European countries under Turkish rule. The Crimean Khanate was declared to be independent of Turkey except for religious matters.

23 Also see: Turan (2012), p.43.

The lands of the Crimea and its surrounding region were one of the main resources of the Ottoman Empire, not only in terms of population, but also for strategic and logistic reasons.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the settlement of Russia in the region would bring about a total loss of activity in the area for Ottoman Turkey in the future. For this reason, the Ottomans fought for years against Russia (1787-1792, 1807-1812, 1853-1866). The Ottomans declared war against the Russians again in August 1787 as a result of the increasing desire of the Russians towards the warm seas, especially the Black Sea. Austria also became a party to this war, and the Ottoman State had to fight two major states in two fronts (Kurat, 2011). The main purpose of the Ottoman State in entering the war was to take the Crimea back and to push the Russians to the borders that existed before the signing of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. The aim of Czarina Catherina II was to eradicate the Ottoman Empire and become the sole sovereign of the Black Sea, to make the Balkans Russian subjects, and to establish a Greek state (supported by her) in Istanbul (Aksan, 2011). The Russians, who cooperated with Austria, achieved great victories in the battles against the Ottoman State. The interpretations of Russian historians also overlap with those of Turkish historians. According to both groups of scholars, the Orthodox subjects in the Ottoman State, and Muslims and Turkish subjects in Russia, were the most important factor in the relations between the two states. While the two states were fighting out with the opposing party outside their borders, they were also mainstreaming this struggle among the people involved with religious institutions and clerics within their borders. In this context, the Russian state used the Orthodox church and clerics, and the Ottoman state used the caliphate and imams, as part of the war.

At the beginning of the war, the Ottoman State requested support from Sweden and Prussia against Russia and signed an alliance with these states.<sup>25</sup> However, these alliances were not successful due to the French Revolution, and the Ottoman State was left without allies in its war against Russia (Kocabaş, 1989). With the French Revolution, which shook Europe and the world and marked the beginning of a new age of nationalism, the Russians declared that they wanted to negotiate with the Ottomans but the defeated Ottomans did not accept the request for these negotiations. After Koca Yusuf Pasha's appointment as Grand Vizier<sup>26</sup>, the Ottoman State, which could not get the support expected from Prussia, sent the delegation that had

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24 Historically, the Crimean Khans had been power that ruled Russia (both Caucasus and Ukrainian steppes) for centuries. With the loss of Crimea, Ottomans had lost this power. In addition, Kerch Strait, as a natural port, is the most important commercial route for the north of the Black Sea.

25 For Ottoman-Prussia alliance see: Beydilli (1790).

26 In the Ottoman State, the Grand Vizier (Sadrazam) was the prime minister, with the absolute power of attorney and, in principle dismissible only by sultan himself.

previously signed the Sistova Agreement to Iași (Jassy)<sup>27</sup> to conduct peace negotiations. The negotiations started in November 1791 but would not be completed until January 1792; the Treaty of Jassy (Muahedat Mecmuası, 2008), consisting of thirteen articles and a conclusion, was then signed. According to this treaty, the Ottoman State accepted all treaties in force: namely the 1774 Treaty of Kaynarca, the 1779 Aynalıkavak Tenkihnamesi, the 1783 Trade Agreement, and the annexation of the Crimea and Taman in 1784. The land on the left side of Dniester River<sup>28</sup> would be given to the Russians together with Ochakov Castle, while Ismail, Bender, Akkerman, and Kili Castles would be given to the Ottomans. The tax debts of the Bogdan Voivodeship<sup>29</sup> would be cancelled, taxes would not be collected for two years, and public amnesty for the captives of both sides would be announced. Kuban<sup>30</sup> would be the border between the two states in the Caucasus. To assure the peaceful relations between Russia and the Ottoman State, the governors of Cildir would not attack Tbilisi, the Georgian Prince. Russian merchant ships would be protected by the Ottoman Navy against the pirates of Garp Ocakları (pirates from Algeria), and Garp Ocakları would compensate any damages to such ships; the Ottomans would provide such compensation if the pirates did not pay (Uzunçarşılı, 2010).<sup>31</sup>

Long-standing Russian-Ottoman wars have helped the Russian army to improve its technological capabilities and renew its military system. The same battles had weakened the Ottoman army, and deteriorated overall financial stability by bringing extra costs to the state treasury, which was already in poor condition. As a result of the defeat in the Ottoman-Russian wars, Selim III understood the necessity of reforming the Ottoman military and wanted to create a new and modern army (Aksan, 2011).

During the Peloponnese and Greek revolts (1821-1829) against the Ottoman government, Russia, England, and France formed a triple alliance and transformed the Ottoman State's

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27 Iași (Jassy or lassy) is the second largest city in Romania. Iași is located in the historical region of Moldavia, and had traditionally been one of the leading centers of Romanian Social, cultural, academic and artistic life. The city was the capital of the Principality of Moldavia from 1564 to 1859, then of the United Principalities from 1859 to 1862, and the capital of Romania from 1916 to 1918.

28 The Dniester is a river in Eastern Europe. It runs through Ukraine and then through Moldova, finally discharging into the Black Sea on Ukrainian territory again.

29 Bogdan is a Slavic name that also appears in Ukraine, Romania and Moldova. Voivode is an Eastern European title that initially denoted the principal commander of a military force. During Ottoman times, voivode was the title borne by the ruler of a province, whose powers included the administration, security and tax collection under a special regime. The territory ruled or administered by a voivode is known as a voivodeship. In English, the title is often called as "duke" or "prince".

30 The Kuban River is a river within the Northwest Caucasus region of European Russia. It flows mostly through Krasnodar Krai, but also in the Karachay Cherkess Republic, Stavropol Krai and the Republic of Adygea.

31 Also see: Kuzucu (2013), p. 233–236.



domestic affairs into a European problem. In addition to incitement activities organized in Balkans against the Ottoman government through Orthodox churches, the Russians burned the Ottoman Navy in Navarino (1828-1829) (Muahedat Mecmuası, 2008). Despite the request of the Ottoman Empire for compensation, the Russians declared war in 1828<sup>32</sup>, and taking advantage of the weakness of the Ottoman Empire with no navy, they crossed the Black Sea and landed at Edirne<sup>33</sup>. Ibrahim Pasha, the son of the Governor of Egypt Mehmet Ali Pasha, had been waiting for help from the Ottoman army but had to abandon the Peloponnese<sup>34</sup> when the necessary aid did not reach him. The Ottoman Empire had lost the Ottoman-Russian War in 1828-1829, and accepted the independence of Greece through the Treaty of Edirne signed with Russia in 1829. The Russians occupied Ahiska, Kars, and Erzurum under the command of General Paskiyevic. The war ended with the Treaty of Edirne (1829) (Kurat, 2011). In the Central Balkans, the border between Europe and the Ottoman Empire would again be the Prut River, but the rights given earlier in international agreements to Moldavia-Wallachia and Serbia would be increased. In addition to granting full independence to Greece, Russia would be paid a substantial amount of compensation by the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, following Treaty of Edirne, Serbia declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1830 with the support of Russia (Armaoğlu, 2014). In short, the Ottoman Empire had admitted the defeat against Russia with the treaties of Küçük Kaynarca, Jassy and Edirne. Especially after the Treaty of Edirne, the balance between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was ensured by the help and support of England and France to the Ottoman Empire.

The Turkish state, which had survived the Russian threat through the Treaty of Edirne with severe losses, had to deal with the revolt of Mehmet Ali Pasha, the rebellious governor of Egypt. M. Ali Pasha, who was not recognized as the governor of Syria, came to Kütahya<sup>35</sup> after defeating the Ottoman armies. Ottoman ruler Mahmut II (reigned 1808-1839) had to make an alliance with the Russians on 8 July 1833 to suppress the revolt of M. Ali Pasha. According to this alliance, which was known as the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi (Muahedat Mecmuası, 2008), the Russian army would help to the untrained and technologically inferior Ottoman army, and

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32 Russian-Turkish War of 1828–1829 was begun in consequence of the Greek Revolution regarding the announcing an autonomous state against the Ottoman Empire. When the empire did not accept this, Russia declared war against the empire in 1828. When the Ottoman army had to withdraw, the Treaty of Adrianople (the Treaty of Edirne) was signed in 1829, between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Greece won independence from the Ottoman Empire and Serbia achieved autonomy.

33 Edirne is a city in the region of East Thrace in the northwestern of Turkey, close to Turkey's borders with Greece and Bulgaria. Edirne had been the third capital city of the Ottoman Empire from 1363 to 1453.

34 The Peloponnese, known as Morea in the Ottoman era, is a peninsula in southern Greece. It is separated from the central part of the country by Gulf of Corinth and the Isthmus.

35 Kütahya, lying on the Porsuk river, is a province in the Aegean region of Turkey, and 11,889 km<sup>2</sup> in size.

subsidize the Ottoman treasury (which was having difficulties with repayment). In the case of war with other states except Russia, the Ottoman State would help Russia by closing the straits to all other states. With this change in strategy<sup>36</sup>, the Egypt issue was now on the agenda as an international topic that was of interest of France, England, and Russia because Egypt and its surroundings was a very important strategic location. France, England, and Italy had desired to be ascendant in North Africa. As a result of the negotiations on the Egypt issue with the European States, the Strait of Istanbul (Bosporus), the Strait of Çanakkale (Dardanelles), which were under control of the Ottoman Empire, gained an international status. Moreover, the privileges given to Russia by the Ottoman Empire in the straits had been removed with the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi (1833) (Ayverdi, 2012).

After the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi (1833), Ottoman-Russian relations witnessed a peaceful period. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) provided the Russians protection of Orthodox Christians living in the Balkans as vassals of the Ottoman Empire. Using this advantage, the Russian Tsardom had incited the Orthodox people in the Balkans against the Ottomans, and the Ottoman-Russian wars began again in 1853. Britain and France joined the Ottoman Empire in these wars – called the Crimean wars – which continued until 1856. Becoming one of the most important forces among the European states after the Vienna Congress of 1815, Russia suffered a heavy defeat in the Crimean Wars, because the Russian Navy in the Black Sea was quite weak. even though the Russian Ground Army was strong. After Russia was defeated, it had to sign the Treaty of Paris. According to this treaty, the winning countries – namely France, England, and the Ottoman Empire – demanded that Russia abolish the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, and the terms of that treaty were (Muahedat Mecmuası, 2008) cancelled. The Black Sea had been made neutral and unarmed by making new arrangements concerning the Strait of Istanbul and the Strait of Çanakkale). The patronage of the Russians on the Memleketeyn<sup>37</sup> since 1774 (the two cities, Moldavia and Wallachia) was terminated (Kurat, 2011). The Turkish-Russian struggle, which had been continuing with Ottoman defeats for about 150 years, was stopped with the support that the European allies had given to the Ottomans. However, the political, social, and economic concessions given in return for this support caused irreparable consequences for the Ottoman State.

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36 Ottoman-Russian relations continued with wars until the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, however, they became military and commercial partners after this agreement.

37 Memleketeyn that means "two countries" in Turkish, was the lands known as Moldavia (today's Romania) and Wallachia in Ottoman period. Until the 1821 Greek Revolution, in which Greeks had been suspended from the administration, Memleketeyn was ruled by Greeks from Fener, also known as Feneriots.

Russia could not get what it wanted from the Balkans and the Caucasus against England and France, which supported the Ottoman Empire, and started to act by using its power with Orthodox people in the Balkans. In 1857, Wallachia and Moldavia were united to form the Romanian state with Russia's efforts. Russia had increased its effectiveness in the Balkans by intervening in the turmoil that started in Herzegovina in 1875, received the support of the community and weakened the Ottoman government thoroughly (Kurat, 2011).

Russia regained the prestige that it had lost in the Balkans and the Caucasus during the Crimea War, and grew stronger; this situation was the reason for a new Russian-Ottoman War (1877-1878), known as the "War of 93". During these wars, which had become the biggest defeats for the Ottoman State in its history, the Russians massacred hundreds of thousands of Muslims, came to close to Istanbul (the capital of Ottoman Empire), and invaded the Balkans (Beydilli, 2008). On the Caucasian front, Kars and Erzurum – which are on the eastern border of the Ottoman Empire – fell to the Russians. With the Treaty of San Stefano (Armaoğlu, 2014) signed between the two states on 3 March 1878, it was acknowledged that the Ottoman Empire had lost all territories in Europe and the Caucasus. However, Britain and Austria, opposed to sole Russian ownership of the Ottoman lands, were not willing to let Russia establish its rule in the Balkans and Central Europe, and they organized the Berlin Congress (13 June-13 July 1878). The states in the Balkans were recognized as independent at this conference (Burçak, 1946).

In 1905, the Russians, defeated by Japan during the Russian-Japanese War, turned their attention back to the Balkans. Balkan countries – namely Albania, Crete, Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria – wanted to leave the Ottoman Empire. Russia provided all possible help to the Balkan countries in their desire to leave. This support led to the start of the Ottoman-Balkan Wars (1912-1913). The rebellious Balkan countries entered into their wars of independence against the Ottoman Empire forming Serb-Bulgarian, Bulgarian-Greek, Montenegro-Serbian, and Montenegro-Bulgarian alliances. The Serb-Bulgarian, Bulgarian-Greek, Montenegro-Serbia and Montenegro-Bulgaria alliances, which fought for independence against Ottoman Empire in 1912, achieved great success and defeated the Ottomans. They occupied the west of Thrace<sup>38</sup> and all the Balkan lands extending to Edirne, and shared the lands amongst themselves. The Balkan countries, which were separated from the Ottoman Empire and declared their independence, then began fighting, as they could not agree to share the lands that they gained. Soon after these events in the Balkans, the Russians

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38 Thrace is an area in southeast Europe, now separates Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, comprises southeastern Bulgaria, northeastern Greece and the European part of Turkey. It is bordered by the Black Sea to the east, the Aegean Sea to the south and Balkan Mountains to the north.

had another conflict with the Ottoman State over Armenian politics. With a document dated 8 February 1914, two large autonomous Armenian provinces based in Van and Erzurum were founded in Eastern Anatolia under foreign governorate inspectors (Beydilli, 2008).

### **Turkish-Russian Relations in Soviet Times**

When World War I broke out in 1914, the Ottoman State tried to remain impartial, but England and France, which the Ottoman State had wanted to make alliances with, refused to join an alliance with the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman State then began negotiations with Germany for an alliance. While negotiations were ongoing, the German Navy bombed Odessa and Sevastopol on the Black Sea Coast of Russia, and Russia declared war against the Ottoman State on 2 November 1914 (Gürsel, 1968).

The Ottoman Empire fought with Russia only in the Caucasus during the First World War. After the failure of Enver Pasha in the Sarikamis campaign<sup>39</sup>, the Russians occupied Erzurum, Trabzon, Erzincan, and Mush in 1916. After the February 1917 Revolution in Russia, an armistice was signed between the Ottoman State and Russia in December 1917, which ended the war. With the February Revolution on 23 February 1917, the Romanov family, who ruled Russia, had to hand over power to the Petrograd Soviet under the presidency of Nikolay Chkheidze, and the Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin – who was in exile in Switzerland – returned to Russia on 3 April 1917. While Russia was tackling these revolutions, the Ottoman army under the control of Enver Pasha – which was reinforced by Azerbaijani and Daghestani volunteers – captured Baku in April 1918. Even though Russia had domestic problems, the Ottoman army could not achieve the success they had expected. Thus, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, a peace treaty signed between the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Kingdom of Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, was then agreed to. According to the Brest-Litovsk Peace Agreement, Kars, Artvin, Batum, and Ardahan<sup>40</sup> were left to the Ottoman Empire. However, the Ottoman Empire's allies – Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria – retreated from World War One by admitting defeat in September 1918. Although the Ottoman Empire had succeeded in Canakkale and the Caucasus, it had to admit defeat as it was left without allies, and signed the Armistice of Mudros with the Entente States (the French Republic, the British Empire and the Russian Empire). The Ottoman Empire fell with this armistice, and Istanbul (Constantinople), the

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39 The Battle of Sarikamish (December 22, 1914 - January 17, 1915) was a conflict between the Russian and Ottoman empires during World War I, in Sarikamish as part of the Caucasus Campaign. It resulted in the Russian victory.

40 Kars, Ardahan, and Batum were known as "Elviye-i Selase" in Ottomans, which were three cities in Ottoman lands. Today, Kars and Ardahan are in the northeast region of Turkey, while Batum is in the territory of Georgia.

capital of the Ottoman Empire, was occupied by British, French and Italian forces on 16 March 1920. Against the background of these developments, the members of the last term of the Ottoman Parliament, which was convened in Anatolia, began their national movement for independence by declaring the Misak-ı Milli<sup>41</sup> (National Pact) (Burçak, 1946).

Many negotiations were held between the Bolshevik government and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), which ruled during the War of Independence<sup>42</sup>. Russia was supporting the TBMM and its president Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, even covertly supplying weapons. In return for this support, they tried to promulgate Bolshevik propaganda in Anatolia. While the Russians were promising to support the ongoing national independence war of Turkey, they did not fulfill their commitments; they were also supporting the Greeks who were fighting with Turks.

Russia supported the new Republic of Turkey by contributing to preventing the usage of the Straits by all countries during the discussion on the issue of the Straits in the Treaty of Lausanne, which was signed in Lausanne on 24 July 1923 between Turkey and United Kingdom, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Portugal, Belgium, and Yugoslavia. However, other states did not accept this offer (Gürsel, 1968).<sup>43</sup>

The Soviet-Georgian War took place between 15 February and 17 March 1921, and the Soviet army occupied and subjugated Georgia by dividing the southern Caucasus into three autonomous regions (Georgian, Azerbaijani, Armenian). In addition to these events, Russian and Turkish delegations held talks in Moscow in March 1921 to determine the borders in the Caucasus region. With the Treaty of Moscow that was signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic on 16 March 1921, the borders between Turkey, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan were determined (Miller, 1948).

In the early years, the Soviets adopted policies of good neighborliness, non-aggression, and neutrality to minimize the risks of the formation of new blocs by the European states against

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41 Misak-ı Milli (National Pact) is the set of six terms made by the members of the last term of the Ottoman Parliament. The parliament published the terms on 12 February 1920.

42 The Turkish War of Independence (also known as Kurtuluş Savaşı, or İstiklâl Harbi, or Milli Mücadele) was the war in order to protect the unity and territorial integrity of the state after the allies occupied the lands of Ottoman Empire. It was fought between the Turkish National Movement and France on the Southern, Armenia on the Eastern, Greece on the Western front, and the United Kingdom and Italy in Istanbul. The lands of the Ottoman Empire were occupied and partitioned following the Ottomans' defeat in World War I. The Turkish National Movement in Anatolia resulted in the formation of a new Grand National Assembly by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his colleagues. After the end of the Southern Front, Eastern Front, and the Western Front of the war, the Treaty of Sevres was removed, and the Treaties of Kars and Lausanne were signed. Anatolia and Eastern Thrace were left by the Allies, and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey declared the establishment of a Republic in Turkey on October 29, 1923.

43 For detailed information see: Kolesnikov (2010).

it. The first agreement with the Soviets involving mutual friendship and non-aggression with Turkey was signed in Paris on 17 December 1925. According to this agreement, if one of the two states were attacked, the other would remain impartial; the two sides would not attack each other and also would not join a hostile alliance against each other. However, the Turkish Republic's trade relations with the West in the post-Lausanne period was not well received by the Russians, and they were cautious about the new Turkish state, as they considered it as part of the Western bloc (Armaoğlu, 2014) In the Montreux Convention on the Straits, Russia strongly supported Turkish control over the Straits (the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles), because Russia preferred Turkish control of the Straits rather than the other states (United Kingdom, France, USA, Italy, et cetera) in case of war or peace. Friendly relations between Turkey and Russia continued until World War II (Gürsel, 1968).<sup>44</sup>

Soviet-Turkish relations were revived at the beginning of the World War II, and negotiations to form an alliance between the two countries began. For this purpose, Turkey's Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu started to negotiate with Russia's Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov on 21 September 1939. The Soviets, however, surprised Turkey by announcing a non-aggression pact they concluded with Germany. In addition, Molotov presented an offer including the demands of Russia and the arrangement of the Straits regime. The offer was rejected by Saraçoğlu. The rejection of the offer made Stalin angry, and he threatened Saraçoğlu, who had not left Russia, by expressing the impossibility of an alliance with Turkey. Turkey and Soviet Russia froze their ties after these events. In order to guarantee the Straits, Turkey signed an alliance agreement with the United Kingdom and France on 19 October 1939 (Gürsel, 1968).

The Soviet Union and Germany did not reach a consensus during the Berlin talks; therefore, Russia desired once again to be allied with Turkey. Turkey, meanwhile, signed a non-aggression pact with Germany on 18 June 1941. Before the war with the Soviet Union, Germany had aimed to secure the Balkan front (Gürsel, 1968).<sup>45</sup>

In the Battle of Stalingrad (23 August 1942 - 2 February 1943)<sup>46</sup>, the allied states, including the Soviet Union, asked Turkey to act against the Germans. At the conferences in Tehran and Cairo in 1943, England and the Soviets decided that Turkey should enter the war against Germany. Turkey, unable to resist the pressure, cut off diplomatic relations with Germany on

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44 For detailed information see: Atatürk'ten Soğuk Savaş Dönemine Türk-Rus ilişkileri: Atatürk'ten Soğuk Savaş Dönemine Türk-Rus İlişkileri Çalıştayı, eds. Kamalov (2011).

45 For detailed information see; Karadağ (2008).

46 The Battle of Stalingrad (23 August 1942 – 2 February 1943) was a conflict of World War II in which Germany and its allies fought with the Soviet Union to control the city of Stalingrad in Southern Russia.

2 August 1944. Although Churchill did not agree with Russia's intentions on Kars, Ardahan, and Straits, he did not take up any clear position against Russia. Turkey declared war on Germany and Japan on 23 February 1945 in order to get rid of the threats from Russia and to join the United Nations Conference. Turkey's participation in the United Nations Conference was approved on 15 August 1945. However, requests by Soviet Russia from Turkey were not completed, and Soviet Russia demanded again that it be able to seize and rule Kars and Ardahan by canceling the 1925 Paris Non-Aggression Pact.<sup>47</sup> Soviet Russia had increased its political efficacy in the Balkans and Central Europe with bilateral agreements signed with Czechoslovakia (1943), Poland (1945), Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania (1948). This situation became a threat to the homeland and border security of Turkey. In the meantime, the Second World War ended with the atomic bomb that the US had dropped on Japan (Gürsel, 1968).

After the end of World War II, the Soviet Union kept pursuing expansionist policies. At the same time, it sought to dominate Turkey and the Turkish straits. On 7 August 1946, Russia sent a memorandum to Turkey explicitly announcing its ambitions on the Turkish Straits. Ankara strongly condemned the claims through a memorandum resisting the Soviet demands. After that, the Soviets issued a second memorandum on 24 September 1946 on the same issue, which caused the US and Britain to announce that they supported Turkey. This process contributed to Turkey's becoming a member of NATO (on 18 February 1952), which had been founded in 1949 under the leadership of the US as a way to defend Western Europe against the Soviet Union. Before long, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and Greece signed the Balkan Pact against potential Soviet expansionism. In 1953, the USSR declared that they had abandoned their demands on Turkey, which signaled its changing foreign policy.

Turkey-Soviet Russia relations revolved around the issue of Cyprus<sup>48</sup> in the 1960s. Since the Kremlin thought that a strong unitary Turkish state established in Cyprus could cooperate with NATO, it opposed Turkey's role in the Cyprus issue. Although the Soviets continued to develop their trade relations with Turkey in this period, they maintained their pressure on Turkey regarding the Cyprus issue and its NATO membership. In 1964-1965, high-level talks were held between Turkey and the Soviet Union with the intention of enhancing bilateral relations. Turkey's Foreign Minister Feridun Cemal Erkin (at the end of 1964) and the Prime Minister Suat Hayri Ürgüplü (in 1965) visited the Soviet Union. Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin visited Turkey between 20-27 December 1966. In the joint declaration issued after

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47 It had reinforced its military elements by establishing Warsaw Pact in Warsaw on 14 May 1955.

48 There has been a period of political and violent conflict in Cyprus, also referred to as the Cyprus crisis between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots between 1955 and 1964.

Kosygin's visit, it was emphasized that improving political and economic relations between the two countries was central. Suleyman Demirel, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey – on the invitation of the USSR – paid official visits to Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tashkent, and Baku between 19-29 September 1967. In these negotiations, good neighborliness, trade relations, disarmament, issues regarding the Near and Middle East, the issue of Vietnam, the issue of Cyprus and the security of Europe were discussed. Demirel also met with the president of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, Nikolai Podgorny, and both of them gave messages of goodwill and friendship (Gençalp, 2014). The President of the Republic of Turkey paid an official visit to the USSR to establish good relations between the two countries on 12-21 November 1969. President Podgorny and Prime Minister Kosygin in Moscow welcomed Cevdet Sunay, the first Turkish president to visit the USSR. Cevdet Sunay stated that bilateral relations between the two countries had been developing rapidly during his talks in Moscow (Armaoğlu, 2014). They also agreed on a peaceful solution to the issue of Cyprus (Gençalp, 2014).

Turkey's Cyprus operation was the issue that led Turkish-Russian relations to worsen in the 1970s. Since 1964, the Russians had expressed on every level that they would not accept that Turkey establish a single state in Cyprus. Turkey landed troops on the island on 20 July 1974, invoking its right as a guarantor. Negotiations regarding the withdrawal of the Turkish army from the island were held in Geneva on 22 July 1974, but no agreement was reached. On 14 August 1974, the Turkish army continued its operations when the negotiations failed. In response to this, NATO did not interfere in Turkey's military operation, and Greece exited from the military wing of NATO on 16 August 1974 (Çakmakçı, 2003). This led the Soviet Union to begin to support Greece against Turkey after the Greeks exited NATO (Armaoğlu, 2014). However, in response to Turkey's Cyprus operation, the US imposed an arms embargo on Turkey in 1975-1978, and Ankara's relations with NATO and the US declined. Therefore, the USSR, in changing its policy, wanted to strengthen the opposite bloc against the US by incorporating a Turkey that is at odds with the US into the Warsaw Pact. Especially after 1975, in accordance with improved relations between Turkey and USSR, the Soviet Union contributed to the strengthening of NGOs and left-wing parties in Turkey by providing financial and logistical support. During these years, the armed groups of leftist organizations were efficient and gained significant power in Turkish political system. Therefore, the military coup that was carried out with the 12 September 1980 Revolution had defined leftist and separatist organizations as the reason for the revolution. With the revolutionary government, Turkey re-established good relations with NATO and the US (Armaoğlu, 2014).



Arab – Israeli relations and the Iran – Iraq Wars in the Middle East between 1980 and 1990 reshaped relations between Turkey and Russia. US military intervention in Iraq (17 January-28 February 1991) re-determined the relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union emerged as the most important power supporting the regime of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party in this period. Turkey, with the US and other allies within the NATO alliance, sided against the Soviet Union. However, when the Soviet Union suffered economic difficulties and collapsed in 1991, it led to a process that put an end to the bipolar system. Despite Russia's economic hardships, the conflict between the US and Russia over the Middle East has never ended.

## **Conclusion**

Undoubtedly, Russia and Ottoman Empire competed with each other because they were neighboring countries, and they were also part of the history of the world with their socio-cultural life outside of their battles. The Turkish tribes began to flow westward for many reasons – steadily and without interruption – even in the years Before Common Era (BCE). This migration always brought about new dynamism in the political, economic, and cultural lives of the settled Slavs and Germans in the region.

From the 5th Century AD, Eastern and Central European Huns, Bulgarians, Avars, Peceneks, and Khazars governed the region politically. Slavs, the ancestors of the Russians, were located in the same region, and they were living in the states that are mentioned above as vassals. The administrative experience of the Turkish tribes in this region was crowned with the latest Golden Horde Khanate (1242-1502)<sup>49</sup>, established by Batu Khan in 1242. This administrative transformation should not be considered only as a power transfer from Genghis Khan's sons to the Russians, but also the administration of Eastern Europe, which caused social and cultural change. After this process, the dominant power that substituted for the Muslim Golden Horde Khanate has been Orthodox Russia. Orthodox Christianity and Islam did not struggle in the period of Golden Horde Khanate and other Turkic states; but with Orthodox Russia, the two religions clashed with each other in this region.

This is a short story of the historical process of relations between Russia and the Northern Turks. The Ottoman Turks, who established a powerful state in the second half of the 11th century initially in Iran and then expanded to Anatolia and in the lands extending from the Balkans to Central Europe from the middle of the 15th century, represented the mission of protection of Islam by carrying the caliphate<sup>50</sup> to Istanbul in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

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49 For detailed information see: A.Y. Yakubovskiy, "Altın Ordu ve Çöküşü", Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2002, İlyas Kemalöglü, Altın Orda ve Rusya, Ötüken Yayınları, İstanbul 2015.

50 Caliphate is a political-religious state under the Islamic domination and a successor to the Islamic prophet Muhammad and a leader of the whole Muslim community called as a "caliph".

Having grown and strengthened rapidly from the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Turks established relations with Russia through the Crimean Khans in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Thus Turkish – Russian relations can roughly be divided into three periods. The first period is the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century, which can be characterized as the period of Ottoman domination; and we can say that the Crimean Khans were quite active in the relations of this period. The second period is the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Turkish-Russian relations continued through building a state of balance. In the following centuries, Russia defeated the Ottoman army and seized all the territory extending to the Black Sea. More importantly, the survival of the Ottoman State was only possible with the help of the Western states. Again, the support provided by Russia for the establishment of the Republic of Turkey clearly shows the fragility of the relations between the two countries. Especially in the 1990s, with the increasing influences of an open society and free market economy in Russia, Ankara and Moscow started to cooperate on many joint projects. The relations that started first with exchanging qualified personnel have turned into significant partnerships over time in various realms, including energy and nuclear technology. The developments have not been painless; they have been especially complex in the last two years. Although the relations are strained occasionally and then restored to normal, the partnerships of these two nations living in a region where new changes take place within hours will no longer be flawless and steady. Rather, Russian – Turkish relations are likely to continue on a delicate course. Ostensibly, more infrastructure and adaptation programs are needed for developing and sustaining the strategic cooperation between Russia and Turkey.

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## CHAPTER 2

# TURKISH – RUSSIAN RELATIONS IN THE PUTIN ERA

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this scientific research is to observe the development of Russian-Turkish relations during the Putin era. The analysis also includes a historical review and strategical points as a geopolitical aspect. In the framework of Erdoğan's reforms at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this paper draws attention to new spheres for cooperation such as defense tenders and technology related to regional security. The Cyprus issue as a part of Turkey's international interest was included in the aspect of the Russian presence in the Mediterranean region. The situation in the Caucasian region and the Georgian crisis provided an agenda for Transcaucasian discussions between Russia and Turkey. This research does not bypass the energy issues including «Turkey stream» and Akkuyu. The Ukrainian crisis and the Crimean issue retain their relevance in contemporary Russian-Turkish relations given their significance within Turkey's regional policy. In addition, the SU-24 aircraft accident, which has a critical place in terms of the two countries' relations, and the nine month restoration process that followed this incident, is also addressed in this article. The Syrian crisis, which became a significant issue in the international arena due to its being related to cooperation in the sphere of regional security and defense, is also mentioned in this study.

**Keywords:** Russian-Turkish relations, Syrian crisis, Crimea, Transcaucasian region, Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Until the 2000s, when Putin took power, Turkish-Russian relations were such that competition was more the order of the day than general cooperation. Along with the rise of Putin in Russia, and of the AKP in Turkey, the process of transition to a multidirectional partnership started with the building of relations rather than with competition. On September 18, 2000, at the General Assembly of the UN in New York, İgor İvanov -the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia-, and İsmail Cem -the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey- came together. Regional and international issues were addressed at the meeting. In October 2000, Mikhail Kasyanov –the Prime Minister of Russia- made an official visit to Turkey, and at the meeting with Bülent Ecevit –the Prime Minister of Turkey- he drew attention to the importance of transition from competition to cooperation in Turkish–Russian relations (Bdoyan, 2017). In the Putin period, the most significant step in terms of Turkish-Russian relations was Putin’s visit to Turkey in December 2004. That was the first official visit to Turkey by the Russian President. As the result of Putin’s visit, the “Joint Declaration Regarding Deepening of Friendship and Multidimensional Partnership between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey” was signed (*Ria*, 2019). During the visit to Turkey by Putin in December 2004, he stated that they would like to participate in a defense industry tender in Turkey as equal participants, and that they might be able to provide high quality products having competitive power in that field. The response of Prime Minister Erdoğan to that call was that the tenders of the defense industry, which had been cancelled in May 2004, would be opened again, and that the Russian companies would be able to participate in those tenders (*Tasam*, 2017) The most significant outcome of Putin’s visit was the signing of the “Joint Declaration Regarding Deepening of Friendship and Multidimensional Partnership between Russia and Turkey”. In the declaration, it was specified that both countries were Eurasian countries, and the key role of both countries in ensuring peace, stability and welfare was emphasized.<sup>7</sup>

The year 2005 was a productive year especially in terms of economic relations. On January 12, 2005, Prime Minister Erdoğan undertook a visit to Russia along with 600 business people. During the meetings in Russia, Erdoğan and Putin mainly addressed trade, the natural gas supply and the status of Cyprus (Bdoyan, 2017). Another significant development that occurred in 2005 in terms of bilateral relations was the actualization of the Blue Stream project. That project was the largest investment that Russia had made in Turkey (Özbay, 2011). Another consequence of the Blue Stream which reflected on Turkish-Russian relations was that Putin, who had taken a stand on the side of Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus during the period of voting on the Annan Plan, declared that he would now support

the Annan Plan along with these developments, and that economic isolation against the TRNC was not fair (*Aljazeera*, 2017). However, in the same year, the decision of Duma, the lower wing of the Russian Parliament, accepting the so-called genocide again put tension into the relations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey made a press statement, and censured Russia for such a decision (Özbay, 2011). In the years 2006 and 2007, many high-level visits took place in order to strengthen the bilateral relations, and to improve cooperation in various fields. In June 2006, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the President of the Republic, visited Moscow, and Bülent Arınç, the Turkish Parliamentary Speaker, also visited Moscow in June of the same year. In that period, Sergey Lavrov and Abdullah Gül, –the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the period- and other members of the governments met a few times (Bdoyan, 2017).

In 2008 a noteworthy change in bilateral relations took place which was a direct result of the Georgia war. Georgia started a military operation in South Ossetia which had declared its independence unilaterally. Russia, supporting South Ossetia, soon became involved in that war and Turkey preferred to preserve its objectivity at that time. In fact, Turkey responded to Georgia's request for military assistance only by meeting the demand of Georgia for electricity when the electricity in Georgia was cut by the decision of Putin, and by sending humanitarian aid to the region via the Turkish Red Crescent (*Aljazeera*, 2017). However, when Russia placed long-range rockets in the lands of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Armenia in 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey declared that Turkey considered such action of Russia to be a clear threat against its security (*Politrus*, 2017).

The first step taken for a multidirectional strategic partnership in bilateral relations was the joint declaration signed between Russia and Turkey in 2009. The declaration stated that the cooperation to be actualized between Turkey and Russia was important not just in terms of both countries but also in terms of peace, security, stability and development in Eurasia (Svistunova, 2016). During the meeting, Gül (the President of Republic of Turkey) and Medvedev (the President of Russia) also addressed the problem regarding making the Turkish articulated lorries wait at the Russian customs. Medvedev stated that it was not applied only to Turkey, that it was a general situation for everyone, but that in case it constituted a significant problem for the Turkish articulated lorries that a solution might be found by forming a technical committee between the two countries (*BBC*, 2019).

The year 2010 was a significant year in terms of economic relations. During the meeting of Putin and Erdoğan in Moscow on January 13, 2010, an agreement was reached for the establishment of the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant (Topsakal, 2016). Sergey Kiriyyenko (the chairman of Rosatom the nuclear facility company of Russia) specified that most of the

shares of Akkuyu would belong to Russia, and that it would be the first nuclear power plant established beyond the borders of Russia (*BBC*, 2019). On May the 12<sup>th</sup> of the same year, during the visit to Turkey of Medvedev (the President of Russia), a cooperation agreement was signed between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Turkey regarding the construction and operation of the nuclear power plant at the Akkuyu site (Bdoyan, 2017). Moreover, a bilateral agreement on visa free movement between the two countries was signed. Accordingly, the citizens of the two countries are able to travel without getting a visa and the period of stay cannot exceed 30 days within 90 days (*DW*, 2019). These steps taken between Russia and Turkey were significant and indicated that bilateral relations were well. However, a development that occurred in 2012 became an indication that the relations between the two countries would enter a new period. In October 2012, a Russian plane taking off from Moscow and going to Damascus was forced to land at Ankara. The reason why the plane was forced to land by F-16 jets was the suspicion that it might contain weapons and ammunition that would be delivered to Damascus. Yet, that incident did not reach a level which would affect the economic cooperation between the two countries (*Aljazeera*, 2017). During the Istanbul visit of Putin on 3 December 2012, the problem of Syria was mainly addressed. Despite Turkey and Russia suggesting different methods for the solution of the Syrian problem, and despite the fact that Russia had placed a Patriot missile defense system on the border of Turkey and Syria, 11 different cooperation agreements were signed between the two countries. The outcome of the visit was that the disputes in Syria would not be able to damage the economic relations between Turkey and Russia (Bdoyan, 2017).

In 2014, the incident that disrupted positive relations between the two countries was the Crimea issue. Crimea was affiliated to Russia through a “referendum” actualized on 16 March, 2014. Turkey became a part of this issue because Crimean Tatars are Turks and Crimea has a historical importance for Turkey. In fact, the issue was highly emphasized in the declarations of Turkey. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, in its declaration, criticized the pressure applied on Crimean Tatars in the process of the referendum, and expressed that it was “inacceptable” for these people to be deprived of security of life (*Bilgesam*, 2017). Prime Minister Erdoğan, who made a statement after the referendum, stated that Turkey shared the same opinion as Western countries regarding the territorial integrity of the Ukraine, that Turkey would be on the side of the Crimean Tatars, and that it would do all in its power for them not to suffer any harm (*Finans Gündem*, 2017). The tension that occurred regarding Crimea in 2014 could not forestall the cooperation in the economic field. In December 2014,



Putin visited Turkey with Russian ministers, business people, and the authorities of Gazprom. During that visit, Putin emphasized that bilateral commercial relations were much more important than disputes in political fields. Moreover, he announced that the South Stream project, planned for conveying Russian natural gas to European countries over the Black Sea but which had not yet been commenced, would be cancelled, and instead the parties were working on a new “Turk Stream” project which would convey the gas to Europe by reaching Greece over Thrace (*Aljazeera*, 2017).

The subject of Syria was another issue creating tension in bilateral relations. The problems caused by this issue between Turkey and Russia started after Russia’s increase of its military presence in the region. In that process, there were several encounters between Turkish and Russian soldiers as opposing sides in the war zone. (Demir, 2016). On October 15, 2015, a military committee under the leadership of Major General Dronov (the Deputy Commander of Air Forces of the Russian Federation) came to Turkey in order to discuss the incidences in Syria. In the written declaration provided by the Turkish General Staff, it was stated that the committee visited the General Staff for the purpose of clarifying the breaches of Turkish air space which had occurred on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, and for the purpose of taking the required measures for non-recurrence of them (*Hürriyet*, 2017). However, the downing of a Russian warplane by fire opened by the Turks on 24 November 2015 brought the bilateral agreements regarding air space breaches to breaking point. The situation was so grave that Putin spoke of this incident in terms of “being shot from behind” (*Politrus*, 2017). Russia requested an apology and indemnity from Turkey by stating that it had not been involved in any breach of air space. In that period, Turkey’s response to this was that such an act had been undertaken in order to preserve its own security, and that it would not apologize for that (Erşen, 2016). The warplane crisis directly and negatively affected nearly all the fields of cooperation including that of energy. The Akkuyu nuclear power plant and the Turk Stream natural gas pipeline projects were suspended. On November 26, 2015, Aleksey Ulyukayev stated that the Turk Stream project had been included in the ‘special economic measures’ being applied against Turkey. And on December 3, Aleksander Novak (Russia’s Minister of Energy) stated that the Turk Stream project had been suspended in connection with the intergovernmental suspension of commission operations (Bdoyan, 2017).

A series of provocative acts on the part of Russia followed the warplane crisis. In December 2015, the incident of a Russian warship opening fire on a Turk fishing boat in the Aegean Sea was one example of this. In the declaration made by the Ministry of Defense of Russia, it was specified that the frigate named “Smetlivy” had opened fire for the purpose of preventing a

possible collision (*BBC*, 2017). Another incident was the sighting of a Russian soldier with a missile on his shoulder during the passage of a Russian warship named “Caesar Kunikov” through the Bosphorus strait in Istanbul. The reaction of Russia against the warplane crisis was not limited to these, and the Russian government started to impose severe sanctions against Turkey. On January 1 2016, Russia suspended the visa free regime between Turkey and Russia. In addition, Russia imposed the obligation of visas on the flight crews of passenger planes arriving from Turkey, in complete defiance of international rules (*Hürriyet*, 2017).

The warplane crisis also deeply affected the tourism sector in Turkey. Initially, Sergey Lavrov (Russia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs) warned Russian citizens not to travel to Turkey. And then at the command of the Federal Tourism Agency of Russia, all tour operators in Russia declared that they had stopped sales of trips to Turkey (*Turizm Global*, 2019). Another sanction applied after the warplane crisis was the prohibition applied on vegetables and fruits being imported from Turkey. Russia indicated that the reason for this ban was that pests had been identified on the products (*T24*, 2017). As the result of these economic sanctions applied after the warplane crisis, the import of Russia from Turkey receded to a level less than half compared to the same period of the previous year (Ulchenko, 2016).

Following the apology of President of Republic Erdoğan in June 2016, relations started to soften again. According to Russian specialist Lyudmila Kravchenko, the reason for the softening was the desire of Russia to actualize the Turk Stream project, in other words it was in the interests of the energy industry (*Gazete Duvar*, 2019). Another important step in terms of bilateral relations was Putin’s support message given via a phonecall to Erdoğan on the day after the coup attempt of July 15 (Svistunova, 2016). This convergence in the political field was also positively reflected on economic and martial relations. During the Putin-Erdoğan meeting in St. Petersburg on August 9, 2016, it was decided to establish a Turkish and Russian joint investment fund, and to have close cooperation regarding the defense industry. On August 11 2016, the first meeting of the formation intending to strengthen the political–martial cooperation regarding Syria was held. This meeting brought together Turkish and Russian intelligence, foreign affairs and general staff authorities. Another important development in the field of martial cooperation was the visit to Ankara by Gerasimov (Chief of General Staff of Russia) on September 16, 2016. The importance of that visit was the decision to establish a direct martial communication line between the two countries (Erşen, 2016). The incident of the assassination of the Russian Ambassador Karlov did not change this positive course in the relations of both countries. Erdoğan and Putin characterized this incident as a “provocation” for the prevention of the development of relations between the two countries (*Vesti*, 2017).

As a consequence of the martial cooperation between the two countries on December 20, 2016, a declaration was signed by the ministers of foreign affairs of Iran, Russia and Turkey. It stated what kinds of steps had to be taken for the finalization of the Syrian crisis. All three countries declared that they were supporting Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, and the role of the UN in the resolution of the Syrian crisis was emphasized (*Habertürk*, 2017).

On May 3, 2017, Erdoğan (President of the Republic of Turkey) met with Putin in Sochi. The main article on the agenda of the negotiations was the issue of economic cooperation. Following the meeting, the parties declared that they had come to some agreement regarding the removal of limitations on export to Russia of Turkish agricultural products, and visa liberalization for the Turkish citizens. In addition, the two presidents addressed the issue of the S-400 Russian anti-aircraft missile system and the establishment of secure zones in Syria. And at the meeting between Putin and Erdoğan at the G20 summit of 7-8 July, the Turk Stream, the construction of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant and the resolution of the problem of Syria were discussed (Bdoyan, 2017). All these developments occurring between Turkey and Russia following the overcoming of the warplane crisis revealed that both parties' policies were willing to improve relations. On the other hand, there were particular issues that seemed hard to be solved. In fact, the declaration of Dmitry Peskov –the spokesperson of Kremlin– underlined the cooperation between Moscow and Ankara including the issue of Syria, but it also stated that these two countries were not in agreement on all issues emphasizing some specific fields where the duties of both countries are different. The declaration draws attention to these hitches in the relations between Russia and Turkey (*CNN Türk*, 2019). It is clear that one of the subjects of conflict between the two countries is Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea. Yet, it is being observed that Russia was making an effort to eliminate the concerns of Turkey regarding Crimea. In 2018, the article written by Sergey Aksenov –the President of Republic of Crimea– targeting the Turkish public opinion, was a development revealing the importance of this subject in bilateral relations. In his article, Aksenov had stated that the three languages of Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean – Tatar languages were being defined as official languages in the Constitutional Law of Crimea which was accepted in April 2014. He adds that it could be only dreamed of in the period of Ukraine. Aksenov also mentioned projects to do with lodging, day nursery, school, water and gas networks, sewerage system and road constructions where the Crimean Tatars live collectively within the scope of federal program for the year 2017. (*Sputnik News*, 2019). This statement indicates that the concerns of Turkey regarding Crimea were being considered seriously by Russia. Furthermore, Russia had offered

to restart the ferry services between Turkey and Crimea. Turkey had made the decision to stop the ferry services with Crimea by March 2017. Sergey Aksenov (the Prime Minister of Crimea) had declared in the previous April during the Yalta International Economic Forum that, “This is not something about us. We don’t have a problem with Turkey. If Turkey requests, there is no limitation regarding entrance to our ports. Everything is dependent on our partners.” (*Yeni Asya*, 2019). But even if Turkey wants to keep its relations with Russia in balance, it has a special sensitivity regarding Crimea because of the Crimean Tatars of its own race. In fact, after the meeting with Vladimir Zelenskiy –President of Republic of Ukraine- in August 2019, Erdoğan –President of the Republic- said that “Turkey does not and never will recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea.” He clearly underlined that Turkey would not step back on this subject (*Haberler*, 2019).

In addition to the issue of Crimea, another important hitch in the relations between the two countries is the issue of Syria. In the civil war of Syria that started in 2011, Russia and Iran took sides with Assad, in other words with Baath regime, and Turkey acted along with the USA-led Western coalition. In other words, Russia and Turkey were on different camps on the subject of Syria which has a very critical importance in terms of the interests of Russia in the Mediterranean Sea, and Turkey’s regional security. In this sense, an agreement on the issue of Syria was very crucial for the future of bilateral relations. At this point, Nur-Sultan meetings, where Iran is also involved, had been a significant step towards the solution of the Syrian crisis. The purpose of these meetings was to strengthen the decision of a ceasefire in Syria made on December 30, 2016. The process started by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan –President of the Republic of Turkey- and Vladimir Putin –President of Russia-. They decided to hold a meeting on January 23, 2017 at Nur Sultan the capital of Kazakhstan that would gather the parties being present in Syria (*BBC*, 2019). Nursultan Nazarbayev (the President of Kazakhstan) declared that his country was ready to host this meeting. In the declaration made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, it was stated that the meetings would commence on January 23, 2017, and end on January 24, and that they would continue for 24 hours in total. The participants were representatives of armed groups signing the decision of ceasefire and Staffan de Mistura, UN’s Special Representative for Syria. Syrian Kurds, which were kept outside of the ceasefire, were not invited to Nur-Sultan. In addition, USA did not send a formal delegation to the meeting, stating the process of change in its administration as the reason. It was also announced that the state would be represented by the ambassador who would attend the meeting as an observer (*Sputnik News*, 2019). At the meeting which ended on 24 January, Syria’s independence and territorial integrity were emphasized, it was

stated that a martial resolution of the issue was not possible. In addition, it was declared that the breaches of ceasefire would be minimized, and also it was specified that the required operations would be made for humanitarian aid to Syria and for the protection of civilians (Yılmaz, 2018). As of today the parties have held meetings 13 times. The 13<sup>th</sup> Nur-Sultan Meeting, being the last of these meetings, was actualized on the first of August 2019. The governments of Russia, Turkey, Iran, Syria, and representatives of armed opposition in Syria took part in the meeting and also UN, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon participated with the status of observer (*Sputnik News*, 2019). In the final declaration published by the end of the meetings by Russia, Turkey and Iran, it was declared that they were against all kinds of separatist plans for disrupting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria (*Haber Sol*, 2019). As has been observed, the common aspect in nearly all the Nur-Sultan Meetings had been the emphasis made on Syria's territorial integrity and the resolution of the problem through peaceful means. However, a statement made by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of Republic of Turkey, gave rise to a question mark regarding the resolution of the issue of Syria through peaceful means. He said, "We don't have even one more day to wait. At this juncture in time, we don't have any other choice than to proceed on our own way." As is well known, Turkey had made an agreement with USA on August 7 regarding the establishment of a safe zone in the north of Syria. Despite the fact that the absence of this zone was disturbing Turkey, the allies of NATO remained incapable of clarifying this issue. Then, Erdoğan made this statement (*T24*, 2019). Upon that, Dimitri Peskov –the spokesman of Kremlin- said that Russia was closely following-up Ankara's declarations regarding a possible operation towards Syrian Kurds and also that Turkey has the right to defend itself against the terrorists, but that the sovereignty of Syria should be respected (*Ria*, 2019). And then, a declaration was also made by Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Lavrov stated that USA was not ready to consider the rightful requests of Turkey regarding the status in the northeast of Syria. In this sense the declaration of Erdoğan –the President of Republic of Turkey- was very reasonable (*Ria*, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

Time will show what kind of a course the process in Crimea or Syria will have, and what its effect will be on Turkish and Russian relations. However, when the events experienced until today are assessed, we can easily say that the Turkish and Russian relationship in the Putin era is one in which cooperation comes to the forefront despite the disputes arising from time to time. Even if the bilateral relations had been negatively affected by the incidents arising after the initiation of the Arab Spring in the Middle East and from the developments

in Ukraine, the cooperation in the economic field would have continued to improve. But the downing of the Russian warplane in 2015 caused a significant rift in the relations between Turkey and Russia, and all relations came to a breaking point. Following the apology of the President of the Republic, Erdoğan, from Moscow in June 2016, the crisis was averted, and relations started to be strengthened again. Since 2016 until today, many projects in various fields such as trade, tourism, agriculture and energy have been realized and are continuing to be actualized between the two countries.

Considering the interests of USA in the Middle East, and its cooperation with the PKK and with DUP being its extension in Syria, carrying out relations with Russia seems to be for the benefit of Turkey. It is clear that convergence with Russia will affect international relations, and that it will indicate a disruption of relations with USA. In the article of Matiya Şeriş under the heading “Is a bright future expected from the alliance of Russia and Turkey?”, the following statement can be read: “A good or bad state of bilateral relations between Russia and Turkey directs the foreign policy. Other governments such as Israel, Iran, the countries of the Persian Gulf, the European Union and USA are being affected by Turkish and Russia relations. If the Turks establish good relations with the Russians, they won’t need to ally with West.” (*İnosmi*, 2019). According to this statement, even if it is an exaggerated expression, it is an expected result that convergence with Russia would negatively affect relations with the West. However, as long as it is for the benefit of Turkey, it is clear that Turkey will take the required risks and try to keep relations with the West in balance as much as possible. In this sense, it is very important for Russia and Turkey to be able to carry out a policy based on cooperation without allowing the conflicts of interest experienced by them to negatively affect the bilateral relations, especially regarding the issues of Crimea and Syria.

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## CHAPTER 3

# TURKEY – RUSSIAN FEDERATION RELATIONS IN THE NEW ERA

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### ABSTRACT

In this research bilateral relations between Federation of Russia and Turkey in the fields of military, economy and diplomacy are evaluated in the time period beginning from the end of the Cold War to present. In this new time period of 2000-2019, in which the era of two charismatic leaders, Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is taken as a basis, a balanced and effective foreign policy was followed and a series of cooperation areas were established. A new active period between the Turkey-Russia relations has started with the beginning of Vladimir Putin's governance and both Putin and Erdoğan carried out corresponding visits and senior summit meetings were held. Though the main determinant of the bilateral relations was to enhance the security weaknesses of Turkey that appeared in the Syria issue, by developing and reinforcing the Turkish defense industry, the progress of the friendly relations between the two countries after the July 15 FETÖ coup attempt in Turkey were also examined. The shooting down of Russian warplane on November 24, 2015 was a milestone and breaking point between the two countries, however, with the normalization of relations, parties were able to reestablish political and economic cooperation in a short time.

This review aims to reveal major effects of strategic partnership, security issues and energy policies of the two countries in Eurasia. After the post-Cold War era the international conjuncture was reshaped hence the Russian foreign policy decision makers changed economy, security and governmental policies to a Eurasianist approach. The consequent effects of these changes to the bilateral relations with Turkey are evaluated in this study. Relations in the context of diplomacy, economy and security of the two regional powers forms the focus point of the debate. Despite the former rivalry, the strategic relations and the vision of partnership between Turkey and Russia have developed through a win-win understanding and thus the analysis are carried out within the framework of regional cooperation in this survey. The major problems in relations and cooperation areas were also highlighted. Qualitative data analysis and induction methods were used in the analysis.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Federation of Russia, Erdoğan, Putin, Partnership

## Introduction

Relations between Turkey and Russia is based on a long tradition. Turkey and Russia are different demographics, and the two countries have economic and military potential. This potential difference affects the relations between the two countries and their regional policies in the post-Soviet period.

Throughout history many bloody battles have occurred between Russians and Turks. Although the long-lasting bilateral relations are based on mostly conflicts and competition, there are also experienced periodic cooperation processes. In addition, in some certain milestones of history the two nations shared a similar fate. The relations between Russian Federation and Turkey are far more than the relations between the two young states built in the early 1900s. These relations are the interaction of two ancient nations with centuries of empire, confederation, and nation-state experiences.

After the First World War, both of the Ottoman and the Russian Empires lost their properties of being an empire. For internal reasons such as revolution and the change of the political system, the Soviet Union, a new independent state, whose political doctrine was the idea of communism, replaced the Russian Empire (Adamçik, 2002). At that time most of the Ottoman Empire's territories were occupied by European countries and the Empire was divided (Aleksandrov, 1989). Because of this the political and economic situations were very harsh for the Ottoman Empire. In such unfavorable conditions, a liberation movement led by Mustafa Kemal was established. Despite political differences Mustafa Kemal sought the assistance of Soviet Union in order to fight the foreign invaders. The USSR was also interested in cooperation due to mutual benefits. Thus, Mustafa Kemal and Lenin became allies. This was a new beginning. The Republic of Turkey was established and cooperation with the Soviet Union helped the success in the War of Independence. In 1925, the two states signed an important treaty of friendship and neutrality (Rubinstein 1997).

Relations between Turkey and Soviets progressed within the framework of the friendship and neutrality treaty until Atatürk's death in 1938. For the first time in the history of Turkish-Russian relations, countries started to cooperate in the military-technical field and commercial relations started to develop. However, the events of 1939, the beginning of the Second World War, made major changes both in the foreign policy process of states and in the international order as a whole. During the Second World War, Turkey had tried to maintain neutrality till the end of the war and took part on the side of the USSR, US, UK only a few months before the end of it. This was done to protect the benefits of the nation in the post war restructuring era.

A new international order was established and the three great powers, the USSR, US and UK became the main actors of this era (Easter, 2000). In post-war conditions, the world consisted of two poles: A US-led capitalist and a Soviet-led communist. The Soviets claiming Turkey's eastern territories and also the control of the straits emerged as a new problem and because of these ongoing issues Soviet-Turkey relations became rather complex. In the first decade after the war relations were almost frozen. After Stalin's death, USSR's territorial claims were abolished however the negative impact of it over relations continued. Thus, Turkey chose to monitor the path of capitalist development and was more eager to cooperate with Western countries. Nevertheless the USSR has never lost its interest in developing cooperation with Turkey. Turkey is a bridge between Asia and Europe due to its unique geographical location and straits and this made it a point of interest for the USSR. In fact, Turkey was the only capitalist camp state where the USSR continued to develop its relationship. During the 1960s-1970s, Turkey took loans from the USSR and the trade relations between countries began to flourish. With the signing of the first agreement relating to the supply of Soviet gas to Turkey in 1987, a new stage in Soviet-Turkey relations began. This was the beginning of the emergence of strong trade ties between countries that had a positive impact on bilateral political relations (Derman, 2003). During these years, a modern model of Russian-Turkish relations began to emerge, where bilateral economic dependence was an important factor in the foreign policy of the two countries. Although Turkey is a NATO member and an ally of the US, leaders of Turkey did not want to sacrifice the benefits of economic cooperation with the USSR and tried to keep a balance between the two blocs in its implemented policies. In modern times USSR was perceived as "the red threat" by NATO and, as a member of it, Turkey was in the position of protecting the southern border of the bloc against the threat. Quiet years have passed Turkey under the protection of NATO and Russians in the Iron Curtain (Rubinstein 1997). "Untrustworthy Russians" is a concept that has become a common phrase used in Turkey. Meanwhile Russia described Turks as the nation that occupied Tsargrad (Istanbul), the holy city of Orthodoxy. Bilateral relations, which date back 500 years, have inevitably followed a fluctuating course.

Disintegration of the USSR was an important event in Russia-Turkey relations. Since the collapse of communism, Russia has seen new countries formed by the disintegration of the Soviets within its sphere of influence (Kurban and Derman, 2015). Russia wants to preserve its sphere of influence and to monopolize the control of energy and raw material transfer from Central Asia (Romanova, 2008). Meanwhile Russia prevents the relations of its near abroad with the West. Turkey aims to reach the status of a regional power in the regions

of Black Sea, Caucasia and the Middle East with its newly implemented foreign policies (Winrow, 2015). Localized at the junction of the energy-rich Middle East and the former Soviet Union territory, Turkey became a natural gas transit center and achieved the unique advantage of having a coercive force. Due to its strategic and geopolitical features Turkey is an indispensable country for Russia. Russia wants to keep its position as the main oil and gas supplier of the EU and for this is in need of Turkey's support (Monaghan and Jakovski 2006). On the other hand Turkey is in need of Russia in order to solve the conflicts in the Caucasus and to realize its targets in its new foreign policies. Besides the alternating historical memory of the relations, the bipolar nature of the Cold War era has been much influential in shaping the perception of threat on both sides. Over time, Turkey has changed perceptions of Russia as a potential threat, while Russia has begun to pursue a more open foreign policy for the Western allies (Warhola, 2006). Russian-Turkish relations approached the process of multilateral cooperation, which distanced itself from the perception of old relations within the framework of historical competition and distanced itself from the conditions of struggle between capitalist and communist blocs.

After the end of the Cold War period, new cooperation opportunities and perspectives emerged. After the signing of the friendship and neutrality treaty with the USSR in 1925, Turkey and Russia continued their military-technical cooperation. In 1994, the countries signed an agreement on military cooperation, and in 1998 an agreement was reached between the Turkish and Russian General Staff of the Armed Forces determining the security zones. The creation of the Joint of Russian-Turkish Military Commission was established in 2001 (Steen 2003). These progresses began to form the legal component of cooperation between the two countries. Moreover, cooperation in the energy sector between Russia and Turkey has dynamically developed (Stulberg, 2005).

Following the rapid development of economic cooperation in the 1990s, bilateral relations entered a new era with the close dialogue established between the political leadership of the two countries and in the early 2000s settled on an institutional basis especially with the establishment of the Senior Cooperation Council (SCC) in 2010 (Caşın & Derman, 2016).

The Turkey-Russia relations which were based on cooperation and mutual benefits, have been exposed to a serious test due to military activities related to the crisis in Syria. With the help of common sense and the joint desire of the two nations the normalization process has been initiated. Within this framework, since the second half of 2016, an intense bilateral dialogue has been reestablished. Today, Turkey's and Russia's foreign policies with regard to the conflict in Syria, has been one of the most crucial and discussed topics. Despite

the negative impact of some political disagreements, bilateral Turkish-Russian relations continue to develop in a positive vector. This study focuses on areas that contribute to the rapprochement of the two countries. In this context, the development of political, economic, cultural relations between the two countries has been reviewed and the role of these recent developments to the foreign policies of both countries in the XXI. Century has been analyzed.

This research is based on analytical and descriptive methodology. Among the main research questions of the study are “How relations between Turkey and the Russian Federation changed during the AK Party governance?” and “What are the basic factors of this change?”. The hypothesis of the article is that the multi-faceted strategic rapprochement of leaders has caused the intensification of bilateral economic dependence in Turkey Russian Federation relations during the AK Party governance period. The development of relations between Turkey and Russia is in accordance with the national interests of both states. Within the context of new political realities in its foreign policy Turkey became more independent from the influence of Europe and the US which makes it possible to see Russia as a strategic ally. In the study, on one hand the historical background of Turkey-Russia relations are taken into account and on the other hand recent developments and tendencies are analyzed. Besides the large projects such as Akkuyu nuclear power plant and Turkish Stream natural gas pipeline, the creation and implementation of new industries, the development of military-technical cooperation like in the S400 missile systems, the opportunities and problems in relations were also examined. The use of English, Russian and Turkish literature provides a comparative and objective perspective for both Russian and Turkish researchers. In order to avoid evaluating Turkish-Russian relations through ideological stereotypes, foreign sources such as foreign policy documents, official agreements and decisions, correspondence among politicians, as well as newspapers were utilized. It is not possible to analyze contemporary Turkish-Russian relations without considering their historical background. For this purpose, the period from the First World War to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the first decade of the post-Soviet period were also analyzed. Thus the main subject of the study covers the time period beginning from the creation of Turkey-Russia strategic alliance during AK Party governance until the shooting down of the Russian SU-24 military aircraft in November 2015, which significantly deteriorated the relations. Official web sites of official institutions, in particular the web site of the Russian president, the web site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the web site of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, the web site of the Russian Federal State Statistics Service, the web site of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation and similarly corresponding relevant official

websites of Turkey, Gazprom, State Atomic Energy Corporation Rosatom website and the Russian export center are among the internet resources made use of in this study.

## **1. Old Rivals New Partners -A New Era in Turkey and Russian Federation Relations**

Turkey has done its first international natural gas supply agreement with the Soviet Union on September 18, 1984 and has begun to import approximately 6 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year since 1987. With this treaty, which foresees the purchase of natural gas for cash for 25 years starting from 1987, the energy dimension has added to the bilateral relations. After the natural gas exit from Russia it is transported to Turkey via Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria and this pipeline is known as the West Line. This treaty has resulted in both an increase in exports and a diversification in exports after 1987 (Horelick 1987). In 1989, the volume of foreign trade between the two countries increased twice. Many problems, difficulties and contradictions in the Turkish-Russian relations in the 1990s are mostly reflections of some of the great new global dynamics that shaped the post-Cold War international order (Arbatov, 1994). Globalization, the shift of power from the center to the periphery, the proliferation of regional conflicts, the West's tendency to promote democracy and human rights, and the increasing international demand for fossil fuels which remain the main energy source, have been some of the developments affecting Turkish-Russian relations (Derman 2016).

When the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union's break occurred in 1991, there was no serious dispute in relations between Turkey and Russia (Bogaturov 1993). This period has been a new beginning for legal and political subjects. With the establishment of the Russian Federation, Turkish-Russian relations entered a vibrant period (Kınıklıoğlu, 2006). While economic relations are advancing rapidly, the progress in politics and security have been much slower and uncertain. Russia saw the Caucasus and Central Asia, the former Soviet territories, as its special domain of influence and this was the main reason why relations did not develop at the same pace in the areas of politics and security as they did in the field of economy (Dugin, 2005).

As the Russian Federation strengthened economically and had a more robust domestic authority, a more competitive understanding began to prevail in its foreign policy. The period 1992-1999 was characterized as a period of controlled tension and competition in the areas of geopolitical influence and bilateral relations (Munçayev & Ustinov, 1999). Because of the conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia and between Russia and Chechnya, the atmosphere

of friendship in bilateral relations has quickly been replaced by undesirable tension. On January 11, 1995, a statement condemning the military operation of Russia in Chechnya was published in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. In addition to this, Russia's attitude towards the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), the Commonwealth of Independent States' establishment of customs union, Russia's objection to the Straits Regulation dated July 1, 1994, the attempt to prevent the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline Project, Russia's agreement with the Greek Cyprus on January 4, 1997 concerning a deal for the sale of S-300 missiles, have been the major issues elevating tension between Turkey and Russia relations (Pamir, 2005). In this period, the relations that were formerly exhibiting a completely competitive nature, in time attained a line predicting cooperation in many areas though has not lost its antecedent aggressive character (Steen, 2003). While the parties maintain geopolitical competition, they have entered into an intensive process of economic cooperation. Both sides showed a clear attitude towards the development of economic cooperation as much as possible, the Russian side was especially keen on this issue. Viktor Chernomyrdin, Russian Prime Minister of the period, visited Turkey on December 15, 1997 and the parties signed many agreements concerning energy, legal, technology, mutual investment, commercial and educational cooperation (Arbatov, 1997). Among them the Blue Stream gas agreement had particular importance that would provide Turkey 16 billion cubic meters of Russian natural gas. Mikhail Kasyanov, Russian Prime Minister of the period, expressed the "strategic partnership" demand of the Russian side during his visit to Turkey in October 2000 (Derman 2016). He also proposed an increase in the trade volume between the two countries from 3 billion dollars to 10 billion dollars. As of 2003, this objective has been achieved and the trade volume target was reset to reach 100 billion dollars. The flourishing successful trade relationships paved the way for a transition in the security and policy fields from rivalry and controlled tension to cooperation.

It is possible to say that, in the new era, Turkey-Russia relations which were previously based on an understanding of competition, peeled off slowly from this historical burden and a multi-dimensional cooperation process began. Indeed, Vladimir Putin, the elected Russian President in 2000 visited Ankara in December 2004 and was the very first Russian head of state to visit Turkey since the collapse of the USSR. The signing of a deeper multidimensional cooperation framework agreement between the parties during this visit may also be seen as the most important indicator of the evolving multidimensional cooperation process. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Prime Minister of Turkey at the time visited Moscow in January 2005 which was an important step in deepening the economic relations between the two countries

(Derman, 2017). These reciprocal visits provided a remarkable increase in high-level talks and bilateral relations reached a new stage. During these visits, significant consensus was reached on extending and maintaining the energy cooperation and increasing trade volume between the two countries (Romanova, 2008).

One of the most important pillars of this established cooperation between Turkey and Russia has undoubtedly been in energy trade. Indeed, Turkey was importing approximately 58% of its annual natural gas demand and 29% of its annual oil demand from Russia. Unilateral gain was not the target of this cooperation understanding and with reciprocal trade the main intention was to develop a network of cooperation in which both parties benefit.

In this sense it is notable that Turkey made 5.9 billion dollars of export to Russia in 2014 which is 3.8% of its total export of 157.6 billion dollars and in the first nine months of 2015 from January until the end of September, Turkey made 2.7 billion dollars of export which is 2.5% of its total export of 107.3 billion dollars (<https://tradingeconomics.com/turkey/exports>).

## **2. Economic Relations**

Economic and commercial relations are the driving force of our relations with the Russian Federation. Russia is one of our most important foreign trade partners. The mutual investments between the two countries amounted to 10 billion dollars and the Turkish contractors have implemented nearly 2000 projects worth more than 60 billion dollars in Russia.

In order to fully demonstrate the progress, we can group the economic relations between the two countries under four headings:

1. Trade and investment
2. Energy and new projects
3. Tourism
4. Building contractor projects



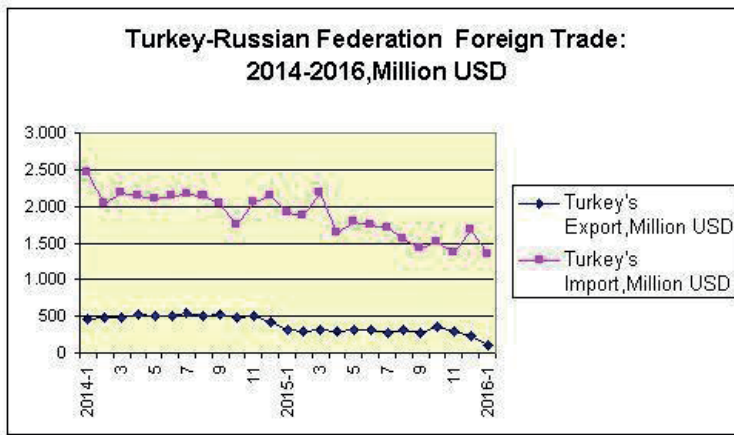


Figure 1: Export Quotas of Russia and Turkey

A high share of export quotas reflects the openness of an economy and the importance of exports in the national economy. As a result of foreign trade liberalization and policies, investment increased between the years 1995 and 2016 (Masumova, 2016).

Years	Russia			Turkey		
	GDP in current prices, USD billions	Exports		GDP in current prices, USD billions	Exports	
		USD billions	% of GDP		USD billions	% of GDP
1995	395.5	115.8	29.3	169.5	33.7	19.9
2000	259.7	114.4	44.1	273.0	53.1	19.5
2005	764.0	269.0	35.2	501.4	105.4	21.0
2010	1,524.9	445.5	29.2	771.9	157.8	20.4
2015	1,365.9	391.6	28.7	859.4	200.5	23.3
2016	1,283.2	329.9	25.7	857.8	189.2	22.1

Source: World Bank Data. Retrieved from <http://databank.worldbank.org> (last visited 26 March 2018).

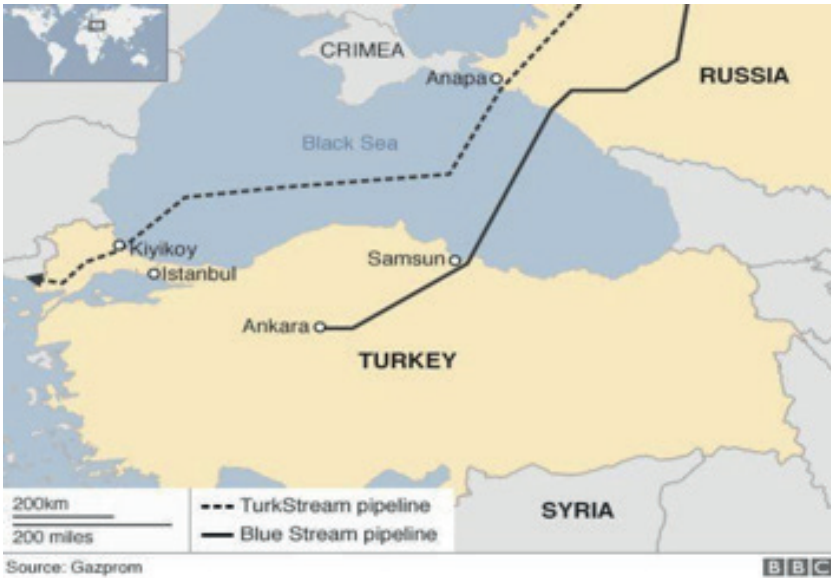
## 2.1. Trade and Investment

After Germany, Russia is Turkey's second largest trading partner. The trade volume between the two countries was approximately 31 billion dollars in 2014. In the case of import, Russia is Turkey's largest partner. According to reports compiled by Bloomberg News, Russia with \$ 25 billion in 2014, surpassing China, has become the largest source of imports for Turkey. Meanwhile, Turkey's 7th largest export address is Russia. Turkish companies have investments in Russia chiefly in sectors of food, beverages, bottles, glass, household appliances and other durables and banking.

As of 2014, the total number of projects undertaken by Turkish companies in Russia since 1989 is 1,923. The total value of these projects is more than \$ 61.7 billion. Therefore, after the 2015 airplane crisis, the explanation of Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev “Turkish companies may lose their shares in the Russian market. The shooting down of the warplane could result in the ending of the joint projects” created apprehension and discomfort (Masumova, 2015).

Years	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
USD billion	21.0	28.2	37.9	22.6	26.2	30.0	33.3	32.0	31.2	24.0	16.9	22.3

Source: TÜİK, at <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr> (last visited 24 March 2018).



**Figure 2: Bilateral Trade Between Russia and Turkey**

Source: <http://turkstream.info/project/>

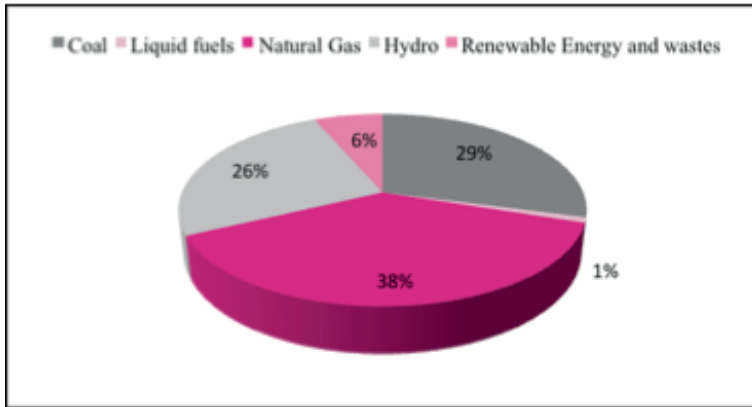
## 2.2. Energy

The Energy subject represents one of the most important aspects of relations between Russia and Turkey. Turkey supplies 58% of its natural gas and 29% of its oil from Russia (Derman 2003). There are important projects connecting the two countries. Our cooperation with Russia, which is one of our main partners in energy supply, is being carried to a further stage with the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant and Turk Current projects. On 12.05.2010,

the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Turkey, signed an agreement on cooperation concerning the construction and operation of Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) in the Republic of Turkey. This was the beginning of one of the largest and most debated nuclear energy projects. Turkey's first nuclear power plant Akkuyu project is being carried out with an investment of \$ 20 billion by Russia. Akkuyu NPP Project consists of 4 units. The output power of each unit will be 1200 Megawatts electric (MWe). The technical reference plant of the Akkuyu NPP Project is the Novovoronejskaya-2 Nuclear Power Plant with AES-2006 project in Russia. The operational life of Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant will be 60 years. Slightly enriched uranium dioxide is the planned fuel to be used in this NPP (Masumova, 2015).

Turkish Stream project consists of the construction of a natural gas pipeline that will traverse along the Black Sea starting from the Russian borders and extending to the European coast of Turkey to Turkey's border with Greece. The length of the pipeline's sea portion will be about 910 km and the length of Turkey's territorial land section will be 180 km. The cost of the project is estimated to be approximately EUR 11.4 billion. With this Turkish Movement Natural Gas Pipeline Project, Turkey is going to buy 15.75 billion cubic meters of natural gas per annum from Russia and the remaining gas will be exported to Europe (<http://turkstream.info/project/>)

Turkish Stream Project was first announced by Vladimir Putin, the President of Russian Federation of the period, during his visit to Turkey in December 2014. However the uprising crisis with the shooting down of the Russian military aircraft on November 24, 2015, halted the progress of the planned projects. The President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan clarified the situation as "If the Russians don't come and build Akkuyu NPP, then inevitably someone else will come and do it." Thus both the future of the Turkish Stream Project and the Akkuyu NPP Project became uncertain in this period (Derman 2016). Only after the end of the plane crisis, Alexei Miller, CEO of the Russian energy company Gazprom, announced that the Turkish Stream project would be put into practice as soon as possible and both projects were re-launched (<https://www.gazprom.com/projects/turk-stream/>).



**Figure 3: Electricity Generation and Shares by Energy Resources**

Source: TÜİK. Çevre ve Enerji, at <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr> (last visited 12 April 2018).

According to 2014 data of Energy Market Regulatory Authority (EMRA) of Turkey, natural gas imports were mostly made from Russia with a share of 54.76 percent. The amount of natural gas imports from Russia in 2014 was 27 billion cubic meters. Even in the EMRA report, it is stated that “our country is significantly dependent on natural gas import and a great deal of this dependence is on Russia”. In gas imports, Iran follows Russia and takes second place with 18.78 percent (<https://erranet.org/member/emra-turkey/>). After the aircraft crisis, the Russian Energy Minister of the period, Anatoly Yanovsky explained that under the ongoing contracts gas supply to Turkey would continue. However, the question of where the alternative addresses for energy could be if relations with Russia were shaken, was raised. John Roberts, the energy security expert of Methinks Ltd. spoke to Bloomberg broadcasting, expressing that Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) supplied either from Iran or the US could be an alternative to Turkey’s situation. However, it should not be forgotten that Iran is also a supporter of the Assad regime of Syria. Trade and other mutual relations began to normalize by 2017 and the declines in 2015 and 2016 have been left behind (Caşın and Derman, 2016).

### 2.3. Tourism

The existing cooperation between Turkey and the Russian Federation in the field of tourism constitutes another important aspect of bilateral relations. In 2019, the number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey approached 6 million. After Germany, Russia sends the most tourists to Turkey. After the aircraft crisis, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s warning “Due to the terrorist threat do not go to Turkey” caused a significant reduction in the number of tourists coming to Turkey. Nevertheless, the number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey increased with the resolution of the crisis. According to Renaissance Capital’s research, about

12 percent of tourists visiting Turkey were from Russia. again Russian people's choice of Turkey as a travel destination makes it the country sending the most tourists after Germany (<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-the-russian-federation.en.mfa>).

NATIONALITY	1995	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
GERMANY	1.6	2.2	4.1	4.4	4.8	5.0	5.0	5.3	5.6	3.9	3.6
TOTAL EUROPE	4.5	6.7	14.0	16.6	18.2	18.3	18.8	19.5	19.2	13.3	13.2
RUSSIA	-	0.7	1.9	3.1	3.5	3.6	4.3	4.5	3.7	0.9	4.7
TOTAL C.I.S.	1.2	1.3	3.4	6.0	6.6	7.2	8.6	8.8	8.1	5.6	10.5
TOTAL	7.2	10.0	20.5	28.5	31.3	31.3	33.8	35.9	35.6	25.3	32.1

**Source:** Balance of Payments, 2017, at [www.tcmb.gov.tr](http://www.tcmb.gov.tr) (last visited 22 April 2018).

**Figure 4:** Number of Tourists Visiting Turkey (in million)

#### 2.4. Contracting Services in Russia

Contracting services supplied by Turkish freelance entrepreneurs in Russia play a great role in the commercial relations between the two countries. Entrepreneurs have the opportunity to take part in the Russian market for the first time in 1980. Since then over 1.900 contracting service projects have been undertaken and the total value of these projects has been calculated as approximately 61.3 billion dollars. When the business undertaken by the Turkish building contractors abroad is evaluated during the time period between 1972-2015 June, it is seen that a total of 8.606 projects were undertaken, reaching a great income of 311 billion 861 million dollars (Derman 2006). During this phase the analysis of the distribution of the projects among the countries uncovers the fact that Russia having a 19,6%, is in the leader position (<http://kesz.ru/en/>).

### 3. Russian-Turkish military-technical cooperation

Military-technical industry is a relatively new area of cooperation between Russia and Turkey. The first steps in this area were taken during the Lenin and Atatürk era, when both countries underwent a period of reform and restoration (Derman, 2016: p.79). After the Bolshevik revolution, the Russian Empire was presented to the world society as a completely different state: the USSR, a new ideology, a new political system and new priorities in foreign policy. Turkey was in a similar position. Republic of Turkey was the successor of the Ottoman Empire, however, the new state was very different from the previous format of the Ottoman Empire. Under the new political realities, both states were in search of allies and were open to cooperation. Thus, at that time, the signed friendship and cooperation agreement between Turkey and the USSR was the beginning of the active interaction between the two countries.

After the collapse of the USSR, Turkey-Russia relations made a new beginning. Though as a member of NATO, Turkey has good cooperation with the NATO countries especially in military necessities. So far history has proved that it is better to have more than one option. In this sense Turkey was seeking alternative options in the modernization of the military complexes. Russia, producing high quality and competitive technical military products, became a good alternative option for Turkey and got the role of an alternative arms supplier for Turkey (Caşın & Derman, 2016).

### **3.1. The Proposal of ATAK Helicopters**

Atak helicopters tender has been another segment in the Turkish-Russian military cooperation. In 1995, Turkey opened a tender for the purchase of attack and tactical reconnaissance helicopters. Many countries offered their choppers in this tender. An Italian firm with “Augusta”, German-French joint venture with “EuroCopter”, an American firm with “Bell Textron’s AH-1Z Viper model” and the Russian army with “Kamov Ka-50 series” have participated in the tender. At first agreements were made with the US firm Bell Textron’s AH-1Z Viper model however after ten years there was no helicopter delivery and it was understood that the USA’s intention was not to give any helicopters to Turkey but to delay Turkish army owning attack choppers. By 2007 the Joint venture of Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) and Italian Agusta Westland began the creation of ATAK T-129 helicopter which was based on Agusta A129-Mangusta. The first ATAKs were delivered to the Turkish army in 2014. In 1997, the Russian Kamov company was also interested in Turkey’s helicopter tender. At that time Ka-50 was in production which was only a single seated helicopter. However two crew in tandem position was one of the set specifications of the tender, so the company introduced a double tandem crew version of the Russian military helicopter Ka-50-2, Erdogan. However the tender was later on cancelled and Turkey had chosen to produce its own chopper by joint venture. The tactical and technical parameters for the attack and tactical reconnaissance helicopters set by the Ministry of Defense of Turkey are well met by ATAK helicopters and the Russian Ka-50-2 series helicopters. According to some authorities the Russian Ka-52 choppers, a newer version of Ka-50 series, were found to be more superior than the American competitor attack helicopter AH-1Z-Vipers. In the ATAK program, events such as demonstration flights of Russian and Russian-Turkish crews and Ka-52 warfire were organized. In addition, Turkish experts found the opportunity to analyze the construction technology of Russian helicopters (<https://www.tusas.com.tr/en/product/t129-atak>).

### **3.2. Air Defense Systems Tenders**

Turkey declared a tender for the purchase of air defense systems in 2009. The current Turkish air defense system was based on Nike-Hercules missiles. These missiles were made by US Western Electric firm with the outdated technology of the 1950s and were brought to Turkey between 1959-1964. This old technology missile systems became ineffective in modern warfare and modernization of them also appeared to be another problem. Thus, Turkey has wanted to purchase US Patriot PAC-2 missiles since 1994. However, many inhibitor situations like the economic crisis, increased conflicts with PKK terror organization, the inconsistency of the coalition governments and the reluctant intention of the US forced Turkey's air defense modernization project to be postponed for a while. As the AK party came to power and the situation in the country stabilized, the air defense subject arose again. In 2009 Turkey Long Range Air and Missile Defense System (T-LORAMIDS) declared a tender. The tender attracted the attention of the US, China, Russia and joint Franco-Italian companies. In addition to negotiations with other tender participants, Turkish-Russian negotiations on the possible procurement of Russian military systems intensified. Turkey was interested in Russian S-300 anti-aircraft missile system used by Greece. The S-300 missile systems were in fact the property of Southern Cyprus however due to legal opposition of Ankara, these systems couldn't be placed in Cyprus, so they were deployed to Rhodes Island and are under the control of the Greek army. Greece is also a member of NATO and the presence of the S-300 systems proves that Russian air defense systems can be integrated into the NATO army. Nowadays, Turkey is more interested in the S-400 Russian air defence missile systems which are a modernized version of the S-300 systems. However, Turkey's interest in Russian S-400 systems became a new issue getting harsh reactions from US and NATO countries. Mainly, objections arise on the topic of integrating a non-NATO weapon system into a NATO country. From Turkey's point of view, this was a Janus-faced policy of US and NATO, as integration of the S-300 to Greece had never been a problem and moreover it was the USA's reluctance to sell Patriot PAC-2 air defense missile systems forcing Turkey to seek an alternative. The Turkish government, however, did not give up the idea of modernizing the air defense system (<http://turkishpolicy.com/blog/32/turkeys-purchase-and-the-path-to-a-post-american-alliance-architecture>).

### **4. Black Sea Security Cooperation**

In 1998, at the meeting of Chiefs of the Black Sea Navies (CBSN) in Varna, "The Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group-BLACKSEAFOR" was initiated by Turkey with the idea of establishing a multinational naval on-call peace task force. The purpose of this initiation was to enhance peace and stability in the Black Sea area by increasing regional co-operation

and improving good relationships. On April 2, 2001 in İstanbul the BLACKSEAFOR establishment agreement was signed by Bulgaria Georgia, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine (Derman, 2013).

In November 2004, Turkey officially invited the Black Sea countries to the operation “Black Sea Harmony”. The aim of this operation was to monitor the southwestern region of the Black Sea for suspicious ships, to identify possible terrorist acts and weapons of mass destruction. Russia was the first country to respond to the invitation. On December 27, the Russian Federation’s agreement to participate in the Black Sea Harmony operation was put into effect. The main forms of Russian participation in the operation were to exchange information about suspicious ships and, if necessary, to use Russian ships and aircraft in the northeastern Black Sea (Derman, 2013). The Black Sea Harmony operation which is an effective action of the Blackseafor group, is important in ensuring security in the region. It should also be noted that the developing dialogue between the Turkish and Russian military representatives plays a major role in strengthening the mutual trust between the countries.

## **5. The main problems between Russia and Turkey**

Albeit the relations between Turkey and Russia are progressing in a good manner, this doesn’t mean that there are no controversial situations. Particularly since the beginning of the 1990s, the wave of regional ethnic conflicts and separatism movements, which have been seriously spreading, have influenced the course of Turkish-Russian relations from time to time. In this context, the Karabakh conflict in the South Caucasus (in fact, the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan), the Chechen issue and the PKK issue have gained importance. The Chechen problem increased the tension of Turkish-Russian relations particularly during the first war of 1994–1996. Turkey’s official policy had been the resolution of the Chechen problem by peaceful means within the territorial integrity of Russia. However, occasional organizational and individual activities of Chechen descent diaspora in Turkey have increased the tension in relations. In this era, the Russian ambassador of the time, Albert Chernyshev, indirectly stressing the PKK problem of Turkey, said “One should not throw a stone to the window of his neighbor if his house is also made of glass”. Later on, Turkey managed to restrict the activities of the Chechen diaspora significantly in the country and Russia frequently repeated in its discourses that Russia is acting cooperatively against terrorism and took actions accordingly (Derman 2013). Thus, it is possible to say that the Chechen problem did not affect the tension of relations much during the hot conflicts that restarted in 1999. Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the PKK terrorist organization, escaped to Russia to evade the pursuit of Turkey in 1997. However, Russia deported Öcalan within a very short period of time and the PKK issue of



Turkey has never become such a great problem in bilateral relations. In fact, there are a diverse group of subjects that are ongoing issues, carrying the potential to increase tension. Russia's support to Assad's regime in the Syria conflict, Russia's denial to accept PKK, PYD, YPG as terror organizations, presence of YPG's official office in Moscow, the deployed Patriot missiles in the Turkey-Syria border by NATO, the Ukrainian crisis and Russia's Crimea annexation, the pressure exerted on the Crimean Tatars and Aircraft crisis are some examples of the disagreements and ongoing issues (Derman, 2017, 111). Among these problems, the aircraft crisis was the sharpest bend and the breaking point in bilateral relations. In spite of regional and global disagreements such as Russia's evaluation of the 1915 Armenian issue as "genocide" and giving support to Southern Cyprus, it is possible to see that the two countries maintain their cooperation and strategic relations in the context of "win-win" rather than being in rivalry. Energy trade constitutes one of the important pillars of cooperation between Turkey and Russia. With the new pipeline agreements signed between the two countries, relations have reached a level that they have never been before. Oil and natural gas are the major subjects of trade between the two countries. Russia reliably continues to supply Turkey's oil and natural gas demands. Turkey's energy dependence on Russia is annoyingly increasing. No matter how friendly the relations between the two countries are, such dependence is not desirable. Despite the annual visit of 2-3 million Russian tourists to Turkey, the presence of border neighborhoods and 50 thousand international weddings, cultural relations between the two countries are quite weak. There is unfulfilled interest in Turkey's history and culture in Russia as there aren't enough Russian publications on this subject. Cooperation of the Universities and common publications would help cultural integration and development of social empathy, aiding the resolution of the conflicts and flourishing of the relations.

## **6. Special Crisis in Turkey and Russia Relations**

On November 24, 2015, an unwanted event took place. Two fighter jets entered the territory of Turkey. These military aircrafts were later understood to be Russian Su-24, performing operations to land targets on northern Syrian territories (Caşın and Derman, 2016). One of these planes, violating the Turkish airspace, returned to Syrian airspace. However, the other Russian Su-24 fighter was shot down within the Turkish airspace. Turkey announced that although the aircraft had received warnings about territorial intrusion, it resisted leaving Turkish airspace so it was shot down according to the engagement rules. Formerly, in 2014 the Turkish airspace was again breached for about 15 minutes by Russian planes in the Black Sea, and in the following G 20 meeting this subject was discussed with Russian leader Putin and he confirmed that it would not happen again. Thereafter, Turkey declared that it would

not tolerate the violation of sovereignty rights ever since. During the G-20 meeting in Ankara, Putin pointing to Turkey declared “Some members give their support to al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham (DAESH- terror organization formerly known as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS))”. Because of the ongoing issues in Crimea and Syria, an ongoing tension had already existed. Putin accused Turkey of backstabbing. The Russian press also depicted Turkey as cowards, backstabbers, terrorist collaborators and traitors. “I think the shooting down of the Russian plane was previously planned. First of all, Ankara fears that Syrian Kurds will inevitably grow strong if DAESH is defeated. In such a case the idea of establishing a great Kurdistan will be possible. Secondly, Tayyip Erdoğan is trying to strengthen his political position through military rhetoric and he has just partly succeeded (Derman and Oba, 2017). Finally smuggling traffic made through the Syria-Turkey border brings significant revenue to Turkey.” were the remarkable comments of Dmitri Abzalov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Center for Strategic Communications (Prime agency). The well-known Pravda newspaper was pressed with a very ugly title. “Fu..... cowards hiding on the outskirts of NATO...” (<https://www.pravda.ru>). According to a news article in Sputnik, Russian leader Putin said in a statement: “The problem is not only about the tragedy that we had yesterday, but much deeper. Not only we the Russians but also the whole world see that the existing governance of Turkey is deliberately pursuing domestic policies for Islamization of the country for many years.” (<https://news.sputnik.ru>) The increased tension was a major blow to bilateral relations (Dyomkin, 2015). In the near past Russian Federation had entered Georgia and tore the two regions of the country, occupied Crimea, kept Eastern Ukraine within its sphere of influence, and sent warplanes to Syria to support Assad (Derman, 2015, 37). Therefore the leader of such a powerful country was expected to act in response. Russia’s response to the downfall of Russian fighter jets by Turkish jets was strong.

### **6.1. Measures taken by Russia**

Shooting down the plane had already increased the tension and evaluation of this topic harshly in the international media and contributed to the fiery atmosphere. On November 28 sanctions planned to be put into force against Turkey were announced by Russian President Vladimir Putin. As soon as the plane was dropped Russian Federation Foreign Minister Lavrov canceled his visit to Turkey. The State Duma and Federal Council, the two houses of parliament of the Russian Federation demanded the cancellation of scheduled flights to Turkey. A package of tough measures were revealed. Travel tours to Turkey were canceled, trucks from Turkey were kept waiting at the customs entry, entrance of Turkish goods from the Russian customs were stopped, food products checks increased, at the airports Turks were

forced to have extra security checks and were humiliated as potential criminals, businessmen were arrested unnecessarily for simple reasons. According to reports from the Russian Interfax news agency, Russian Prime Minister Medvedev, said that the important joint projects of Turkey and Russia may be canceled. Medvedev declared that Turkish companies could lose their shares in the Russian market. Economic measures also began to take effect quite soon. Russia announced that white meat intake from Turkey would stop by December 1, 2015. The first cut flowers of the season that were planned to be sent to Russia from Antalya remained at the airport. According to the RIA Novosti agency, the Russian General Staff spokesman Lt. Gen. Sergei Rudskoy reported as “One of the two greatest air defense warships of the Russian Navy, Moscow, the flagship of the Russian Black Sea fleet will be stationed at the junction of Turkey’s and Syria’s territorial waters”. Furthermore, Russia deployed S-400 missiles to Syria after the crisis, which had a range of 350 km approximately against airborne targets. Without doubt, these modern and effective missiles would be a direct threat to Turkish and allied aircrafts (<http://s400.tass.ru>).

The particular explanations from the senior names of Russia’s management staff made it clear that the economy of Turkey will be forced to suffer seriously as punishment. Following these developments, Gazprom PJSC, Rosneft, Lukoil, Magnitogorsk Iron & Steel OJSC, Turkish Airlines, Sberbank PJSC, Yandex NV, Anadolu Efes and Enka Construction came out to be the most vulnerable companies([https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/74663/000175272419048349/NPORT\\_828700853642636.htm](https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/74663/000175272419048349/NPORT_828700853642636.htm)).

In comparison to the former years’ first six months period, the trade volume between the two countries, in the first six months of 2016 had decreased by 35 percent. Similarly, the number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey dropped by 87 percent (Derman, 2019).

All of Russia’s sanctions against Turkey, but especially the ones that were related to the economy, had a smashing effect on Turkey’s tender financial balance.

## **7. New Period in Post-Crisis Relations**

Relations between the two countries have changed its pathway after the November 24 aircraft crisis (Kurban & Cabbarlı, 2019). It can be derived that the political developments and international relations are variable dependent and fragile and this has a direct effect on economic relations between Turkey and Russia Federation. The beginning of the progress in relations between Turkey and Russia was not long ago but its route became tense and painful with the crisis.

The coldness between the two countries lasted until 27 May 2016. On this date, the first signs for positive steps in bilateral relations began to appear. In this context, in a conversation in Athens, with Alexis Tsipras, the Prime Minister of Greece of the period, the Russian leader Putin expressed their desire to improve relations with Turkey if the first step came from Turkey. In another time, during his meeting with Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel of the period, in early June 2016, Putin expressed that he would support negotiations for the normalization of relations with Turkey and would support negotiations for the improvement of relations between Turkey and Israel and renormalization of the relations with Turkey (Derman 2017).

On June 14, 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan sent a congratulatory message to Putin and Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım sent a congratulatory message to Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on the Russian National Day celebrated on June 12. On June 27, President Erdoğan sent a letter to Putin and expressed his condolences about the downfall of the Russian plane and the deceased Russian pilot. On June 29, Russian President Putin called President Erdoğan and thanked him. The two leaders agreed to act jointly to improve relations and restore their former state (Derman, 2019).

After the July 15 coup attempt, President Erdoğan made his first foreign visit to Russia on August 9, 2016 and the leaders of the two countries accompanied by a large delegation met in St. Petersburg (Derman, 2019).

All these developments can be described as positive developments after the aircraft crisis. However, on December 19, 2016, there was another sad event between the two countries that could lead to a new crisis. Russian Ambassador to Ankara Andrey Gennadiyevich Karlov was assassinated at the opening of a photo exhibition organized by the Russian Embassy at the Center for Contemporary Arts. “Do not forget Aleppo, do not forget Syria,” said the assassin and was shot by security forces. Putin was fully aware of the events in Turkey during the 15 July coup attempt and did not blame Turkey for the assassination and evaluated the incident as a plan to make mischief and sabotage the scheduled tripartite summit in Moscow. In a similar way President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a statement regarding the assassination as “a provocation aimed at disrupting the normalization process”. Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed the same views (Derman & Oba, 2017:35).

Despite the assassination of Russian ambassador Karlov creating anxiety of a second peak of the crisis concerning the Syria issue in Astana process, Turkey, Iran and Russia became important players acting in cooperation. Relations on trade, the fight against terrorism, the

Cyprus issue, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Turkish Straits and energy transmission lines have sometimes been positive and in some other periods and have been strained (Derman 2016). Considering the positive steps taken in the resolution of the Syrian issue within the framework of Astana spirit and the purchase of S-400 missiles from Russia, relations with Iran and the Russian Federation have improved considerably. The Number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey reached 6.5 million and a target trade volume of \$ 100 billion is aimed for. S-400 purchases took place and the Turkish Stream project was implemented. However, it must be notified that Russia also has economic problems. Russia has been achieving half of its budget from exported oil and gas. The sharp drop in oil and gas prices, stagnation of capital flow to the country and the sanctions imposed by the US and the European Union (EU) on account of the Ukraine crisis, have caused economic turbulence in Russia. According to data released by the Russian Federal Bureau of Statistics, the Russian economy contracted by 2.2 percent in the first quarter of 2015, contracted by 4.6 percent in the second quarter and by 4.1 percent in the third quarter compared to the same periods of previous year (Özer, 2016).

## **Conclusions**

Despite the coexistence and similarity of the historical fate of both countries, and consequently the existence of common interests, relations have been established on the basis of mutual distrust and necessitated the maintenance of deep-seated stereotypes that limit the possibilities of good neighborliness in both communities. Nevertheless, the question arises considering the evolving cooperation between Turkey and Russia. Is this cooperation a result of a strategic transformation in the Russian Federation foreign policy or is it a mere periodic necessity? Regarding the wars between Russia and Turkey, rivalry, expansion policies, spheres of influences, ideological differences, public competition, Russia's historical demands on Turkish territories, it can be claimed that there is no strategic transformation in Federation of Russia's foreign policy but the current cooperation is the process of periodic necessity. In this case, as the recent developments creates many opportunities for Turkey, this also embodies serious risks. Though Russia had been a global rival of the US after the Second World War in the context of global leadership, it has lost its struggle in the 1990s, but has not abandoned its claims. It still sees the US as the other pole. Therefore, the tension between the US and Turkey is seen as an opportunity. By establishing military and strategic relations with Turkey, one of the main actors of NATO which is founded against the Soviet threat, Russia not only keeps Turkey close to its influence sphere but also prepares grounds for the breakage of the security structure of NATO and the West. Thus, gains are obtained in the context of splitting the opposite front.

Russia, as a lucrative market for military products, has never lost its interest in Turkey. Meanwhile, Turkey's armed forces actively would modernize the country not only with NATO, but also with other countries that can offer high quality products, are also open to cooperation in this field. However, due to the political orientation towards the West of Turkey it is not easy to enter the Turkish military technical market. Therefore, the Turkish-Russian military-technical cooperation largely depends on how independent foreign policy works for Turkey's NATO allies. Moreover, in recent years the priority of the Turkish government is not to purchase military equipment abroad but to develop its own military production. Considering these factors, the Russian joint military developments and technologies can be an important partner for Turkey in the shopping area. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, "the AK party came to power and after Prime Minister Erdogan, Turkish-Russian relations have gained a stable character in the fight against terrorism.

Russia is an important partner for Turkey. Having many years of experience in the production of military technical equipment, Russia manufactures high quality and competitive products with advanced technologies. Russia is interested in entering the Turkish military-technical market and is ready to make big concessions. As stated earlier, Turkey's new policy over the modernization of military technical systems is aiming not only at the purchase of equipment from other countries but also the creation of its own products. Russia seems to be ready to cooperate with Turkey in this area and not just for purchases, but also to make contracts for the joint production of military technical equipment. Currently, Russia and Turkey have already realized some major joint projects. A Russian company won the tender for the production of Medium Range Anti-Tank Weapon System in 2009, and in 2015 Turkey and Russia began to work on the joint project for a short-range missile system known as "Igla" which is in the category of Surface to Air Missiles (SAM), a Russian version of well-known Stinger missiles. Furthermore Turkey has also launched the purchase of S-400 missiles (<https://www.igla.ru>). Despite the two countries' military demands, it should be noted that some political factors complicated cooperation of the two countries in the military-technical field. Primarily it should be taken into account that Turkey is a NATO ally and the military-technical priorities in the modernization of the system should follow certain standards (Derman, 2017). The rapprochement between Turkey and Russia in this area can complicate Turkey's relations with European countries and the US. Therefore, the Turkish government needs to pursue a balanced policy between East and West. Despite the existing restrictions of NATO and the US, in recent years Turkey has increasingly pursued a more independent foreign policy and tried to keep Russia as an important strategic partner. The economy sector and the energy sector have

become major fields of cooperation. During the AK Party's administration, a dynamic trade turnover growth was observed among the countries. Agreements for the projects of Akkuyu NPP and Turkey natural gas pipeline are the two important agreements signed between Turkey and Russia in the last decade, which are also believed to determine the quality of bilateral relations for many years.

The Moscow administration feels the necessity to have good relations with Turkey in order to be effective in both the Turkish and the Islamic world. Problem-free relations with Turkey means that it would be much easier for Russia to consolidate its position in the Turkish world. In terms of the Islamic world, there is a dual policy for Russia as Moscow evaluates the Muslim world in two axes, the Shiites and the Sunnis. Hence, Russia wants to expand its area of influence over Shiites via Iran and over Sunnis via Turkey. Besides, Russia seeks support of Turkey in the ongoing Syria issue. Turkey taking its position near the Russia-Iran axis becomes an argument to be used against the West. Furthermore, this also has a buffering and balancing effect against other actors and threats. When Idlib territory is considered as a special case, Putin begin to follow policies concordant with Turkey and by doing so escaped being cornered in the context of human rights, has tried to achieve a positive image in the international community, has reduced costs in Idlib projection and has escaped responsibility in case of a terrorist act. Syria, which is considered as the last stop of the Arab Spring and dominated by instability and chaos for approximately seven years, eventually has managed to seize its supremacy over the terrorist groups and ensured control over the majority of the country. On the road to success, the Damascus regime made a joint decision in the Idlib projection with Russia and Iran. The option of performing an extensive military operation in the region had been a major debate subject in the Tehran Summit on September 7, 2018. At the summit Iran, Russia and Syria shared the same opinion of executing the military operation, however Turkey underlined the drawbacks of such an action. Thus, the common point of the analyzes and evaluations after the summit was that the expected result could not be achieved and the "Astana Spirit" was damaged. Recep Tayyip Erdogan's explanations after his return from Tehran were in the sense of confirming the dissidence. However, only ten days later, the Putin-Erdogan meeting in Sochi disintegrated the negatives of the Tehran Summit. The most important outcome of the Sochi interview is that the Russian Federation began to exhibit a posture close to the thesis of Turkey and has been more affirmative to Ankara's demands. The flexible foreign policy of Russia towards Turkey cannot be attributed only to the result of an understanding set forth in the Sochi Interview. After the "Airplane Crisis" between the two countries, initiation of letter diplomacy enhanced normalization of the relations and later on the failed coup attempt on

15 July 2016 started a new phase . This new phase is based on a friendly relationship system in which both parties pay maximum attention to relations, respond to each other's demands, maintain soft-tone explanations even in crisis situations or in case of political discrepancies.

From the perspective of the Russian Federation, it can be stated that four important points come into prominence in determining, shaping and conducting the foreign policy. The Eurasia Cooperation Action Plan signed on 16 November 2001 between Russia and Turkey is the first one of these. The second point is Russia's new strategic vision that goes beyond being an expansionist and regional power and evolving into multipolarity in the international system. In this respect, the Moscow administration led by Putin has come a long way primarily by confronting its internal structural problems. In this process, separatist movements were liquidated, economic strides were made and serious improvements were achieved in military capacity. Russian decision-makers then began to test the international system. In this context, there have been military, political and economic initiatives. The third point is that with the questioning of the US global leadership, the effectiveness and population of the Moscow administration has been opened up according to Russian decision-makers. Thus, rapprochement policy is aimed towards players that have periodical or traditional tension with the US and in this context particularly towards Iran and Turkey. Finally the fourth point is that Russia has to care for the Turkish world and Islamic world as one of the main determinant parameters in its strategic projections due to geographical and socioeconomic conditions. Thus, it can have the opportunity to control a large geography and population with economic and natural resources. According to these four mentioned points effective in the foreign policy of Russian Federation, it can be emphasized that Russia needs Turkey in the realization of its global objectives. First of all Russian expansionism in the Caucasus-Caspian-Persian Gulf axis or Black Sea-Aegean Sea-Mediterranean axis cannot be realized against the presence or opposition of Turkey. Therefore, Russia's rapprochement policy with Turkey is a tactical stance that coincides with the interests of Russia and in a sense aims to neutralize Ankara. It is of particular interest that Turkey is surrounded by Russia in the Balkans, Black Sea, Middle East axis. During the problematic process with the EU and US, Turkey has comprehended that there are many other options in the world. As it will be recalled, Erdogan made this very clear during his prime ministry, saying, "If necessary, we will say goodbye to the EU and turn to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization".

Turkey is the second country where the demand for electricity and natural gas increased most in the world. In the forthcoming period, consistent with its economic and social development targets, it is expected that Turkey will continue to be one of the most dynamic



economies in the world sustaining the increase in the energy demand. As a result of this increasing energy demand, Turkey becomes more and more dependent on energy imports, primarily oil and natural gas. Currently Turkey supplies about 26% of its total energy demand from the domestic sources. The rest of its energy demand is supplied from the imported resources mainly from the Federation of Russia. Relations with Russia have gained importance in many ways, including the S-400 acquisition in the defense industry and the Turkish current. In a sense Russia and Turkey have become strategic partners cooperating mainly in energy and military. Despite this interdependence of Russia and Turkey, it should not be ignored that there is serious conflict of interest between the two in the regions of the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. Based on these conflicts, the economic rapprochement between the two countries may not easily turn into political rapprochement and it is also not easy for Turkey to abandon the US and EU at its own will.

It can be concluded that during the AK Party governance relations with Turkey and Russian Federation have reached a new level. The implementation of long-term huge projects illustrates the mutual trust between Turkey and Russia. Strong economic interdependence between countries has become a factor that helps overcome some political disagreements between countries. Although there are political disagreements in some issues, recently both countries share their common views related with regional problems and also pursue coordinated policies at the international dialogue level. So far the running process demonstrates that mutual cooperation meets the national interests of the two states and continues to develop in the context of a tactical partnership.

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## CHAPTER 4

# TURK AND RUSSIAN RELATIONS FROM DISTANT NEIGHBOURSHIP TO CLOSE NEIGHBOURSHIP

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### ABSTRACT

The current diplomacy between Turks and Russians, who fought thirteen times between 1677-1918, and who had come on the brink of war many times besides these wars, is one of the most spoken subjects of today. When the history of the relationship between two countries is examined, it is observed that similarities to today's relationship between parties occurred occasionally. These convergences especially in the period after the Cold War, had increased in the period when diplomatic breakups between Turkey and the USA had come up. Historically, Turkey, in its national security calculations, had always followed-up a policy that is taking Russia to the center, and that is balancing the level of threat directed by Russia by the Western allies. Today, the convergence with Russia is being actualized as the result of a reverse functioning of a similar strategic calculation.

**Keywords:** Syrian crisis, S-400, SDF, Astana Agreement

## Introduction

The strategic positioning of Turkey near Russia is being defined by the structural factors of national, regional and international policy. And the most determinant one among these factors is the development which had increased its effect after year 2011, namely Arab Spring. Arab Spring is one of the most significant milestones of the Middle East in recent history that had completely changed the strategic parameters of the region for both the regional and global powers (Đidić& Kösebalaban, 2019). Moreover, the reflection of Arab Spring in Syria, and the changes arising after the Syrian Civil War had caused a dynamic process in which the large powers being effective in the region had repositioned themselves. Within this scope, a rise of diplomatic breakups between Turkey and the USA due to the developments arising by the Syrian crisis had been the main cause of convergence of Turkey with Russia. But the most significant difference of this breakup compared to other periods is the procurement by Turkey of S-400 Missile Systems made in Russia despite all the pressures. This procurement has caused the most significant breaking point of recent years in international relations.

USA's acceptance as addressee of DUP/PPU, the Syrian PKK being the largest branch of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and its policies marginalizing Turkey in Syria, had directed Turkey to closer relations with the Russian Federation (hereinafter will be written as Russia) and Iran in Syria. This relation means for Russia pulling Turkey, being one of the most important countries of NATO, near itself, and forming a flaw within the organization. And as for Turkey, it focused on balancing the DUP / PPU relationship with the USA.

For these reasons, the answers to questions such as "How the current process between two countries will be shaped in the future?" and "Will the effect created by the procurement of S-400 turn to a higher cooperation?" will be shaped according to the relations of Turkey with the West. Russia, which is shaping its approach against the Middle East and Turkey through a pragmatism principle that will ensure being able to respond to traditional and untraditional threats (Ruslan & Lukyanov, 2018), is becoming one of the most important options that Turkey directs to as a force of an alternative balancing against the West. In addition, strategic convergence arising between Turkey and Russia had caused remarks in different forms by various countries and specialists, particularly including Turkey and Turkish specialists. Besides the remarks that a conflict of interest experienced in recent periods with the USA directed Turkey to a process which will focus Turkey to a cooperation with Russia in Eurasia (Çelikpala, 2015), there are groups that deem unsustainable the policy of convergence with Russia, which is a country that had experienced a conflict of interest along its history (Đidić & Kösebalaban, 2019).



Considering the long history full of conflicts, the relations between Turkey and Russia are mostly being explained over factors such as identity, commercial mutual dependency and traditional alliance structures. But the structure of relations between Turkey and Russia exhibits a complex appearance which cannot be explained only by economics and power or identity factors. For this reason, in order to understand the relations between two countries, the asymmetric power relations require multidimensional analysis of complex causalities such as relations with the West, changing descriptions relevant to national interests, transformations in the type of regime, and economic and social networks (Balta, 2019).

### **1. Distant Neighborhood in Turk and Russian Relations**

Even if the year 1492 seems as a milestone for Turk and Russian relations, the relationship between Turks and Russians dates back to the migrations of Turks prior to the year of milestone on a geopolitical basis, and to the obligation of Slavs to live together at the moorlands of Ukraine. The history of diplomatic relations has started to shape over commercial affairs in the period of Bayezid II. In addition, the shaping of relations in between Ottomans and Russians over power balance dates back to the period of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. In 16<sup>th</sup> century, upon initiation of domination of Russians on West Turkistan, Ottoman Empire had launched an expedition to Astrakhan in 1568. By that expedition, even if Sokollu Mehmed Pasha had tried to prevent the rise of Russians, the Ottoman army had returned from Caucasia and beyond without being able to fight (Topsakal, 2016).

Along 16<sup>th</sup> century, Russia had followed-up the strategy of proceeding and expanding its lands in the direction of the west as well as the east. This expansion strategy directed to the west had become known by the completion of Belgorod line of 800 km by Russia in order to defend itself from the pressure of Crimean Khanate. In that process, while Russia was expanding its lands, it had determined the strategy of proceeding towards Ukraine which is located at its south-west. But the expansion of the lands of Russia, and her construction of castles and military cities for defending had to be deemed as a significant threat by the Ottoman Empire.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the relations between Ottomans and Russia had continued to be pursued over the balance policy. One of the most important examples of this policy had actualized by the participation of Russia in the Holy Alliance formed by the Venice and Poland Governments following the Vienna Siege of Ottomans in 1683 that had ended with defeat. In its expansion strategies after that date, Russia had started to act along with Europe against the Ottomans. Upon understanding of Russia as from the 17<sup>th</sup> century that

it wouldn't be able to improve its trade without seaway, Peter the Great had besieged the Azov Fortress<sup>1</sup> in 1696 in the second time, and thus he gained a chance for drawing a more profitable route in the direction of trade. Russia had also wanted to benefit from the Treaty of Kallowitz, that had been drawn up in 1699 among Holy Alliance Governments and Ottomans, but it had not been possible.

Another important incidence in the relations of Ottomans and Russia is the Treaty of Istanbul. Ottomans, that had not established a direct relation with the Russians until the Treaty of Istanbul, that had been drawn up by the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, had sat around the table for the first time with the Russians, and by the conclusion of the treaty the Azov Fortress was left to the Russians. By the Treaty of Pruth that had been drawn up in 1711, even if the abandonment of Russians from the acquisitions that they had obtained until that time had relieved the Ottoman Empire, the calmness in between the two countries had ended as the result of levying war on Ottomans through the agreement of Anna of Russia with Charles IV the Emperor of Austria (Topsakal, 2016). The Ottoman Empire, struggled separately with both countries, tried to regulate its relations with both Austria and Russia through the Treaty of Belgrade, that had been drawn up in 1739.

Ottoman and Russian relations, that had been subject to a struggle between the years 1730-1740, had continued as strained but without war in between the years 1741-1761. In the period of Catherine the Great, Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji (1774) had been drawn up between the Ottomans and Russians which was a milestone in the history for the Ottomans. By the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji, the process of losing Crimea had started, and the Treaty of Aynalikavak, that had been drawn up in 1779, had been the continuation of that process. The process that started with the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji had continued with the Treaties of Jassy and Adrianople, and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century went down in history as a process in which Russia had completely blockaded the Ottomans (Topsakal, 2016). In that period, the balance between the Ottomans and Russians had been ensured by the support of Western governments, and this state had eliminated the capacity of Ottomans to act alone.

Recognition of danger of Russia by Europe, and especially the initiation of England and France to act near Ottomans had revealed their effort of making the Ottoman Empire a buffer region against the threat of Russia towards them. But the consideration of Ottomans' ability to remain standing had started an irrevocable process for the Ottomans.

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1 For more detailed information regarding the occupation of Azov Fortress by the Don Cossacks see. Sinan Yüksel, "Occupation of Azov Fortress by Don Cossacks (1637-1642)", *Journal of History Reseraches*, Volume: XXX, Issue:49, Year: March/2011, Ankara, p.205-218.

In the war of 1877-78, which is also known as Russo-Turkish War, Ottomans had faced one of the most severe defeats. The main reasons of war may be deemed as panslavism policy of Tsardom of Russia, inability of Ottomans to control the Balkans, seeking of a block by the Tsardom of Russia, and unsuccess of bloody uprisings arising due to tax problems (Özdal & Karaca, 2018). By the end of the war, Kars and Erzurum had also been taken from Ottomans as well as the occupation of Balkans. By the Treaty of San Stefano, which had been drawn up in 1878, they had wanted to eliminate the domination of Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, and the borders of Great Bulgaria had been drawn. For this reason, Treaty of San Stefano had been a significant road map in the foreign policy of Bulgarians (Özdal & Karaca, 2018).

England and Austria, being disturbed by the acquisition of strategically important regions by the Russians, had stepped in and organized the Treaty of Berlin (Topsakal, 2016), and had tried to ensure the independence of Balkan Governments instead of the domination of Russians in the Balkans. Russia and the Ottoman Empire, confronting due to Balkan problems by the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, had then faced the Armenian problem (Köni, 2015). New internal and external dynamics, that had arisen during and after World War I, had caused the determination of a new conflict and cooperation fields in between the two countries.

## **2. 20. Century, and Effect of National Dynamics on Turk and Russian Relations: Ad Hoc Convergence**

The fall following the war of the Ottoman and Russian monarchies, which were on opposite camps during Balkan Wars and World War I, had an effect transforming the internal and external dynamics of Turkey and Russia. In 1917, Lenin had been declared as president following the acquisition of Tsardom of Russia by the Bolsheviks. On December 30, 1922, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had been established by the participation of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Republics of Caucasia (Oran, 2011). By the Armistice of Mudros (Oran, 2011), that had been drawn up following the initiation of World War I and the severe defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the Allied Powers had started to occupy Ottoman lands. By the end of the national struggle, initiated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the proclamation of the republic had been actualized on October 29, 1923, and then the Republic of Turkey continued as a successor state of the Ottoman Empire. In the period of national struggle, the Turk and Russian relations had been established on a resistance mechanism against the policies of the West, and the relations between the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and Russia Soviet Federative Socialist Republic had started in the process of reorganization of Europe following World War I.

In the period following World War I, the isolation of both governments from the international system had caused the Turk and Russian directors to focus on their internal problems, and on establishing strong central authorities that will ensure the continuity of regimes. The parties had tried to shape their foreign policies and security policies within the frame of this comprehension. Establishing a robust and stable economic and political order for guaranteeing the territorial integrity, and being approved in the international domain had become the main priority (Çelikpala, 2015). USSR had been the first European government officially recognizing the Turkish government through the Treaty of Moscow of March 16, 1921 (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016). Treaty of Kars, and Turk – Russian Friendship and Neutrality Agreement of 1925, that had been drawn up in that period, had arose as an expression of the similar view of world policy by both parties, and at least of their intent that they did not want to create a problem for each other (Çelikpala, 2015).

Following the drawing up of Friendship and Neutrality Agreement of 1925 in between two countries, the year 1926 had continued with mutual visits. the 1920s are being deemed as years of recognition and evaluation of each other in both commercial and cultural sense, and of building-up of friendship. It is observed that investments had been made in weapons and army in the 1930s. And the 1930s had caused disturbances and migrations as the result of the killing (Metreş, 2018) of many Soviet people in the Soviet Union during 1936-1937 under the administration of Stalin. Until the commencement of World War II, the Turk – USSR relations had been shaped within the frame of friendship and improvable relations. But the first tension arising in bilateral relations in that period had been experienced during the meetings of the Montreux Convention regarding the Regime of Straits in 1936. This tension had reached a peak following World War II on March 19, 1945 after the Russian foreign minister Molotov sent a diplomatic note to Turkey indicating that it would not renew the Pact of Non-Aggression of 1925 (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016).

### **3. Effect of International System on Turk – Russian Relations: Ideological Positioning**

Along with the outbreak of World War II, and the dragging of the Soviet Union into the war through the attack of Germany, the Turk – Soviet relations had turned to a point whose destruction will remain for a long period as the result of the insistent request of Soviets for the participation of Turkey in the war (Oran, 2011).

While the Soviet Union had wanted to decrease the pressure of Germany on itself along with the participation of Turkey in the war, Turkey had preferred to preserve its complete

neutrality. While examining the Turk – Russian relations in that period, it is necessary to consider the participation of the USA in the war, and becoming a leader in Western alliance by its superior military power and capacity which became quite effective in the changing of balances. The Soviet Union's, insistence regarding the participation of Turkey in the war, had taken a reverse situation which is Turkey's non-participation so that they would not be sharing their acquisitions from the war with Turkey after it became clear that the Germans would lose the war.

The 1940s had been the start of a much negative period compared to the 1920s and 1930s in terms of relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union. Non-renewal of friendship agreements that had been drawn up between the Soviet Union and Turkey, and the unresponsiveness of Turkey in not giving some compromises that the Soviet Union wanted from Turkey had caused the increase of tension, and breakdown of relationships between the two countries. In the meanwhile, another important development had actualized by the declaration of war by Turkey against Germany and its allies due to such a requirement in order to participate within the United Nations. This state had not been taken kindly by the USSR.

By the declaration of Truman Doctrine in March 1947, the lines of Cold War had started to become clear, and USSR and Turkey had taken their place in opposite camps (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016). Within the frame of the dynamics required by the double-poled world order, Turkey and USSR had determined an external policy strategy conforming their ideological dependencies. Along the period of the Cold War, Turkey's government identity, and its basic motivation enabling its participation in NATO in 1952 had been shaped by the opposition of communism (Balta, 2016). In that period, Turkey had benefited from many opportunities including the Korean War (Gönlübol, 2016) of 1950 in order to become a member of NATO, and this state had provided positive effects for NATO membership (Mütercimler & Öke).

The NATO membership of Turkey (Gönlübol, 2016), that bases its basic foreign policy strategy in international policy on becoming closer to the USA, had threatened the relations of Soviet Russia and Turkey. These tensions deepened by the international business cycle had been concluded by the defining of Russians again in the form of *enemy* along with the NATO membership of Turkey.

While the concept of alienation, gaining an ideological dimension as being merged with opposition to communism, is approximating Turkey one more step to the USA and European-Atlantic security institution that adopt the Soviet opponent policy of containment, it had moved Turkey away from Soviets (Çelikpala, 2015). In 1953, while USSR had started to

make its presence felt in the Middle East and Arabian Peninsula, Stalin had passed away the same year. The presence of the USSR in the Middle East had disturbed the USA, and the USA had initiated the meetings of the Baghdad Pact which would also involve Turkey against the expansionism of Soviets in that region (Oran, 2011).

In the period of the Cold War, the policy of Turkey that is included in the Western camp, and that define itself directly in ally with the USA had started to change in 1961 by the crisis known as Johnson Letter. Turkey, which had recognized that unidirectional foreign policy was harming itself, and limiting its mobility, had decided to follow-up a more flexible policy in its relations with USSR in order to balance the USA and West camp following 1961. In addition to this development, by the effect of the drawing up of Helsinki Accords in Europe in 1971, and of softening arising in the double-poled structure of international policy, the relations of Turkey and USSR had started to improve.

#### **4. Re-positioning Following Cold War: Regional Competition in Eurasia**

The disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the end of the Cold War had caused the elimination of ideological obstacle determining the relations of Turkish political elites with Russia (Balta, 2016). The transformations arising in systemic and regional order by the end of the Cold War had caused the arise of new opportunities and fields of cooperation between the two countries. The 90s had been determined by the increase of economic and commercial relations in between the two countries. Economic and diplomatic cooperation, that had increased in that period, had also involved some factors of conflict. By the beginning of the 1990s, the disappointments that Turkey had experienced in the EU membership process had caused Turkey to follow-up a proactive policy undertaking leadership role on the Republics of Central Asia (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016). This policy of Turkey had been deemed as an external political competition in terms of Russia. In addition, Turkey's assumption of external political attitude still with the logic of Cold War is the cause of inability of ensuring the confidence between the two countries.

Along 1990s, the problems between Turkey and Russia had mostly been determined over the internal security factors. Along that period, while Turkey had accused Russia by giving support to PKK, Russia had accused Turkey by supporting the Chechenian separatist movement. On November 5, 1999, *Common Declaration Against Terrorism* had been drawn up between the two countries, and the relations had started to improve after that date (Balta, 2016).

The regional crises, and the unstabilizing effects of these crises had played a significant role on the foreign policy of Turkey against Russia (Kasim, 2003). In terms of Turk and Russia relations, the first half of 1990s is the transition period bringing the “competition” to the fore in the shadow of negative heritage of the past, and the second half of it is the transition period bringing “cooperation” to the fore which is indicating a bright future shaped by the vision. While Turk – Russia relations gained dimension as deepening in economic and commercial fields in 1990s, the distrust caused by mutual fears had not made it possible for friendship and cooperation to spread to a wide area which is also covering the issues of politics and security. But this environment had prepared grounds to the arise of virtual convergence where the arise of discourse, carrying the bilateral relations to a multidimensional partnership, could be observed (Çelikpala, 2015).

In the 1990s, the policies of Turkey, that had been encouraged by the West, increased their influence in Caucasian and Central Asia area, which had been perceived by Russia as one of the most significant threats directed to its regional interests. Upon that, as from 1993, Russia had started to adopt a more integrationist approach in its close geography.

### **5. Effect of Leaders on Turk-Russian Relations: Administration of Erdoğan and Putin After 2000**

In the 1990s, while Russia was experiencing the difficulties of the process of transition to market capitalism, Turkey had faced a series of economic and political crises. When compared with those years, in 2000s, Russia –being under the administration of Putin-, and Turkey – being under the administration of Erdoğan- had experienced relatively political stability and economic welfare periods in which the mutual dependency had increased. (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016).

The change, that had been actualized in internal political and economic atmospheres of both countries, had caused an extensive and multidimensional transformation also in the perspectives of Turkish and Russian foreign policy. On June 28, 2000, the *Concept of Foreign Policy* had been declared in Russia, and an approach in which the interests of Russia were primary had been adopted on lands after Soviets. And in Turkey, Turkey’s traditional Western focused foreign policy had faced a transformation by the Minister of Foreign Affairs İsmail Cem, and a foreign policy had not focused on conflict but on trade had tried to be formed. Cem’s multidimensional approach had been pursued by the AKP government in 2000s, and *Policy of Zero Problem with the Neighbors* had been followed-up (Balta, 2016). As a result of this transformation that started in foreign policy approaches, both countries had benefited from

the current structure of the international system, and they had undertaken a more assertive role in regional relations (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016).

A transformation had also occurred in the perception of the Turkish public opinion of Russia that had reached to the position of primary partner of Turkey in the fields of economic and commercial relations, and especially in the context of energy cooperation (Çelikpala, 2015). As from that period, the relations had been characterized by multilateralism. Within this frame, a new approach based on the discourse of two similar countries that may actualize commercial partnership, that may have relations based on mutual understanding and that may spread it to Eurasia geography had replaced the approach of two countries fighting with each other in opponent camps and that are basic security threats for each other (Çelikpala, 2015). In 2001, the document of “*Action Plan of Cooperation in Eurasia: To Multidimensional Partnership from Bilateral Cooperation*” had been the one shaping the new period in bilateral relations. In 2002, the cooperation between the two countries had been developed further to the military field. Before the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the USA, the Russian Federation objected the intervention in case a decision from the UNSC was not obtained, while Turkey had not allowed the use of its lands for passage to Iraq by rejecting the mandate of March 1. The similar policies that they follow-up had formed grounds for the economic convergence of both countries.

Especially as from the 2000s, the relations between Turkey and Russia had gained a multidimensional quality as cultural and economic dimensions being in the forefront. In the 2000s, the rapidly increasing energy requirement of Turkey, parallel to the view of Russia under the administration of Putin of deeming the export of energy resources like natural gas being in the first place of economic-political priority had gathered both parties around common interests. In fact, the meetings held between the parties in that period, and performance of all the drawn-up agreements under the effect of energy centered cooperation draw a great deal of attention (Çelikpala, 2015). Two countries, acting in cooperation in the field of energy, had also pursued parallel strategies on issues being significant in terms of power balances in the world, such as, the civil war of Syria, territorial integrity of Iraq, problem of Israel and Palestine, Iran policies and terror (Oran, 2011). Even if the similar policies followed-up by both countries overlap, the limits of conformity that they show in foreign policy had been formed within the frame of not breaching the interests of each other while preserving their own interests.

While Abdullah Gül – the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey- had visited Russia in February 2004, Putin had visited Turkey for the first time as president in December of the same year. And the process had been followed by drawing up of an agreement on deepening the multidimensional partnership between the two countries, and by the adoption



of a comprehension emphasizing not competition but partnership. In November 2005, Mavi Marmara had been opened. Mavi Marmara had also gained importance in terms of bringing the cooperation to the forefront instead of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan petroleum pipeline competition (Özbay, 2011). The two countries had followed-up parallel strategies in the developments in Iraq, Afghanistan, South Caucasia and the Middle East. But in 2006, during the visit of Russia, the request of Turkey about the inclusion of PKK in the terror list had caused disappointment due to the statement of Russia regarding only its sensitivity about terror (Oran, 2011).

The relations, that had gained momentum by the leadership of Erdoğan and Putin as from the beginning of 2000s, had started to be shaped by the new dynamics arising in regional and international policy while the first decade of the century was coming to an end. One of the most significant developments arising within this scope had been the instabilities in commercial balance by the global financial crisis of 2008. This turbulence arising in global economic structure had combined with the developments arising in the geography of the European Union (EU). At the Bucharest Summit of April 2008, it had been approved that Ukraine and Georgia could become members of NATO, and in May 2008, EU had declared Eastern Partnership Initiative. In 2009, Obama's accede in the USA, and his declaration of its will for withdrawing from the Middle East had created a significant risk / opportunity dilemma for Russia. After that date, Western supported uprisings causing tension between Russia and Europe had arisen in the geography of old Soviets soils. However, the tension between Russia and Europe had reached the peak by the support of Russia in 2008 for the South Ossetia separatist movement in Georgia (Balta, 2016). Turkey had objected to the military intervention of Moscow for its support to the Russian-biased separatist South Ossetia units, and had defended the territorial integrity of Georgia (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016). In addition, *Protocol of Cooperation in Religious Field* had been drawn up between Russia and Turkey in the same year, and thus the relations had not been limited only as focused on security, energy or defense.

The support by Russia of protocols drawn up between Armenia and Turkey on October 10, 2009, and in the same year the passage of South Stream project from the waters of Turkey had been reflected positively on the relations (Oran, 2011). In addition to these developments, higher clarification of problems between Turkey and the EU in 2010 had been factors that had converged Turkey and Russia (Balta, 2016).

In 2010, Russia had supported the policies of Turkey in the reactions regarding the breach of international law by the attempts of Turkey in the Middle Eastern region, the constructive role it had undertaken along with Brazil against the Nuclear Crisis of Iran. As well as in the

case of 9 Turkish nationals who were killed by Israeli military forces at the *Mavi Marmara* ship. On the other hand, the reflection of the Arab Spring, which had started in 2010 and whose effect is ongoing, started in Syria in 2011 and the gradual deepening of the Syrian Crisis in 2012 had the most determinant developments in bilateral relations. The tension, that started in February 2011 by the statement written on the wall by 11 children saying “Your turn is coming” by indicating Assad, who had continued ruling as one party despite the USA and EU’s request regarding his leave of office, though Russia, Iran and China supporting the administration of Damascus (Demir, 2016).

The beginning of different terror elements’ activities on Syrian lands by the Syrian Crisis, and worsening of Turkey’s relations with the regime of Assad had subjected the relations of Turkey and Russia to a compelling test. But getting involved in the problems in the Middle East to a certain extent, and developments arising in other fields of mutual cooperation had enabled Turkey and Russia to abstain from a clear conflict. Turkey and Russia try to coordinate the regional security policies, and to be more flexible in order to abstain from future conflicts (Mamedov & Lukyanov, 2018).

## **6. From Arab Spring to Nur-Sultan Process: Period of 2011-2019**

The process of transformation arising in the Arab world by the beginning of 2010s had caused the arise of a comprehension regarding that Russia and Turkey has to determine a new perspective in their foreign policies regarding the Middle East (Ruslan & Lukyanov, 2018). That new foreign policy vision arising in Russia and Turkey under powerful leader profile had occurred in both countries in the form of “pursuit of being deemed as great power” (Rüma & Çelikpala, 2019). The imperial heritage owned by both countries, and the requirement of being deemed as determinant / effective actors in regional and global sense caused by this heritage had been the most important factors determining the new foreign policy visions of Russia and Turkey (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016).

The basic driving force of a new approach adopted by the Russian foreign policy had been the renewal of the Russian army. The reflections of this renewal matters in terms of indication by Russia of Russian army’s capacity of intervention in far geographies as Syria as observed in its “vicinity” such as, Ukraine and Crimea (Rüma & Çelikpala, 2019).

Particularly being in the close geography, Syrian Civil War had been the regional development for Turkey and Russia as they took their most important steps within the frame of the vision of being the regional great powers. The tragic civil war in Syria had formed a field in which the foreign policy objectives of these two countries had been observed with

really controversial reflections (Rüma & Çelikpala, 2019).

Another significant development causing the arise of controversial perspective between Turkey and Russia, that are positioned on opposite camps regarding the developments in Syria, had arose by the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. The USA and EU had imposed sanctions against Kremlin as the result of annexation of Crimea by Russia, and in this process Turkey had both not recognized the annexation, and had supported the Crimean Tatars at all the international platforms (Koçak, 2019). Even Turkey, making statements supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine, had expressed its concern regarding the Crimean Tatars and power balance at the Black Sea, it had not supported the sanctions of the EU on Crimea against Russia (Balta, 2016). Following the Crisis of Ukraine, the imposition of sanctions on Russia by the Western countries had been deemed as an opportunity by Turkey for the development of relations. Turkey had not supported the sanctions imposed against Russia, and on the contrary it had emphasized that Russia is a very important economic partner for Turkey.<sup>2</sup>

In the period following this process, while the strategic faults that the administration of Obama followed-up in Syria had condemned the USA to DUP-PPU being the extension of PKK in Syria, it had also given rise to an approach not considering Turkey being its most important ally in the region. And the policies followed-up by the USA had increased concerns in Iran regarding that they are “being surrounded”.

In that period, the administration of Assad had called Russia to Syria also by the effect of Iran, and Russia had not declined this request which would enable the actualization of an historical purpose for itself. On September 30, 2015, the Russian army had started an air campaign in Syria, and that campaign had been the first military campaign that the Russian army had actualized in a geography beyond the lands of the Soviet Union (Coşkun, 2019).

The incorrect strategy followed-up by the administration of Obama had made Russia an important player in Syria. Today, Russia has become a very powerful element in the region as it had never been before in history. The change of this state seems very difficult in the following process. This state will be the most important factor affecting the future planning of both countries of the region and the USA. As from that date, Russia started to significantly show its presence in Syria, and it had become balanced and decision maker in the region for the first time in its history.

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2 We didn't see the requirement of conforming to the embargoes.(February 13, 2015).<https://m.borsagundem.com/haber/bu-ambargolara-uyma-gereklilik-gormedik/212119>,

This state had been perceived as a threat by Turkey that had just detached from the logic of the Cold War. While Russian planes were bombing Syria, they had breached the Turkish air space, and required a warning declaration at the highest level that had been made by Turkey against that. A Russian plane, breaching the Turkish air space at the Syrian border, crashed on November 24, 2015, and the pilot of the plane died. And this caused significant tension and a breakdown of relations between the two countries.

The crisis period of Turk and Russian relations, that had continued as from November 2015 until June 2016, had showed a change following the coup attempt in Turkey in June 2016. Following the unsuccessful coup attempt of June 15, 2016, Putin had declared that they reject the illegal and violent actions against the government and had conveyed his condolences for the losses in Turkey. Following that declaration, Erdoğan made his first overseas visit after the coup attempt to Russia on August 9, 2016.

After the coup attempt, the murder of Andrey G. Karlov –the Ambassador of Russia in Turkey-, that created a great shock in Turkish and Russian public opinion, had not caused a new crisis between the two countries, and it had converged them more. In fact, only one day after the assassination of ambassador Karlov, the ministers of foreign affairs of Turkey, Russia and Iran had gathered in Moscow, and had confirmed their determination for the declaration of a new peace process for the resolution of the Syrian Crisis. That strategic dialogue, carried out among three countries for the resolution of the Syrian Crisis, had been one of the most effective mechanisms. Operation Olive Branch and Operation Euphrates Shield, that Turkey had actualized in Syria, had been successful as the result of the triple mechanism carried out among Russia, Turkey and Iran (Kortunov & Erşen, 2018).

Besides the strategic partnership in Syria, Turkey and Russia are continuing to improve their relations also in the economic field. Mutual economic relations by the two energy projects as being Akkuyu Nuclear Plant and Turk Stream, and developments such as Russian tourists visiting Turkey are indicators of improving relations between the two countries. A more actual development had occurred by the procurement of S-400 Missile Systems by Turkey from Russia. In June 2017, Turkey had decided to procure S-400 Missile Systems from Russia, and by the drawing up of that agreement Turkey had been the first NATO country deploying the Russian military systems on its land (Kortunov & Erşen, 2018).

The economic relations that are gradually deepening between Turkey and Russia by this strategy defined as “compartmentalization” by Öniş and Yılmaz, which also means that the simultaneous presence of political tensions has become possible (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016).

Turkey and Russia, being two governments having a history full of conflicts, deep structural differences and different world views, have started to converge as the result of disappointments experienced regarding the USA, rather than the presence of a common strategic vision (Hill & Taspınar, 2006).

The unsuccessful operations in Syria with the leadership of the USA for ending the terrorist acts, has caused Ankara and Russia to find a common ground for interfering in the resolution process of the problem in Syria. Russian and Turk leaders, along with Iran, have initiated the Nur-Sultan Process in which the USA and EU have not been involved. (Coşkun, 2019).

The most important reasons causing the initiation of this process, and causing Russia and Turkey to take place on the same platform are factors such as, transformation of main objective of Turkey pursued since 2016 on the problem of Syria from “change of regime” to “prevention of a possible Kurdish autonomous region”(Đidić & Kösebalaban, 2019), alienation against the USA, and Russia’s eagerness to ensure the cooperation of Turkey which is against the regime and which is a member of NATO (Rüma & Çelikpala, 2019). Turkey is currently acting over two main strategic dependencies. The first of these is the provision of a significant leverage by Russia to Turkey against the USA and EU. And the second one is the expectation regarding that Russia will provide a significant voice to Turkey in the final phase of peace meetings of Syria, and that it will prevent the Kurds to have a future in the region.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to all these expectations, Turkey is also facing with the reality that Russia is not accepting DUP-PPU as terrorist, and that this terrorist group has an office in Moscow. Russia has developed relations with the Kurds in the Middle East, and has not abstained from establishing relations with the braches of PKK in Iran, Iraq and Syria.<sup>4</sup>

The factor characterizing the relations between Turkey and Russia is the interactional and *ad hoc* nature of these relations. Despite strong economic relations, and intense security cooperation, the relations have not been institutionalized, and they are dependent on the personal decisions of the leaders. The lack of countries to have a common and extensive vision on their close neighbors is also another negative factor (Balta, 2016).

For this reason, the relation of Turkey and Russia may be best defined by the hedgehog concept revealed by Arthur Schopenhauer in 1851.

3 Amb. W. Robert Pearson, “Russia and Turkey—Dalliance or Alliance”, *American Diplomacy*, March 2018, [americandiplomacy.web.unc.edu/2018/03/russia-and-turkey-dalliance-or-alliance/](http://americandiplomacy.web.unc.edu/2018/03/russia-and-turkey-dalliance-or-alliance/) (e.t.24.12.2019), p.5

4 It shouldn’t ve forgotten that Mustafa (Melle) Barzani had took refuge in USSR in 1947, and had started movement by returned to Iraq in 1956.

*“On a cold winter morning, many Indian porcupines got close to each other for not getting frozen. And then they realized their quills, and got separated. When they got cold, they again got close to each other. They got away when the quills disturbed. The dilemma that they experience in between getting frozen in cold and the pain of quills continued as the distance between them reached a point where they could tolerate both pains.”*

Problems are arising when the relationship of Turkey and Russia goes beyond the relation of two countries feeling alienated by the West. These problems are giving rise to the requirement of keeping the relations at a specific distance for the sake of balancing the West. In this context, it is not possible for Russia to abandon Syria due to its presence in the Mediterranean Sea. Thus, the subject is not the lands of Syria for Russia, its presence on the lands of Syria is just a tool directing the purpose, which is to be in the Mediterranean. At this point, the presence of Turkey or the USA or Iran in Syria will be acceptable as long as it doesn't cause threat to its interests. For this reason, Russia is showing the effort of not carrying its relations with Turkey to the level of conflict even if it doesn't completely meet its expectations on sensitive issues.

In other words, Russia and Turkey don't have a request of deeming each other as strategic partners. Russia, while intending to affect the decision-making processes in NATO by pulling Turkey –which is being marginalized by the allies of NATO- near itself, and to form a crack in the West. It is wishing to create a future for its own initiative in Syria within this process. And Turkey is using its convergence required against the policies of its own allies.

## **Conclusion**

Change occurring in power balances is forming the main dynamic of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's global policy. The arise of this change occurring in changes of power at the axis of Asia and Eurasia affecting the geo-strategic environment of Turkey and Russia had made it obligatory the adoption of a new vision in the foreign policies of both countries. Turkey and Russia, as two countries having historical fields of conflict and different identity perceptions, are experiencing a new period having the capacity of determining the bilateral relations in the long term.

Russia has followed a policy for being regional hegemon in its vicinity through its interventions in South Ossetia, Crimea and Syria, and in this process Iran and China have been the main allies of Russia.

In a similar manner, Turkey has tried to position itself at a determinant and active position against the regional dynamics arising after Arab Spring. In this process, it has tried to pursue the traditional alliance being maintained by the USA and the EU along with its balanced standing in the triangle of Russia, Saudi Arabia and China. As a member of NATO Turkey's procurement of S-400 Missile Systems of Russian air defense system, and its joint performance of various infrastructure projects with China are main indicators that it is trying to comply with the regional power positions.

Cyclic changes arising as focused on the Middle East and Eurasia have directly affected the Turk and Russia relations, also in this period as it had been in the past. The quality of relations in the near future for Turkey and Russia, that converge to each other by observing the national interests against the policies of the USA in the regional developments where Syria is at the center, will be shaped as per the expectations of the parties and the results they acquire. According to that, not allowing a PKK connected formation at its national borders being the most significant factor for Turkey, and the efforts of having a strategic position at the region being important for Russia will be the cornerstone of policies of both countries against each other.

The incorrect policies followed-up by the administration of Obama had not just made Russia a significant player in Syria, it had also made it effective in the Mediterranean Sea and increased the actualization possibility of the Russian dream. The change of this state seems very difficult in the following process. Thus, Turkey will be obliged to a policy that is greatly considering Russia both at the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea. When considered in a real political sense, keeping Turkey near itself means for Russia creating a large crack in NATO, and responding the moves of the USA along with its own NATO ally. Because the loss of Turkey means for Russia being constrained with alienated Iran, and with Assad that nearly all the international public opinion doesn't want to be effective in the future of Syria.

And for Turkey, Russia has become a factor which would balance the closeness of the USA and other NATO allies of their perception on Turkey's security. Despite all these determinations, the factor characterizing the relations between Turkey and Russia is the interactional and *ad hoc* nature of these relations. Despite strong economic relations, and intense security cooperation, the relations have not been institutionalized, and they are dependent on the personal decisions of the leaders. Russia and Turkey don't have a request of deeming each other as strategic partners. The main point is the great meeting of interests.

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## CHAPTER 5

# EURASIAN PIVOT IN RUSSIAN AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY: EURASIANISM AS AN IDEATIONAL PREMISE?

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### ABSTRACT

The main focus of the chapter is an examination of the issue of the Eurasian pivot in Russian and Turkish foreign policy. In doing so the chapter aims to determine the ideational and rational underpinnings of a substantial shift in foreign policy identity construction by concentrating on the question of whether Eurasianism constitutes an ideational premise of the Eurasian pivot. Another major question this chapter seeks to address is the strategic rationale behind the eastward shift. In this context, the chapter argues that the ideational foundation of the Eurasian pivot in both countries' foreign policy is a fusion of two substantial elements of Eurasianism: anti-Westernism in combination with a post-imperial great power mindset (the discourse of “velikoderjavnost” and “neo-Ottomanism”). At the same time, it is not merely an ideational construction that drives such dynamics in foreign policy identity construction; it is also a pragmatic and rational interest that demands an instrumental use of the Eurasianist idea. In other words, what drives the Eurasian pivot and mutual rapprochement in this context is the need to acquire more effective maneuvering instruments and mechanisms with the aim to strengthen the international position against the West. Thus, Eurasianism in both countries' Eurasia pivot discourse constitutes an instrumental approach.

**Keywords:** Eurasia pivot, Eurasianism, foreign policy identity, Greater Eurasia Partnership, Asia Anew Initiative

## Introduction

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the bipolar system of the Cold War era was transformed into a “unipolar moment” of the West under an American leadership (Krauthammer, 1990). However, since the end of the 2000s, this transitory of unipolar order has been replaced by a new bipolarity. This time the emerging bipolar system is multi-centered in itself; thus it has been theorized “as a multi-order world system” (Flockhart, 2016; Lisanin; 2017) or “orders within order system” (Paikin, 2019). In this multicentricity there is the West or Transatlantic pole, which is increasingly dissociating and loosening internally at the expense of a traditionally strong unity and solidarity; on the other hand, there is a nascent non-Western pole, formed by the strategic alliance between Russia and China. Though constituting a relatively secondary center in the emerging system, Moscow strives to enhance a strategic rapprochement with Beijing and acts on the basis of a similar set of values. Both powers advocate a system of international relations, which resides on the principle of multilateralism and a great power equilibrium.

The rapprochement and stable coherence between the two major Eurasian countries means the re-emergence of Eurasia as a continent with a pivotal role/function in the changing world order. In this context, it is argued that the 21st century will be neither an American nor Asian century, but rather a Eurasian century with interaction between the major powers of the supercontinent (mainly China, Russia, and the European Union) as the dominant dynamic of the international relations as a whole (Macaes, 2018). Thus, given the increasing strategic importance of Eurasian countries, it is suggested that the nascent multicenter world order will be a Eurasian order (Rolland, 2019). Major powers, such as China and Russia, are proposing initiatives to increase the geopolitical and geoeconomic value and strategic importance of the Eurasian supercontinent. The most obvious manifestation of such policies is the two powers’ aspiration to merge their regional integration and cooperation structures (the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union - EEU) and infrastructure initiatives (the China-led Belt and Road Initiative – BRI) within the framework of the “Greater Eurasia Partnership” project, as well as the EU member states’ increasing interest in enhancing the continental connectivity between Europe and Asia. Thus, the contours of Greater Eurasia are beginning to take a more precise shape (Karaganov, 2019).

In this context, the success in achieving congruence and interaction between different (regional) orders existing in the greater Eurasian continent is important for the stable structuring of the new multipolar/multicenter world order. As Kissinger points out, “a

struggle between regions could be even more debilitating than the struggle between nations has been”... thus “the contemporary quest for world order will require a coherent strategy to establish a concept of order within the various regions, and to relate these regional orders to one another.” (2014: 371).

In the gradual process of the shifting center of world power towards the Asia-Pacific region, two major countries of Eurasia – Russia as a country increasingly more confident in positioning itself as a non-Western power and taking on the role of building a non-Western order, and Turkey as an actor of a strategic importance within Trans-Atlantic alliance (mainly via NATO) – are shifting their foreign policy attention to Eurasia, revising their foreign policy doctrine and the intellectual/ideological foundations of their geopolitical identity. In addition, the strategic rapprochement between the two major Eurasian powers, Russia and Turkey, and a Eurasian reorientation in their foreign policy occur in parallel to the synchronization of their perspectives on the pressing world issues.

Retrospectively, the main reason for the two countries’ Eurasian pivot lies in the dynamics of the post-Cold War foreign policy identity construction and their relations with the West. The intention that pushed both countries to Eurasia as an alternative geopolitical concept against Europe and the West, in general, is deep dissatisfaction with the West and growing distrust in relation.

This chapter examines the issue of Eurasian pivot in Russian and Turkish foreign policy. In doing so the chapter aims to determine the ideational and rational underpinnings of such a shift in foreign policy identity construction by concentrating on the question of whether Eurasianism constitutes an ideational premise of the Eurasian pivot. Another major question this chapter seeks to address is the strategic rationale behind the Eastward shift. In this context, the chapter argues that the ideational foundation of the Eurasian shift in both countries’ foreign policy is a fusion of two substantial elements of Eurasianism: anti-Westernism in combination with a post-imperial great power mindset (the discourse of “*velikoderjavnost*” and “*neo-Ottomanism*”). At the same time, it is not merely an ideational construction that drives such dynamics in foreign policy identification; it is also a pragmatic and rational interest that demands an instrumental use of the Eurasianist idea. In other words, what drives such a Eurasian shift and mutual rapprochement in this context is the need to acquire more effective maneuvering instruments and mechanisms with the aim to strengthen their position against the West. Thus, Eurasianism in both countries’ Eurasian pivot discourse constitutes an instrumental approach.

Throughout the chapter this assumption is substantiated by a further four assertions: First, the Eurasian pivot and the concept of Eurasia/Eurasianism are understood and defined differently by Russian and Turkish advocates of the idea. Russian Eurasianism in its current manifestation serves as an ideological foundation for the efforts to legitimize Russia's influence in neighboring countries and to expand it to greater Eurasia, which is seen as a crucial prerequisite for great power status. Turkey's Eurasianism, in turn, conveys a foreign policy aspiration to create an effective balance against the West and increase its strategic presence and engagement in the greater Eurasia. Second, there are asymmetric bilateral relations, which take place in a covert competition in a number of regions (such as Central Asia, the South Caucasus, the Middle East), and areas (such as the energy field in the context of oil and gas pipeline routes). Third, the discourse of the Eurasian reorientation is paralleled with a transactional and situational character of bilateral relations with the combination of overlapping and contradicting interests. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that cooperation between Turkey and Russia will soon be translated into a full-fledged strategic alliance.

### **1. Russo-Turkish Rapprochement: A Dichotomy of Partnership and Competition**

The unique geographical position of Russia and Turkey at the center of the Eurasian continent and at the crossroads of civilizations, the imperial past and an aspiration for post-imperial self-assertion as a major power have given rise to similar views on the international system and strategic culture, which determined the dynamics of bilateral relations evolving from competition in the 1990s to an ambiguous rapprochement in the 2000s (Svarin, 2015).

Due to the historical-geographical and cultural-civilizational factors, the two major powers' interests forming the supercontinent of Eurasia had frequently clashed and converged in different periods of history. Their foreign policy behavior and identity to a large extent were shaped under the influence of imperial politico-ideological legacy. Both countries claim to have a regional superiority or privileged interests in their strategic environment and consider themselves not only politically but also morally responsible for the processes taking place in the former imperial peripheries. Even though both countries' current foreign policy strategy does not require an imperial restoration, the objective of bringing together or reuniting peripheries is an important issue in both countries' foreign policy agenda. Russia's *Ruskiy Mir* (Russian World) or an idea of the Eurasian Union and Turkey's idea of a historical Ottoman sphere of influence where modern Turkey is destined to assume the role of "regional power" also demonstrates the persistence of the imperial imagination in both countries self-perception (Torbakov, 2017). Importantly, Eurasian regions where both powers are striving

to disseminate their influence contain an element of kinship in terms of their historical and civilizational structure, thus cooperation and competition occur in an intertwined context.

The collapse of the Russian and Ottoman empires after World War I was a critical turning point in the Russo-Turkish interaction. The cooperation between the newly established Republic of Turkey and the Soviet Union as a new incarnation of Russian statehood paved the way for a more visible political and economic rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow during the 1920s and 1930s. However, with Stalin voicing doubts about the legitimacy of Turkey's territorial integrity after World War II, Ankara had to lean towards closer strategic ties with the transatlantic alliance and to join NATO in 1952. With this, the Turkish-Soviet understanding ceased to be the case (Erşen, 2017a). Nevertheless, Turkey's periodic disappointments over the Atlantic allies have led to the perception of the Soviet Union as a compensating opportunity in Turkish foreign policy.

The end of the ideological confrontation of the Cold War-era offered a breakthrough opportunity in Turkey-Russia relations. A volatile combination of cooperation and antagonism has acquired a new dimension. Bilateral relations have continued to take place within the framework of a new geopolitical rivalry in the context of power projection on the new independent Turkish states in the Caucasus and Central Asia (Erşen, 2017a). At the same time, this was a historical period when both countries were forced to reconsider their role and foreign policy identity in the wider international context. It was during this period that post-Soviet Russia faced the problem of weakening power, while Turkey ran into the risk of strategic marginalization within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic security system (Frappi, 2018).

During the 2000s Russo-Turkish relations remained under the strong influence of their bilateral relations with the United States and the EU. Although Turkey's NATO membership prevented a genuine strategic partnership with Russia, Moscow viewed this limited interaction with an important NATO member as a strategic instrument that could be used in its geopolitical rivalry with the West. Similarly, Ankara tended to use its expanding ties with Moscow to gain leverage over its transatlantic partners and act more independently in the regions of its traditional influence (Erşen, 2017a).

While having unstable and serpentine relations with their Western partners, Turkish and Russian approaches to various issues on the regional and global scale are becoming closer and more synchronized, the need for coordinated actions is increasing and much effort is being made to base bilateral relations on a strategically stable framework.

Russia perceives Turkey as not an entirely Western actor in its criticism of the dominant position of the West in world politics and therefore excludes Turkey from the new East-West confrontation rhetoric reminiscent of the Cold War period. Thus, from a Russian perspective, Turkey's participation in the cooperation and partnership initiatives carried out under Moscow's leadership is possible and appropriate. From Turkey's perspective, on the other hand, the membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as well as the idea of Turkey being a party to the free trade agreements and cooperation mechanisms developed between the Eurasian countries are frequently emphasized on the official level.

## **2. The Essence of Eurasian Pivot in Russian and Turkish Foreign Policy Discourse**

Since the end of the Cold War, both Russia and Turkey have sporadically diversified their external relations and sought alternatives to disproportionate dependence on the West/Europe. In this context, the ideology of Eurasianism and theoretical discussions about the concept of Eurasia has become an intellectual platform advocating for the strengthening of Russian-Turkish mutual understanding and approximation in the joint efforts of building multipolarity.

### **2.1. Russia's Foreign Policy Identity Construction: From Greater Europe To Greater Eurasia**

A retrospective review of Russia's Eastward shift reveals that the fundamental dynamics of this strategic redirection can be discerned within the scope of Moscow's fluctuating understanding of "order" which gradually evolved from the idea of "Greater Europe" to "Greater Eurasia" (Karaganov, 2017). The crucial turning point in this context came with the 2014 Ukraine crisis when Russia-Europe/West relations turned into a "new Cold War" (Kohen, 2018). Effectively, this meant the impossibility of establishing an international order based on the "Greater Europe" model and Russia's forced need to turn its attention from the Euro-Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific with a new strategy to build the "Greater Eurasia" order (Trenin, 2013; Mankoff, 2015; Trenin, 2016; Trenin, 2017; Khlebnikov, 2018; Karaganov, 2018).

In the context of foreign policy identity construction and strategic reorientation, Russia has historically seen itself as part of Europe. In this sense, Russia's bonds with Europe were legitimized both on the basis of civilization (in the context of Christianity) and geopolitics (in the sense that it was among the major European powers such as Germany, France, and England). In the post-Cold War era, however, post-Soviet Russia ceased to be perceived as a major power; instead it was relegated to the status of the periphery of Europe or as Trenin

points out, the “East of the West” (2016). Russia’s Greater Europe proposal on the new European security architecture was rejected by the Western capitals without entailing any serious discussion. The main reason for this fact is that such an agreement would undermine the current system of a European security order, which envisages the acceptability of only one superpower on the continent which is “occupied” by the US (Miller & Lukyanov, 2018).

The basic tenet of the Greater Europe system arrangements was the idea of a rapprochement between the two sides rather than the assimilation of the East within the West. In this context, further Europeanization of Russia required some degree of “Russianization” of Europe (Kortunov, 2016). This implied a need for a mutually beneficial convergence within the framework of symmetrical and equal partnership, particularly in the areas of energy security and economic cooperation.

In contrast to the European understanding of a liberal order, Russia’s understanding of order is based on the classical realist and traditional power politics approach which presupposes the existence of a multipolar and multicenter system of relations and the internalization of the principle of “equal partnership of equals” as the main precondition of regional order and stability. In other words, Russia advocates a vision based on the principle of multilateralism with more than one political center and ideational basis, contrary to the perspective of the EU-centered security community, which is perceived as part of the unipolar order (Sakwa, 2015). The basic principle in this sense is “equal cooperation between equals”. Indeed, in the context of his criticism of the unipolar world model, Russian President Vladimir Putin during his February 2007 Munich Security Conference speech stated, “In the modern world, the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible”. In 2014, during the Valdai speech, Putin once again emphasized that unipolarity means “the dictatorship of one power over the world”.

In this context, Russia’s strategic thinking, which has been renewed with Putin’s ascendance to power, the model of multipolarity and multilateralism based on the Primakov doctrine has become an important rationale for legitimizing the sphere of influence in Russian foreign policy (Zagorski, 2008). In this multi-centered and multi-polar system of great powers, Russia positions itself as an independent center and claims to represent a geopolitical, geoeconomic and geocultural whole between the East and West. This structure has been institutionalized in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and has been theorized within the framework of the Eurasian identity, Orthodox Christianity and, more recently, the concept of a Russian World.

Moreover, for Russia, the great power status (*velikoderjavnost*) in the first place begins with the continuity of the status of a “regional great power”. In other words, Russia sees itself as a regional leader in the territories under Moscow’s influence since the imperial period and the Soviet Union and believes that the dominant power position in its own periphery adds significant legitimacy and weight to the status of the global power center. In this context, Russia believes that the effort to ensure the continuity of its historical influence in post-Soviet Eurasia is a legitimate necessity, similar to the role of the US in the Western world.

The Ukraine crisis of 2014 put an end to Russia’s two substantial efforts – integration with the West (based on the model of Greater Europe) and re-integration of former Soviet territories (Trenin, 20019). This process triggered Russia’s gradual transformation into a revisionist power, which rejects the universality of the Atlantic security order. The failure to create the “Greater Europe” from Lisbon to Vladivostok and the idea of an order based on Europe/West-Russian concert has led Russia to focus its political, economic and diplomatic efforts in a different direction. Thus, unable to secure a genuine partnership with the West, Russia began to seek new partners in the East and turned towards a “Greater Eurasia” strategy within the scope of the rapprochement with the emerging powers, especially China (Timofeev, 2018). Together with China and other emerging Eurasian powers, Russia has begun to create an alternative world order based on the principle of pluralism in the international system. In this sense, China with its westward pivot (BRI) has become the main focal point of Russian foreign policy. Starting from 2015, Russia, in line with the idea of “Greater Eurasia” spanning from Shanghai to St. Petersburg, aims to harmonize its own integration mechanisms (EEU) with China’s continental infrastructure projects. In this context, the nature of the Russian-Chinese rapprochement is defined primarily by the concept of entente and argues that it represents the formation of a “multi-order world system”. As Trenin emphasized, this cohesion is based on mutual understanding and geopolitical convergence based on overlapping worldviews rather than an alliance in the traditional sense (2016). It refers to the degree of opposition to Western hegemony and particularly US global dominance.

There is also an important issue affecting the foreign policy identity of Russia in the context of the shift from Greater Europe to Greater Eurasia. Historically, Europe was significant for Russia in three different but interrelated hypostases: “Europe as an idea, Europe as a model and Europe as a geopolitical reality that allowed Russia to become and remain a great power” (Stent, 2008). Since the 17th century, Russia sought to establish itself as a European power, despite the fact that geographically it was situated more in the Asian part of the continent than the European one. An intellectual dispute between Westerners and the Slavophiles of the



19th century was built on the very same question on the Russian quintessence. The existential question was the dilemma “is Russia a part of Europe or apart from Europe” (Stent, 2008), while for Europe itself, Russia has always remained the “other” (Bespalov, 2019). In the context of reorientation in foreign policy, for the first time in history, Russia has rejected Europe and the values represented by Europe as a means and model of modernization and abandoned the European-oriented perspective over its own future (Trenin, 2014; Kortunov, 2016). Thus, the discourse suggesting that Russia should be seen as a different Europe in terms of defining its relations with Europe became no longer valid (Romanova, 2018).

In the context of the restructuring of foreign policy identity, the intellectual tradition of Eurasianism, which sees Russia as a unique civilization encompassing the Eurasian continent, became an important source of Russia’s strategic thinking and the Eurasian pivot in foreign policy. Arising from the interconnectedness and mutual construction of geography and civilization, the problem of Russian quintessence in Eurasianism was resolved through the conceptualization of Russia as a multinational Eurasian empire, a unique civilization that combined elements of different cultures belonging neither to Europe nor Asia. This notion became ideally suitable within Russia’s yet another Eurasia pivot. This time Eurasia is defined as a unique geographical area and civilization, which by its nature constitutes an important contrast with the Atlanticist system. The fundamental idea is the necessity of making Eurasian geography a united political entity under the influence of Russia (Imanov, 2008; Bassin, 2008). The new appeal to Eurasianism is fully compatible with Gumilyov’s belief that it was Eurasianism that was the only true ideological choice for Russia: “I will tell you a secret that if Russia is going to be saved, then only as a Eurasian power and only through Eurasianism” (2008: 31).

Moreover, in the first decade of the 21st century, the traditional Russian East-West dilemma acquired a new dimension. “To become a strong and modern state, Russia needs to align its national development strategy more closely to the macro trends of global development than anytime before. The key trend of global development here is the shift, unprecedented in scale and speed, of the global economic and political center to the “new Asia.” (Valdai, 2012) The recognition of this changing role of Asia and its importance from the point of view of Russia’s development is reflected at the highest official level. An age-old question of Russian identity resolved in an imperative – “to be closer to Asia, to be competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” (Bespalov, 2019) In this context, Russia’s main priority in regional cooperation is the integration of its own integration project (EEU) with China’s Belt and Road Initiative. In 2016, Moscow proposed an overarching continental initiative “Greater Eurasia Partnership”,

which was supported by China. In a joint statement of the two countries in 2019, it was emphasized that the Belt and Road initiative and the idea of the Greater Eurasian Partnership “can develop in parallel and coordinated manner, which will contribute to the development of bilateral and multilateral integration processes for the benefit of the peoples of the Eurasian continent” (Bespalov, 2019).

## **2.2. Turkey’s Foreign Policy Identity Construction: From the Periphery of The Euro-Atlantic System to A “Central Country” In Eurasia/Afro-Asia**

Since the 1990s, the concepts of Eurasia have become one of the focal points of intellectual debates in Turkey. This discourse has occupied a wide range of issues spanning from the necessity of developing a new relationship model with newly independent Central Asian and South Caucasus Turkic republic to the ongoing shift in foreign policy orientation from the West to the new geopolitical alternative of Eurasia. In other words, it is possible to observe that Eurasian orientation in Turkish foreign policy discourse developed within two waves. The first wave corresponds to the first half of the 1990s when the idea of a “Turkic world extending from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China” and attention towards the post-Soviet countries in Russia’s former southern peripheries was an important policy priority. Since the second decade of the 2000s, Turkey has expressed dissatisfaction with the EU integration process and begun to move towards the emerging Eurasian countries such as Russia and China. Thus, on the highest official level, Turkey numerously declared its interest in becoming a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) while reconsidering its European integration aspiration, which meant that Turkey was seeking new alternatives to its traditional reliance on the West.

In a broader context, the characterization of Turkey as a “Eurasian country” was a rarely used notion due to the fact that since the beginning of the Cold War, Turkey had pursued a foreign policy line based on the Western/European affiliation while rejecting the Eastern/Asian self-perception (Tellal, 2005). Turkey’s pro-Western positioning of itself within an opposite geopolitical and ideological pole against the Soviet Union meant severing all ties with the Turkic peoples in Central Asia and the South Caucasus, which had become part of the Soviet Union. Turkey’s estrangement and even alienation from the Turkic peoples of the USSR has become more evident with Ankara’s NATO membership.

The Eurasian orientation in the foreign policy of Turkey was revived as a geopolitical concept in the early 1990s due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the bipolar world. In 1991, the emergence of the independent Turkic states in the post-Soviet Southern Caucasus

and Central Asia crisis in the EU-Turkey relation triggered a new reading of the concept of Eurasia in Turkey. However, in the Turkish political and strategic thinking there were multiple interpretations rather than a consensus on the Eurasian direction in foreign policy. In this context, there are some apparent differences in approaches to Eurasian orientation in Turkey's political spectrum. The ultra-left nationalists currently advocate an alliance with the Neo-Eurasianists in Russia for the sake of building an anti-Western geopolitical alliance. While the far-right nationalist movements advocate an anti-Russian and Pan-Turkic approach, which envisages the necessity for Turkey to restore historical influence in the South Caucasus and the Central Asian region.

Thus, until the mid-1990s, the Eurasian concept had been associated almost exclusively with the Turkish republic in Central Asia and the Caucasus and has been used as a tool to increase Turkey's influence in the region within the scope of the Turkic world discourse. The first half of the 1990s was the peak moment in the spreading of ideas of a Turkic world and Pan-Turkism for nationalist and ultra-nationalist parties and political organizations; at the same time this was a period of intense implementation of various policy initiatives (Valiyeva, 2018). This was an idealistic period in Turkey's Eurasia pivot. However, the priority of relations with the new Turkic republics in Eurasia based on cultural and historical affinity and ethnolinguistic kinship, which to a large extent shaped Turkey's post-Soviet geopolitical strategy towards the region, soon was replaced by a pragmatic approach dominated by economic interests. Turkey positioned itself as an applicable model for socio-economic and political development to newly independent states of Central Asia and the Caucasus. This strategy was important not only in terms of developing multifaceted relations with the post-Soviet republics but also in terms of upgrading Ankara's status in the hierarchy of world powers. In other words, success in the Eurasian policy was supposed to increase the geopolitical importance of Turkey in the eyes of the West.

Thus, significant interest and attention to the Turkic world and disposal of active policy engagement in post-Soviet Central Asia and South Caucasus during the first half of the 1990s signified an existence of an independent and thoroughly developed Eurasian strategy in Turkish foreign policy. However, the dynamics of Eurasian orientation in Turkey has always been inversely proportional to the intensity and success of the EU integration negotiations and the importance of its relations with the West as a whole. In other words, Eurasia as a geopolitical project was only a viable and widely discussed option in Turkey when Ankara suffered a decline or deterioration in its relations with the West. Therefore, ideological structures are not the driving force behind the development of the Eurasian pivot in Turkey; it has rather been the pragmatic interests (Erşen, 2017).

Particularly since the late 2000s, there has been a serious revision of Turkish foreign policy at the intellectual, strategic and tactical levels affecting the Eurasian orientation. The new foreign policy doctrine of Turkey envisioned the country's transition from the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic system of the bipolar world order into a "central country" in the post-bipolar world (Frappi, 2018).

Although it is not possible to come across a clearly formulated Eurasian concept within the scope of the new foreign policy approach, former Turkish Foreign and then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's indirect Eurasian conceptualization was different from previously existing approaches. Davutoğlu conceptualized Turkey as a "Central Country" surrounded by concentric circles consisting of two regions of primary importance – the Middle East and North Africa, while the importance of Central Asia as an element of Eastern orientation was reduced. That is why, in such a reconceptualization of Turkey's Eurasia orientation, Davutoğlu refers to the region where Turkey should be defined as a "central country" as "Afro-Eurasia" rather than "Eurasia". Thus, Davutoğlu expanded the scope and the content of the traditional Eurasian orientation of the 1990s in Turkey, which had focused merely on the South Caucasus and Central Asia and blended it with the classical geopolitics of the Heartland concept. According to Davutoğlu, positioning Turkey as the regions' central country should solve the problem of upgrading the status of Turkey on a global scale. Thus, from the Turkish perspective the Eurasian orientation implies not only the necessity to formulate a coherent strategy towards the Turkic republics, but also envisages a regional order in which Turkey with its "central country" position could play a new role in the emerging marco-region of Afro-Eurasia. (Davutoğlu, 2011).

Thus, Turkish foreign policy has a multi-faceted nature, and Ankara is in search of new partners and allies, which can be discerned in Turkey's objective to establish mutually beneficial strategic partnerships with BRICS and SCO countries as an alternative economic development model. In this sense, although on the level of official discourse European integration remains among the political priorities, Turkey increasingly perceives itself outside of the "European family" (Öniş & Kutlay, 2017). Turkey's rhetoric to become one of the most important parts of the emerging Greater Eurasia replaces its European strategy.

In the context of the Eurasian pivot, the cooperation and competitive balance in the triangle of Turkey-Russia-China constitutes an important issue. The development of cooperation and integration processes in Greater Eurasia creates necessary preconditions for the formation of the Russia-China-Turkey rapprochement in which cooperation and competition are intertwined. Interest and policies of the three major Eurasian countries intersect in the region

of Central Asia, which is important for Turkey in terms of ethnic, religious and linguistic ties. This means that the pursuit and realization of national interests in an effective way necessitates Turkey's balancing between the major powers. Turkey's interest in cooperation with the SCO and even joining it as a full member and the Easter/Eurasian pivot, in general, is, in fact, a manifestation of a multi-vector foreign policy strategy rather than its aspiration to secure a viable alternative to its reliance on the West (Akıllı, 2013).

One of the significant manifestations of Turkey's Eurasia shift is the "Asia Anew" initiative launched in August 2019, which is designed to include cooperation on education, defense industry, investments, trade, technology, culture and political dialogue (Daily Sabah, 2019). According to the Foreign Minister of Turkey Mevlut Çavuşoğlu, "To be influential in the economy and diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires going hand-in-hand with Asia. Asia is becoming the economic center of the world. The international community is in a competition to gain more ground in Asia. However, our roots are deep in this most dynamic region of the world. Just like being in Europe and European, being in Asia and Asian is valuable to us. One of the qualities that make us who we are is that we stand on these two dimensions." (Yeni Şafak, 2019). Since Asia is becoming the economic center of the world, Turkey's orientation to Eurasia is a strategic imperative. In this context Turkey-Russia and Turkey-China relations have the potential to shape the basic paradigms in the continent of Eurasia. (Sputnik, 2019)

### **3. Eurasianism: An Ideational Premise of the Eurasian Pivot?**

#### **3.1. Eurasianism in Russia and Turkey: A Comparative Review of the Main Tenets**

In the 20th century, Russia twice experienced similar geopolitical collapse, namely the dissolution of two historical embodiments of the Russian state – the Russian Empire (1917) and the Soviet Union (1991). In both cases, the state structure and geopolitical unity were disintegrated leading to a deep identity crisis. In other words, the imperial collapse and post-imperial challenges constituted a political and psychological milieu for the reinterpretation of Russia's national and international identity (Bassin, Glebov, & Laruelle, 2015). Therefore, Eurasianist accounts of different historical periods reflect different political circumstances and serve to promote fundamentally different political ideologies. For this reason, it is impossible to reduce Eurasianism to any single doctrine (Bassin, 2008). It is an ambiguous system of thoughts with a changing ideational lineage. The "classical" period of the ideology corresponds to the interwar period and was a deeply heterogeneous and ideologically fragmented movement in itself.

Originating in the 1920s, the idea of classical Eurasianism with it strives to legitimize the Eurasian element of the Russian identity, proclaimed an “exodus to the East”. Rethinking Russia’s geopolitical space (as well as geopolitical identity) at the beginning of the 20th century, which endured radical changes due to the defeat in the First World War, the Russian revolution, the dissolution of the Russian Empire and the emergence of the Bolshevik regime, constituted the intellectual basis for Eurasianism (Glebov, 2015). Throughout the Soviet period, there were attempts to support Eurasianist views, which were most thoroughly developed in the works of Lev Gumilyov. Nevertheless, till the 1990s, the idea of Eurasianism occupied a marginal position in Russian public consciousness (Paderina, 2019). The growing interest in the concept of Eurasia coincided with yet another catastrophe in Russian history, namely the collapse of the Soviet Union, which triggered the resurgence of new discussions on Russia’s quintessence and place in the world. A new appeal to the idea of Eurasianism as part of the post-Soviet rethinking of Russia’s geopolitical space and identity in the early 1990s emerged within the framework of Neo-Eurasianism most thoroughly elaborated by Alexander Panarin and Alexander Dugin.

Eurasianists of the classical period put forward a new vision for post-imperial Russia. According to this vision, without being officially an empire, Russia would preserve the geographic and civilizational unity of historical Russia – “Russia-Eurasia”, which occupies a dual position between Europe and Asia. It enjoys a *sui generis* civilizational structure, which is born out the fusion of the Slavic and Turko-Muslim peoples (Laruelle, 2008). As Nikolay Berdyaev briefly points out, “The Russian people is not purely European and it is not purely Asiatic. Russia is a complete section of the world – a colossal East-West. It unites two worlds, and within the Russian soul, two principles are always engaged in strife – the Eastern and the Western” (1948: 1).

The whole discussion on Russia’s Eurasian quintessence was built around two fundamentally interconnected ideas: first, Peter Savitsky’s idea of Eurasia as a natural “development space” (*mestorazvitiye*) for many different ethnic and religious groups constituting an interrelated unique collection of identities under the overarching Eurasian affiliation; and second, Nikolai Trubetskoy’s concept of pan-Eurasian nationalism (Tolz, 2015). According to the Eurasianist idea, Russian society is indeed a Eurasian society with multiple identities: a multifaceted and extremely complex linguistic, anthropological and cultural-civilizational mixture of Russian-Slavic, Finno-Ugric, Turko-Mongolian elements (Bassin, 1991). In accordance with this idea of multiple identities, the nationalism of each people of Eurasia must be combined with pan-Eurasian nationalism. Moreover, the historical

role and significance of the Russian people, according to classical Eurasianism, gives it special status among the rest of the peoples of Eurasia (Tolz, 2015). Based on these two interconnected ideas, the main task for the Eurasianists was to maintain the integrity of the former imperial space.

In neo-Eurasianism, Russia is also defined as “Russia-Eurasia” and it is emphasized that its borders overlap with the territories of the former Russian Empire and the Soviet Union and is interpreted as an organic geographic, historical, cultural and anthropological whole. This organic unity is based on a solid foundation of multidimensional ties of a large number of ethnic and religious groups with a common history. In other words, Eurasian geopolitical unity and social cohesion are indestructible as it includes the co-existence of brotherly peoples (Bassin, Glebov, & Laruelle, 2015). Eurasianists of the new period also focus on how to reconstruct the unity of Russia-Eurasia. In their geopolitical imagination, the present-day Russian Federation is seen as an incomplete entity, therefore, restoration of “historical Russia” or “Russia-Eurasia” is once again conceptualized as a vital necessity for Russia. The disintegration of Russia-Eurasia is believed to be a disaster, and it is argued that this dissolved organic union should be restored in the form of the Russian-led Eurasian Union (Torbakov, 2017).

An important similarity or common ground between classical and new Eurasianism is the fact that both arose as a reaction to the political collapse of the existing state, accompanied by the territorial or geopolitical collapse of the whole. The process of territorial fragmentation of an organically unified civilizational zone was equally unacceptable for both classical and new Eurasianism. Therefore, the attempt to justify the need to restore the geopolitical and territorial cohesion of Russia-Eurasia is a common element in two versions of Eurasianism. (Bassin, 2008)

Although adherents of neo-Eurasianism claim to continue the idea of classical Eurasianism of the early 20th century, deriving its legitimacy from it (Bassin, 2015), there are significant conceptual discrepancies between the two versions of the Eurasian idea. In this context, in the classical idea of Eurasianism, the borders of Russia-Eurasia approximately corresponded to the space of Russian statehood in its structure that existed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is considered as a *sui generis* geographical region – an organically unified “geographical individual”. (Laruelle, 2015 a) Nevertheless, the new Eurasianism sees Eurasia in a more complex perspective. Internally, Eurasia is identical to the territories of the former Soviet Union, which reflects the classical understanding of the term Eurasia – the traditional space of Russian statehood. However, at the same time, the geographical scope of Eurasia is not limited to the post-Soviet space. Eurasia extends beyond even the imperial and Soviet space

in three directions: western – to Europe, southern – to Central Asia and eastern – to China and even the Pacific Ocean. As a result of such erosion of the limits of Eurasia, the meaning of civilizational borders is also eroded, and Eurasia becomes a “global project” (Bassin, 2008).

Unlike the original Eurasianist’s opposition to Europe, for neo-Eurasianists, particularly for Alexander Dugin, the concept of Eurasia is identified with the principle of political and ideological opposition to the global domination of the United States after the Cold War. The opposition to Atlanticism is absolutized and it is believed that the image of the world in the 21st century will be determined precisely by the imminent and continuous struggle of Tellurocracy and Thalassocracy (Dugin, 2000; 2015). Therefore, the function of modern Eurasianism is to constitute a theoretical/discursive dimension for the global struggle against Atlanticism.

In neo-Eurasianism, Eurasia is conceptualized within the global geopolitical milieu. On the one hand, Eurasia is a “Russia-Eurasia” of classical Eurasianism, territorially represented today by the post-Soviet space and integrated partially within the Eurasian Economic Union. However, in addition to this “smaller Eurasia”, there is a “large Eurasia”, which represents different geo-economic zones of the continent as a whole. (Bassin, 2008) Thus, neo-Eurasianism is an ideology with geopolitical and economic essence while civilizational justification (such as the deep interaction of the Slavic and some Asian peoples over the centuries) is relegated to the secondary position (Laruelle, 2015).

There is a significant body of literature on the “concept of Eurasia” and “Turkish Eurasianism” and their relationship with the idea of Russian Eurasianism in Turkish geopolitical discourse (Laruelle, 2008; Güneş, 2012; Erşen, 2011, 2017; Tüysüzolu, 2014; Shlapentokh, 2015; Imanbeyli, 2008; 2015). Turkish Eurasianism is seen as an emerging new school of thought that includes various geopolitical readings of the concept of Eurasia and ideology of Eurasianism in the Turkish context (Ismayılov, 2011: 275).

In a broader context Eurasianism in Turkey is conceptualized as one of the key intellectual movements along with Turkism, Westernism, and Islamism. Similarly, referring to Yusuf Akçura’s “Three Styles of Politics”, conceptualization for Turkish national identity, Turkish Eurasianism has been defined as the “fourth style of politics” (Aktürk, 2015). At the same time, there are accounts of Turkish Eurasianism as one of the strands of Turkey’s post-Cold War geopolitical discourse, which places conceptualization of Eurasia within the framework of various geopolitical traditions associated with three political ideologies: Turkism/nationalism, socialism/Kemalism, and conservatism/Islamism. According to this explanation, each political ideology maintains its own (unique) understanding of the concept of Eurasia (Erşen, 2017 b).



Therefore, instead of considering Turkish Eurasianism as an ideology on its own, it is actually more appropriate to talk about various “interpretations” of the concept of Eurasia, which consists of three geopolitical traditions with their understanding of the significance of Eurasia in post-Cold War Turkish identity discourse. These are: Eurasia as a manifestation of Turkey’s aspiration to unite the Turkic world under its own hegemony; Eurasia as an anti-Western geopolitical project which envisages a strategic rapprochement between Turkey and other Eurasian countries (Russia, Iran and China in particular) as a counterbalancing leverage against the Transatlantic alliance; and Eurasia as a novel definition for the former imperial peripheries of Turkey (Erşen, 2017 b). Consequently, there is no genuine Eurasianist ideology in Turkey and ideological constructions designed under the banner of Turkish Eurasianism are devoid of philosophical roots or thoroughly elaborated theorization. Self-proclaimed Eurasianists imported the idea of Eurasia into their own system of thought without fully comprehending its ideological essence. (Karasar, 2008; Imanov, 2008).

Discourse on Turkish Eurasianism emerged in the 1990s as a manifestation of Turkey’s post-Cold War identity crisis and was elaborated mostly within the left-wing ideology with its discourse of pro-Russian geopolitics (Akçalı & Perinçek, 2009). “Pro-Russian orientation abroad and socialist–nationalist government at home are the international and domestic faces of Turkish Eurasianism, which distinguish this movement from others” (Aktürk, 2015:55). References to Eurasianism as an ideological framework for Russia-Turkey rapprochement in this explanation is linked to attempts at the reinterpretation of the geopolitical identity of Turkey, which stipulates a pro-Russian orientation for Turkey as the only right way of preserving sovereignty and integrity in the face of Western hegemony. For them, Russia – a powerful northern neighbor – should be considered as the most important ally of Turkey in world affairs.

An aspiration of Turkish intellectuals to reconceptualize or reproduce the imperial past was, in essence, a reaction to the new conditions of post-Soviet existence. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey began to search for a new foreign political identity, since its role as a buffer state between two antagonistic poles has ended. Moreover, “The Soviet collapse resulted not only in the diminution of Turkey’s strategic and military appeal to the West but also in the explosion of Europeans’ long suppressed, atavistic anti-Turkish prejudices. (Karpat, 2004: 510). Therefore, in (anti-Western) academic and political circles, the issue of new ways in foreign political orientation, namely the Russian alternative, has become more relevant.

This “pro-Russian” specificity in the Turkish Eurasianism constitutes the most critical and defining feature of such conceptualization, which in turn distinguishes it from pan-Turkism as a rival to Russian Eurasianism conceptualization of Eurasian geography and

civilization. Pan-Turkism, as another way of understanding Eurasianism, puts forward a deeply anti-Russian vision while for the rest of the advocates of Eurasianism in Turkey Russia is perceived as Turkey's potentially most significant ally (Aktürk, 2015). In this sense, there occurs a paradoxical contradiction between Eurasianism as a Russian ideology and its Turkish version with its special emphasis on the necessity for Turkey to expand its influence across the entire Turkic World. Thus, there is a contention that Russian Eurasianism emerged as a reaction to spreading the influence of the Pan-Turkic movement within the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries since it was perceived by the Eurasianists, who designed this ideology to protect Russia as a multinational empire, as a threat to the territorial integrity of Russia. Russian Eurasianists replaced the pan-Turkic Turanian myth with their own, emphasizing the common historical fate of the Turanian people and the Eastern Slavs (Wiederkehr, 2007). The emphasis on the unity of the Turks and Eastern Slavs, therefore, was supposed to serve as an instrument for preserving the unity of the Russian Empire.

Although the representatives of Eurasian geopolitical discourse in Turkey define themselves as "Eurasianists", both its ideological and geopolitical content do not envisage principles with a real Eurasianist quintessence. Nevertheless, there is an intellectual current in Turkish geopolitical discourse with overlapping ideas with Russian Eurasianism – Neo-Ottomanism (Tüfekçi, 2012; Tüysüzolu, 2014). This concept has similarities with the original Eurasianism in terms of containing the expansionist objectives that Russian Eurasianism strives to achieve. In other words, an aspiration to rebuild a sphere of influence on the post-imperial peripheries envisaged by the concept of neo-Ottomanism is seen as the most important element that approximates Eurasianism in Turkey to the Russian Eurasianism in its original guise (Tüfekçi, 2012; Torbakov, 2017). A post-imperialist mindset and identity form a common source of inspiration for the two interpretations of Eurasianism, which is considered as an ideology of justification or legitimation of imperial aspirations (Tanrısever, 2018). At the same time, Neo-Ottomanism diverts from Russian Eurasianism in the sense of not including Western opposition.

### **3.2. The Instrumental and Pragmatic Function of Eurasianism in Russian And Turkish Foreign Policy Discourse**

The notion of "Russia as a Eurasian power" quite frequently appears in the official rhetoric. In Vladimir Putin's words, "Russia since ancient times was formed as integrated Eurasian power and is a Eurasian civilization"; "Eurasia has vital importance for the establishment of the Russian state as a great multinational Eurasian power" (Putin, 2005; 2007). In the framework of the ongoing implementation of the Greater Eurasia partnership as the most

recent manifestation of Russia's Eurasian pivot, Putin has emphasized, that the "Greater Eurasia is not an abstract geopolitical scheme, it is a future-oriented, truly civilizational project" (Putin, 2017).

As the Valdai Discussion Club puts forward, "Russia has set itself a goal to actively participate in the construction of an objectively forming new geoeconomic, geopolitical, cultural and ideological community – a partnership of Greater Eurasia. Unlike the old Russian Eurasianism, the concept of Greater Eurasia is not targeted against Europe or the West but provides for including Europe of the European Union or most of it. And Russia will at long last find a comfortable place in history and geography as a great Eurasian power. Given the growing trend toward the regionalization of the world, Greater Eurasia will most likely be one of the leading centers." (Valdai, 2018: 17). Likewise, in the Turkish discourse of Eurasia pivot, Eurasia is seen as of vital importance in substantiating Turkey's power projection in a variety of regions and countries.

Therefore, the emphasis of the foreign policy narrative in Russia and Turkey has shifted: the two countries no longer seek integration with Europe. Moscow and Ankara see the Eurasian project as an alternative and a chance for a new multicenter order, which for Russia, in turn, means a "Eurasian" way out of the European crisis" (Karaganov, 2015).

This Eastward turn of Russia, as well as Turkey, reflects a shift in the priorities of the countries' foreign policy and the objective need for both of them to benefit from the economic recovery/rise of Asia in the global economy (Trenin 2015). As the Valdai Discussion Club report states, "In 2015, we can talk about the emergence of the "moment of Central Eurasia" – a unique combination of international political and economic circumstances that allow us to realize the potential for cooperation and joint development of the states of this region. The main driving forces for turning the Center of Eurasia into a zone of joint development will be the project of the Silk Road Economic Belt and Eurasian Economic Integration." (Valdai, 2015: 4-6). Thus, it is believed, that the wider continental space of Greater Eurasia in contrast to post-Soviet Eurasia will determine the fate of the 21st century (Trenin 2013).

From the Russian perspective, Eurasianism serves as an instrument for territorial control through economic integration and security cooperation within the scope of various Russia-led institutions and arrangements aimed at the reintegration of former Soviet countries. Thus, as Morozova asserts, "Russia's Eurasian ambitions are justified not by its historic destiny but the convergence of the economic preconditions necessary for the practical realization of the Eurasian idea, whatever its origins are. Eurasianism is proposed as the state-ideology,

capable of providing the ideational underpinnings for the current borders of Russia, on strictly pragmatic, utilitarian grounds.” (2009).

Similarly, the processes of regionalization in Greater Eurasia are largely pragmatic in their objectives. Existing and potential initiatives primarily serve the goals of economic development and political interests. Modernization of national economies, increasing global competitiveness, common markets for goods, services, capital and labor, direct investment, trade loans, infrastructure projects, and transport subsidies are the key mechanisms of Eurasian integration and cooperation in all its manifestations (EEU, BRI and the Greater Eurasia Partnership) and for all its participants. In terms of political rational participating in these integration and cooperation mechanisms and projects to a large extent serves to the expansion of the sphere of geopolitical influence on the great Eurasian continent as an effective way of becoming a major power with global aspirations. Thus, it is the pragmatic approach, within which integration is not an end in itself, but a means of modernizing economies and gaining a more favorable place in the international system (Vinokurov, 2013).

The discussion about Eurasianism inevitably rests on the debate about the role of borders in this space, which lingers unresolved. There is no clear understanding of where Eurasia begins and ends. Even neo-Eurasianism perceives Eurasia as encompassing Europe as its part (Lewis, 2018). Greater Eurasia is an attempt to go beyond the borders of the Eurasian world towards a wider continental reach. Eurasianism’s “Russia-Eurasia” was a holistic and closed continent, which was vital for the internalization of certain “ideocracy” (Laruelle, 2015 b). The discourse of Greater Eurasia, however, is aimed at opening a space in which Russia could play a significant role outside the traditional boundaries of Eurasia while creating a geopolitical image of power with a continental scale (Lewis, 2018).

From this perspective, despite an Eastward turn the western direction still remains important. The geostrategic and geoeconomic calculation is based on the fact that the economic and diplomatic achievements associated with the eastward reorientation will allow Russia to once again enter a new negotiation process with the EU as an irreplaceable partner in Greater Eurasia in the new hypostasis of the Eurasian Union (Dutkevich, 2019).

From Turkey’s perspective, Eurasianism is not a guiding ideology or a clearly articulated strategy. The concept of Eurasianism is rather regarded as an instrument of pragmatism (Erşen, 2013). Thus, on the theoretical level along with the “cultural-reductionist” discourse (which perceives a stable Eurasian identity as a precondition for regional integration) and “strategic” discourse on Eurasianism (which sees the geopolitical and strategic interests of

Eurasian actors as the main trigger for mutually beneficial Eurasian integration), there is a “pragmatic” discourse on Eurasianism, which does not require a clear commitment to fixed ideological principles and strict adherence to the adopted strategy (Tanrısever, 2018). Thus, it serves to overcome political and diplomatic challenges by using economic opportunities. At the same time, Turkey’s Eurasianism is pragmatic in the sense that it serves to promote its own vision of the former imperial periphery while continuing the traditional role of a “bridge” between Europe and Asia (Tanrısever, 2018).

## Conclusion

In the current circumstances of a changing world order, Russo-Turkish relations are deepening and their foreign policy perspectives are becoming more coordinated in spite of different interests and approaches in various issues and regions. Moreover, contradictions in bilateral relations and occasional tensions do not prevent the preservation of mutually beneficial trade and energy relations. One of the significant determinants in the changing dynamic of mutual rapprochement is both powers’ Eastward reorientation in foreign policy. Against this background, an ideology of Eurasianism has become an important focal point for political and academic discussions. This chapter has sought to determine the function of the idea of Eurasianism in both countries’ Eurasia pivot discourse and substantiate the pragmatic and instrumental nature of Russian and Turkish interpretations of Eurasianism. While classical and neo-Eurasianists are trying to justify Russia’s great power status, Turkish Eurasianism in its neo-Ottoman incarnation strives to substantiate the strategic importance of Turkey as a “central country” in the continent with *sui generis* significance in a historical and civilizational sense.

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## CHAPTER 6

# THE TURKISH-RUSSIAN “COALITION OF INTERESTS”, IN SYRIA: AN ANALYSIS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF NEO REALIST THEORY

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### ABSTRACT

Turkish and Russian (Soviet Union) relations before the Cold War, were moderate in certain proportions. During the Cold War bilateral relations were at a low level due to reasons such as Turkey taking sides with the Western bloc against the threat of communism and becoming a member of NATO, and because of the Soviet Union’s territorial claims against Turkey. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, bilateral relations remained in a competitive dimension and improvements were observed in some areas towards the end of the 1990s. In the early 2000s a change in power in both countries, and the abandonment of the negative legacies of the Cold War had a positive impact on the development of bilateral relations. During this period, various partnerships were established in areas such as politics, economics and energy. The fact that the two countries have different perspectives on the situation brought about by the Syrian crisis has caused the deterioration of the strategic relations established in the early 2000s. Subsequently, both countries have approached each other in the context of their national interests. In this study, it is argued that the process of rapprochement in developing bilateral relations on the subject of Russia’s and Turkey’s intervention in the Syrian crisis should be evaluated within the framework policies of the neorealist theory “balancing through alliances” and “attack-defence balance”.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Russia, Syria Crisis, National Interests, Neo-Realism

## **1. Theoretical Context: Neo Realism / Structural Realism**

According to neorealists a security threat does not arise from the desire of revisionist states to gain power, but from the concept of “self-help”, which is revealed by the anarchic structure of an international system. In classical realism, the anarchic structure resulting from a lack of effective authority in the international system facilitates wars and conflicts, while in neorealism it is the main cause of wars and conflicts, namely security threats (Schweller, 1996).

According to the concept of self-help, every state is per command. When a state uses force against another state, since there is no authority to judge and prevent it, a state can always use force against another state, and as a result the state may face the problem of survival. (Waltz, 1979). In order to overcome this problem, the states experiencing the survival problem aim to get rid of the security threats arising from the anarchic system on their own through using some methods such as increasing their power and military capacities in the system (Ayдын, 2004). This is where the security dilemma emerges. According to Waltz, the security dilemma is a vicious circle that arises from the fact that one state increases its military capacity because it is unsure of the other state’s intentions. In other words, increasing the military capacity of a state in the name of security would be a source of distrust for another state and this would continue mutually (Waltz, 1979).

In general, the reason for states experiencing a security dilemma is the uncertainty arising from state behavior. Butterfield summarises the uncertainty in the security dilemma as follows; A state may not want to harm another state, but uncertainty arises because it cannot fully know the intentions of the other state. This uncertainty raises security concerns. (Butterfield, 1951). Collins’s illustration supports this; When State A increases its military capacity, State B may not understand A’s intentions. Even if State A did not intend to pose any threat to State B, State B cannot rely on it and acts in the worst case scenario that A will attack it. In this case, because of the anarchic structure, state B is obliged to take care of itself to stop state A (Collins, 1997).

Considering all of this, we can say that neorealism almost ignores the policies of power of revisionist states. At the same time, Waltz’s theory ignored the purpose of the revisionist states and to what extent they would exert power. The shortcomings in Waltz’s structuralist theory in the context of revisionist states tried to be overcome by other structuralist realists after the 1980s (Açıkmeşe, 2008).

### 1.1. Defensive Realism

Defensive realists have sought to cover the deficiencies of neorealism, especially with the idea that revisionist states may pose a security threat. In this case, in addition to the uncertainties brought about by the concept of security dilemmas originating from an anarchic structure of system of neorealists the concept of attack-defence balance was adopted. In defining the international system, the concept of the balance of attack and defence tries to answer the questions as to why the states put forward the military and diplomatic policies followed and how and in what way a security dilemma arises, whether the relations will turn into conflict or cooperation. In this respect, in defensive realism, there is no possibility of not experiencing the security dilemma, but there is a possibility of transformation into cooperation (Açıkmeşe, 2008).

In the balance of attack-defence, if the attack is more advantageous, that state can pursue aggressive policies and even invade the other state in order to gain superiority over it. In other words, if a state's self-defence is at a disadvantage compared to the occupation of another state, that state can attack the other state. In this context, even any status quo state can become a revisionist state. In the offensive-defence balance, if defence is more advantageous, states can reduce the likelihood of an attack by trying to increase their military capacity, failing to avail cost, and maintaining their status quo. Thus, the ambiguity of the anarchic structure disappears and wars do not emerge. At least, the defending state tries to be prepared for the attacks that may come to it, in this case it does not pose a threat to the security of the opposing state and the chance of cooperation increases (Jervis, 1978).

According to Jervis, technology is the main determinant of the attack-defence balance. Geography, alliances, doctrines are generally underestimated and are excluded from analysis. In this context, especially the development of military technology is very important for providing security for states (Jervis, 1978: 183). It makes more sense to concentrate on technology only in three respects, ignoring other imaginable variables; firstly, attack is the main determinant technology in the defence balance and has references in the work done in this understanding. Secondly, defining another variable with the concept makes the situation more complicated, making it difficult to calculate the balance of attack defence, and finally the third, is the fact that technological developments have changed the international system. While such factors such as various beliefs, a sense of nationality, and internal policy balances vary from state to state, technology affects the entire system (Lieber, 2000). In short, on the attack-defence balance, if the pointer is on the attack side, the security dilemma will increase, otherwise the security dilemma will decrease and the possibility of cooperation will emerge.

Based on technology, Jervis analysed the attack-defence balance over the 1973 Arab-Israeli War as follows (Jervis, 1978);

*“The initial analyses of the 1973 Arab Israeli war indicated that new anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons have restored the primacy of the defence. These weapons are cheap, easy to use, and can destroy a high proportion of the attacking vehicles and planes that are sighted. It then would make sense for a status-quo power to buy lots of \$20,000 missiles rather than buy a few half-million dollar tanks and multi-million dollar fighter-bombers. Defence would be possible even against a large and well-equipped force; states that care primarily about self-protection would not need to engage in arms races.”*

In the attack-defence balance, defence is more advantageous in many cases, even if war and occupation arose when the pointer showed the attack. If a state acts aggressively or in a revisionist manner, it cannot avoid a balance of power against itself. It is seen that a state trying to be a hegemon in history has had attempts to be balanced by other states and there has been a strong resistance in case of attack. In this case, the best way would be to monitor minimal security in a moderate way (Walt, 2002).

### **1.2. Offensive / Attack Realism**

Attack realism emerged as the result and necessity of articulating the revisionist states mentioned in defensive realism but that had been previously ignored. The pioneer of attack realism, Mearsheimer summarised his theory with five assumptions (Mearsheimer, 2001);

- The international system is anarchic, but it does not mean that it is chaotic or irregular. The source of the anarchy stems from a lack of authority over the rulers.
- The great powers naturally possess aggressive military skills, which allow them to destroy each other in a barbaric way. This makes each state potentially dangerous to another state.
- A state can never be sure of its intention in relation to another state. In other words, a state cannot be sure that the other state will not carry out its first attack, but that does not mean that these states have absolutely hostile intentions.
- For states, survival is the main goal. In particular, it is important to maintain and ensure territorial integrity and autonomy in domestic politics. States may have other aims, but their main purpose is to be safe.

- States are rational actors. They are aware of the international environment and produce strategies accordingly. They think about what other states think and form vital strategies for how their ideas are perceived from the other side.

In attack realism, states' desire to gain power ends only when they become a hegemon. Here, in the race to become a global and regional hegemon, a state only continues its desire to gain power either by preventing a state from becoming a regional / global hegemon or until it becomes a hegemon. In the system, only states that have succeeded to become regional hegemons can behave as status quo, otherwise no status quo is found (Mearsheimer, 2001).

**Figure 1.** Differences in the Realist Theory of Power Struggle (Mearsheimer, 2001).

BASIC REALIST THEORIES			
	Human Nature Realism Classical Realism	Defensive Realism	Attack Realism
<b>What causes the power race of states?</b>	States' desire to gain power.	Structure of System (Anarchic Structure)	Structure of System (Anarchic Structure)
<b>How much power does the state need?</b>	As much as possible Their main goal is to increase power until they become hegemon.	No more than they have. Their main goal is to maintain the balance of power.	As much as possible Their main goal is to increase power until they become a hegemon.

The attack realism, when it is accepted as a critique of Waltz's theory (including the critique of defensive realism), there is in fact a return to classical realism with only one difference. In classical realism, the revisionist behaviours of states have the essence of human nature, while in attack realism there is an anarchic structure to the system. In this case, classical realists are volitional, structuralist attack realists. (Waltz, 2002).

## 2. Russia's Policy Towards the Syrian Crisis

### 2.1. Historical Background

Russia's relations with Syria contain historical data from the Soviet Union. Diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Syria were established in 1944. A non-aggression pact was signed between the two states in 1950 and a gun agreement was signed in 1954 (Yılmaz, 2016). During this period the main dynamics of the policies of the Soviet Union in Syria were as follows (Howard, 1974):

- As Israel was allied with the US, Syria had to be allied with the Soviet Union. In this case, if Israel had been allied with the Soviet Union, it would have been allied with the US in Syria.

- The fact that the Syrian Communist Party was one of the most active parties in the Middle East made it close to the Soviet Union.
- Given Syria’s geopolitical position (geostrategic); in terms of its proximity to Turkey and Iraq it was considered an important element. This position of Syria was considered to be extremely important in order to prevent the political containment policy applied by the US to the Soviet Union.

During the Soviet Union, the Russians tried to gain as many allies in the Middle East as possible. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 their policies towards the Middle East were weakened as they were engaged in various economic problems, internal conflicts and local separatist movements. During this period, the US consolidated its position in the region (Mankoff, 2009).

In the new era, which started with Putin’s election as president in the early 2000s, Russia began to play a more active role in the Middle East again. With the help of rapidly increasing trade relations, high level political contacts with the countries of the region, military and diplomatic support provided to countries such as Iran and Syria, and observer membership in the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, Russia has become an important player in Middle Eastern geopolitics again. The Arab uprisings that erupted in such a period, in which the influence of the region increased, caught Russia unprepared like many other countries. In this context, Russia followed with concern the changes in power as a result of popular demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt in the first months of 2011 (Erşen, 2016).

## **2.2. Russia’s Interventions in the Syrian Crisis**

We can say that Russia’s bilateral relations with Syria were riveted especially during the Soviet Union period, and it was interrupted after the Cold War period, and in the mid-2000s, bilateral relations with the Putin administration strengthened again. In this period, when the Arab uprisings created a domino effect in the region, the last conflict area was Syria. The causes of the Syrian crisis that broke out in March 2011 can be listed as follows; economic disturbances, sectarian conflicts, authoritarianism of governance, influence of global and regional powers.

In the early years of the Syrian crisis, Russia supported the Assad regime, and at the same time pursued a “wait-and-see” policy stating that the crisis was an internal conflict and that any country should avoid intervention (Freire and Heller, 2018). The overthrow of Bashar al-Assad’s Syrian regime since the summer of 2011 has become almost the sole goal of Syrian policy for all states opposing the regime. Despite the tens of thousands of opposition militants trained to overthrow Assad and the billions of dollars spent on them, attempts to



change the regime have failed. In this context, since March 2011, almost every policy that looks like a military and political opposition to Syria has not yielded the expected results in Syria. Undoubtedly, behind this failure Russia's full and solid support for the Damascus administration has played an important role (Isyar, 2013).

On September 30, 2015, Russia realised that the activities of radical terrorist elements and anti-regime groups in Syria were increasing and that Assad could not stand up against it (Valenta and Valenta, 2016). Although this intervention was greeted as a surprise internationally (Freire and Heller, 2018), Russia's engagement in Syria was the third military intervention following the invasion of Georgia (2008) and Crimea (2014) (Mason, 2018). The main dynamics of Russia's intervention in the Syrian crisis can be listed as follows;

- Experiences in the Libyan crisis.
- Balancing the US (both in the region) and establishing "great power" status.
- To prevent radical terrorist groups from spreading to their territory.
- Providing activity in the Mediterranean Sea within Tartus Port.

#### **A. Libyan Crisis: From Error to Experience**

The Arab uprisings started in Libya in February 2011 have been one of the main reasons why Russia has made its policies and military intervention towards Syria more effective. Following the increase in armed conflicts in Libya, the Resolution No. 1973, which authorised "the creation of prohibited flight zones for the protection of civilians" brought up by the UNSC in March 2011, was approved as a result of abstaining votes under the Medvedev administration in Russia and the PRC. Following the decision, an international coalition, led by France, the United States and the United Kingdom, launched a military operation called humanitarian aid. Then the Gaddafi administration was overthrown and a new administration was established. The impact of these developments on the position of Russia in the region can be listed as follows;

- Historically, the relations between Russia and Libya, which date back to the Soviet Union, have been damaged.
- The fact that the people of the region perceived Russia as a cooperating state with the West damaged the perception of the alternative system actor. This situation has the capacity to affect the relations in every plane that is the countries of the region in the future.
- Russia has suffered a political defeat.

Russia’s policy of acting together with the international community in the Libyan crisis has brought Russia great losses. In this context, the negative data output of the liberal and moderate policies in the real world has led Russia to pursue more realist policies, which do not hesitate in military interventions in order to protect its national interests. Therefore, it is possible to say that one of the fundamental dynamics of Russia’s policies in the Syrian crisis is the mistake made in the Libyan crisis. In this respect, Russia’s determination to prevent Syria from becoming “another Libya” is quite clear (Katz, 2013).

Considering the fact that Russia had been deceived in the matter of Libya, the UN Security Council said that they vetoed the sanction decisions they had prepared on 4 October 2011, 4 February 2012, 19 July 2012, 29 May 2013, 28 August 2013 and 22 May 2014. Thus, they tried to preserve the existence of the Assad administration in Syria. (Yılmaz, 2016).

### **B. The U.S. Balance: Great Power Politics**

Russia’s approach to global power policy is more generally stated in the National Security Strategy Document published in 2015 as follows (RFNSS, 2015: 7):

“A solid foundation has now been established to further increase the economic, political, military and spiritual potential of the Russian Federation and to strengthen its role in shaping a multi-centre world.”

From this point of view, we can say that Russia is struggling with power in the context of national interests and tends to increase power to achieve this. In addition, with an emphasis on the multi-polar international system, it can be said that the unilateral policies of the United States are not accepted and strategies for balancing the USA are being formed.

The Middle East has different meanings for the two countries. In its simplest form, the US sees the region as an area to preserve its current status quo, while Russia sees it as an area to compete with balance the US. The Syrian crisis is at the centre of these narratives. In addition, Russia’s direct military intervention in the Syrian crisis is indicative of its intention to become a decisive force not only in the Middle East, but also in global politics. Russia’s behaviour is no surprise in an anarchic international system (Samoylov, 2018).

In the Syrian crisis, Russia sees every failure of the US as a gain. In this context, in order to undermine the policies and strategies established by the USA on the current situation, it tries to establish more activities in the region by focusing on various partnerships (Yılmaz, 2016). We can define Russia’s policies in the region as a strategy to prevent the US from spreading in the region without prejudice to all official cooperation mechanisms with the US.

This prevention strategy offers Russia the opportunity to balance the US and remain a system player in the region. In this context, Russia's appeasement tactic on issues related to Iran, Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah, which challenges the American-centred Middle East system, is a case that supports Russia's prevention strategy that includes the desire to become a major actor in the Middle East (Samoylov, 2018).

From all Middle Eastern countries, including the Arab monarchies, Russia has a goal of economic interest. To achieve this goal, Russia has to maintain the image and status of a major actor in the region. For Russia, being a major actor brings partnerships with its allies in the region. This situation obliges Moscow to actively participate in the mechanisms for resolving regional conflicts. In other words, although Russia opposes the US-based status quo in the Middle East, it also wants to have some areas of action to prevent the US over-empowerment in the region (Shumilin, 2009). In this context, Russia sees Syria as a field of operations. The biggest achievement of Russia in Syria is the ability to create its own perception as a problem solver in the international system.

### **C. Radical Terrorist Groups**

Russia sees the international system as anarchic / unstable. In all security documents published after 2000 (Military Doctrine, National Security Strategy Document) one of the most important elements that make the international system anarchic and unstable is international terrorism. In this context, the fight against international terrorism is important to ensure the national security of Russia.

Apart from global and regional interests, another factor affecting Russia's Syrian policy is that Moscow is skeptical about the social dimensions of the radical changes in the Arab geography. According to Russia, the Arab uprisings did not bring more democracy to the Middle East as some countries claim; on the contrary, radical terrorist groups gained power thanks to the developments in the region (Erşen, 2016).

This situation can be considered as a three-dimensional security issue for Russia; firstly, ISIS, which gained strength in Syria, is threatening the interests of Russia by groups such as al-Qaeda and al-Nusra. As Russia supports the Assad regime, these groups also see Russia as their enemy. In this context, "Port of Tartus" and threats to other economic issues are pushing Russia to take precautions against these groups. At the same time, considering the situation of Syria after the crisis, the formation of a stakeholder mechanism with these groups at any point of the new administration; might lead to a lack of solid relations with Syria. Therefore, Russia might struggle much in the future.

The second dimension is the danger of radical terrorist groups spreading to the Caucasus and Central Asia region. Russia thinks that in the Caucasus, especially, the radical groups relations with the groups that were in conflict in the past will pose a great threat. As a matter of fact, the organisation called “Caucasus Emirate”, which is active in the North Caucasus region of Russia, took the name of the “Caucasus Province” in 2015 by swearing allegiance to ISIS (Erşen, 2016). The spread of these groups in the Central Asian region, especially in Muslim-Turkish states, which Russia has described as being a close environment in the past, may create instability in the regional context. In addition, as a result of the spread of radical terrorist groups in the region, Russian-led, Eurasian Economic Union, Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation may be damaged.

The third dimension is the danger of radical groups spreading to Russia’s internal hinterland. The greatest danger at this point is the risk of the Muslim population of Russia’s inner regions participating in the actions of any radical terrorist group. This could be a direct matter of survival for Russia. In the last period moderate and unifying policies especially on the Muslim population of Russia, can be interpreted as a precaution against these threats.

#### **D. Port of Tartus**

One of Russia’s most important national interests in Syria is the protection of Tartus Port. Since 1971, the port has been used as a supply and maintenance base by the Soviet Union. This port is the only naval base used outside former Soviet geography. The port has been continuously expanded and transformed into a large military base by Russia, especially since 2010 (Yılmaz, 2016).

The most important feature of Tartus Port is that it is the key to Russia’s presence in the Mediterranean. In the “Maritime Doctrine” published by Russia in 2015, the importance of the Mediterranean Sea is stated as follows (RFMD, 2015):

- pursuing a determined policy to transform the region into a zone of military-political stability and goodwill
- To ensure the permanent (sufficiently) marine presence of the Russian Federation in the region
- Expanding cruise access from the ports of the Crimean and Krasnodar region to the Mediterranean basin countries.

In this context, considering the importance given by Russia to the Mediterranean, the protection of the Assad administration can be seen as equivalent to the protection of a port of

nearly fifty years. The strategic importance of Port of Tartus can be listed as follows (Nazır, 2017):

- The Black Sea Fleet's provides access to the world's oceans
- Possibility to strengthen the Mediterranean fleet with the Northern Fleet
- Ensuring military presence in the Middle East and protecting most of the Syrian coast
- Ensuring the safety of marine traffic in the Horn of Africa
- The port of Tartus is 6-7 days away from the strait of Gibraltar. (The point of departure to the Atlantic Ocean and the operational exiting region of Russia's Baltic and Northern fleets)
- Establishing the infrastructure for foreign intelligence and electronic intelligence activities.

### **3. Turkey's Policy Towards the Syrian Crisis**

#### **3.1. Historical Background**

On the subject of Turkey- Syria relations; the water problem has often been tense under certain issues such as the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and the Hatay issue. Nevertheless, to discuss cooperation in the fight against terrorism, the delegations of Turkey and Syria met 19-20 October 1998 in Adana. With the Adana Agreement signed between the parties, an important psychological barrier was overcome and a new period started with Ahmet Necdet Sezer's visit to Hafez Esed's funeral in June 2000 (Yeşilyurt, 2013).

Thanks to former Foreign Minister Ismail Cem's efforts before 2002, the acceptance of Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) expansion into neighbouring regions policy by the new government in Syria, and relations until 2011, cooperation has developed in a positive direction. As a result of the developing relations, the two countries signed a free trade agreement in 2004, the trade between the two countries reached 250 million dollars in 2010 and bilateral relations were started to be defined as a strategic partnership. Apart from economic cooperation, cooperation in the field of energy (establishment of a joint oil exploration company) in 2010 and a joint military exercise in 2009 increased the field of security. Along with the developing economic, energy and security alliances, solutions and cooperation regarding the PKK, water problems and the status of Hatay, which have become historically important problems between the two countries, have been approached. As a result of all these developments, "High Level Strategic Cooperation Council" was established in 2009 (Çağlar).

In March 2011, bilateral relations deteriorated with the crisis that broke out in Syria because the views of the two states on the Syrian crisis were different. Therefore, this situation can be expressed as an interstate dispute about the definition, reasons, content and solution of the developments in Syria (Çağlar, 2012).

### **3.2. Turkey’s Interventions in the Syrian Crisis**

Turkey’s policy towards Syria adopted during the period between 2002-2011 was to have “zero problems with neighbours” and “to be the core country (in the region)” was created within the framework of such policies. In this context, the Assad administration was asked to carry out various democratic reforms. The positive relations that continued until the Syrian Civil War changed during the crisis and caused the parties to adopt a stern attitude. Turkey’s Syrian policy in subsequent periods was founded on the collapse of the Assad regime and the resolution of the crisis through diplomatic means. In this context, Turkey has supported the group against Assad’s regime. With the US involvement in the crisis, solutions were sought through international organisations such as the United Nations. Russia’s involvement in the crisis and support for the Assad regime changed many balances in Syria. In this respect, Turkey and Russia were faced with the crisis in Syria. At the same time, ISIS’s terrorist attacks in Turkey and the US’s support of the PYD-YPG terrorist organisation, Turkey was caused to suffer a serious national security issue (Kiraz, 2018). All in the wake of these developments, Turkey’s military intervention in Syria has become inevitable.

The fundamental dynamics of Turkey’s military intervention in Syria are closely associated with threat perception for the country’s security. These dynamics can be listed as follows:

- Preventing threats from Syria
- Fight against radical terrorist groups
- To eliminate the PKK terrorist organisation in Syria (PYD-YPG).

#### **A. Threats From Syria**

Turkey, following the outbreak of the crisis in Syria, produced various policies at a diplomatic level and, to keep things from getting bigger, avoided harsh discourses. At the same time, the regime in Syria continued its connections with opposition groups. The Assad administration, against these policies, has tried to ensure the cessation of contacts with opposition groups by performing actions that threaten the security of Turkey.

An RF-4E fighter aircraft belonging to the Turkish Air Force departing from Malatya Erhaç 7<sup>th</sup> Main Jet Base Command at 10.30 am on 22 June 2012, South of the district of Samandağ in Hatay, was shot down on the grounds that the Mediterranean was in violation airspace 8 miles off Syrian territorial waters (Sabah, 2012).

After this development Turkey has followed policies against Syria, which have been evaluated by the national and regional security dimensions. The first reason for the change in Turkey's policy towards Syria, is the failure of the Assad regime to fulfil democratic reforms. A second reason is that Assad did not withdraw from the use of weapons by continuing with hard interventions against the people. The third reason is that Russia took an attitude in favour of Syria after the Turkish warplane was shot down. Together with the security vulnerability occurring in the south of Turkey and Russia's support of Assad, Turkey has both national and regional level security threats. Therefore, Turkey has revealed a security approach that prioritises the southern border (Erdağ, 2018).

The incident of a Turkish fighter plane being shot down, was interpreted as a result of the support given to opposition groups. Ankara, on the other hand, did not increase the tension by acting calmly against this incident.

On 3 October 2012, mortar shells fired in the clash in the Tel Abyad district of Raqqa, fell into the Akçakale district of Şanlıurfa, 200 meters from the border. Five civilians lost their lives. After the incident, the Turkish Armed Forces took action and responded immediately. Turkey was perceived as a threat to the national security of this event (Aljazeera Turk, 2012).

On May 11th 2013 by means of two bomb explosions in the Reyhanlı district of Hatay, terrorist attacks were carried out. The statement reported that 53 people, including 5 children, were killed and 155 injured. The Assad regime denied these allegations, although it was quite strongly evident that the attack was made by sources linked to the Assad administration. The regime has continued to use a policy of denial as in previous events (BBC News, 2013).

After all these developments Turkey has continued to pursue liberal policies avoiding military intervention. In this context, it was assumed that the security of the country could be ensured through NATO and the UN. However, ISIS and the Syrian branch of the PKK PYD-YPG have increased security threats.

## **B. Radical Terrorist Groups**

In 2013, ISIS gained strength in Syria and Turkey has struggled with organising different methods to deal with the situation. A new dynamic has emerged in the region when Abu Bakr Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, came to Syria from Iraq and started asking for allegiance

from Syrian’s opposition groups, especially Salafist-jihadi names. Baghdadi first forced to swear allegiance to their own organisation by suppressing opposition groups. In this regard, Baghdadi’s biggest goal has been that Turkey support opposition groups. From the moment of access to operational capability in Syria, he organised the assassinations of leaders of opposition groups, ISIS have seized the territory they control and in the north have become the dominant power in Syria. (Ulutas, 2016).

In the first period, in Syria against ISIS targets, Turkey’s national interest policies were created in accordance with the spirit of the time. During this stage, which might be called as “struggle through proxies”, Turkey has given support to opposition groups clashing with ISIS, but did not choose the way a direct conflict with ISIS. In the second stage, ISIS has continued to increase its threat in Turkey. In this context, Turkey, within “the rules of engagement” would begin a large-scale fight against ISIS he said. Therewithal, operations within the “rules of engagement” were extended to include PYD / YPG elements. Turkey with artillery and howitzer shot, has hit the boundary line controlled by ISIS. In this context, Turkey has contributed to the fight against ISIS by using FSA groups within the framework of the struggle through proxies strategy. Thus, between Turkey and ISIS, the transition to the third stage without a high level of military conflict began. ISIS, while maintaining their offensive against opposition groups on the one hand, began to concentrate acts of terrorism in Turkey on the other hand. In this context, Turkey has pursued a strategy within security and political dynamics. (Ulutaş and Duran, 2016).

ISIS first attacked security teams conducting road controls in the Ulukışla district of Niğde on March 20, 2014. Three ISIS terrorists, a German citizen Benyamin Xu, a Swiss citizen Çendrim Ramadani and a Macedonian citizen Muhammad Zakiri opened fire with long-barrelled weapons on the Turkish Gendarmerie. (CNN Türk, 2014). On June 10, 2014, ISIS was declared as a terrorist organisation by Turkey after taking control of the whole of ISIS Mosul. After this event, on June 11, ISIS attacked Turkey’s consulate in Mosul and took hostage 49 consular officers.

ISIS increased its activities in 2016; such as, in Sultanahmet Square on 12 January, on İstiklal Street on 9 March, Gaziantep Police Station on 1 May, Atatürk Airport on 28 June, Henna Night on 20 August and New Year’s Day in İstanbul to Reina massacre. By the ISIS terror organisation, 14 major terrorist attacks in Turkey were carried out (10 live bombs, 1 bomb attack, 3 armed attacks). A total of 304 people, including 10 police officers and 1 soldier, were killed and 1,338 people were injured (62 police officers and 7 soldiers) (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior, 2017).



Turkey has made changes in policies towards Syria because of the terrorist attacks of the ISIS terrorist organisation. The first period of crisis, on behalf of to ensure Turkey's national security; the policies such as "acting on a liberal level with the international community and seeking solutions with multinational organisations" have failed. Therefore, Turkey moved to a more realistic line to ensure national security, in the context of the neorealist "attack-defence balance" it began military intervention by selecting the direction of attack.

### **I. Operation Euphrates Shield**

Operation Euphrates Shield has been done to eliminate the threat to national security of Turkey. These security threats can be listed as follows (Yeşiltaş et al., 2017):

- The arrangement "live bomb attacks" by ISIS in Turkey's cities.
- Controlling of a border line of approximately 100 kilometres in the Azez-Jarablus region in northern Syria. In this boundary line, ISIS through domination founded might target provincial and military points in Turkey's borderline, especially in Kilis, which has seen as a possible state by ISIS.

As a result, with the maturation of condition in the both Syria and Turkey and in regional conjuncture, on August 24, 2016, Turkey's struggle with ISIS entered into a direct intervention phase and the Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) began. In this context, it is needed to specify that Turkey, on the basis of Article 51 of the Treaty of the United Nations, to fight against ISIS, has launched a legitimate operation (Ulutaş and Duran, 2016).

Turkey's "Operation Euphrates Shield" followed by a gradual strategy in fighting simultaneously with the dominant three security issue at stake is planned as follows briefly (Yeşiltaş et al., 2017):

- Eliminating the armed force of the PKK by military means and other means.
- Military intervention to eliminate the ISIS threat.
- Restoring the strategic flexibility by freeing the state from "Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation" (FETO) elements.

First of all, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which cleaned the Jarablus, Çobanbey and Azez borderlines from terrorists, moved to the south and in the last months of 2016 seized the town of Dabık, which has ideologically great importance for the ISIS terrorist organisation. The next target was al-Bab. As a result of intense clashes, the city was completely cleared of terrorist elements on 30 March 2017. In this direction,

the operation lasted 216 days; Al-Bab has been possessed, ISIS has been expelled to 40 kilometres away and the PKK-PYD terror corridor is divided. The operation was concluded in the provision of a safe zone at a depth of 40 kilometres and a length of 90 kilometres (Sensoy and Duman, 2017).

### **C. The Syrian Branch of the Pkk: Pyd-Ypg**

In 2016, one of the main factors determining Turkey’s Syria policy was still PYD-YPG’s activity in the region. The PKK’s Syrian branch the PYD-YPG, took advantage of the crisis in Syria and continued to portray itself as a legitimate actor against ISIS. In the Iraq-Syria borderline, which is very important from a geopolitical perspective the organisation aimed at controlling the linking of Rabia-Sinjar expanding and the activities of in this area, has increased the threats posed to Turkey. PYD-YPG, which was able to establish dominance in such large areas for the first time since its establishment on October 17, 2003, continued its military engagement with the Assad regime, US and Russia in order to increase the regions it controls in northern Syria (Acun, 2016).

Turkey has been fighting against the PKK terrorist organization for nearly 50 years. In this context, PKK’s Syrian branch the PYD-YPG’s of structuring in Syria, constitutes a major national security threat to Turkey. At the same time, the establishment of a hostile Kurdish state beyond Turkey’s southern border could lead to the emergence of another security threat in the long term. Turkey’s southern border (Syria) has a direct connection with the Arab world. In this border “Kurdish” elements deployed in it can cause rupture between Turkey and Arab lands.

Another of the turning points in Turkey’s Syria policy, is the US approach to PYD-YPG. The terrorist organisation PYD-YPG perception of the US as an ally against ISIS and the “militarisation” of PYD-YPG, caused bilateral relations to deteriorate. In this case, it has been inevitable for rapprochement between Turkey and Russia. In this context, in order to ensure national security, Turkey cooperated with Russia to balance the US and strengthen its hand in military intervention.

## **II. Operation Olive Branch**

Because of the PYD-YPG’s increasing efficiency and United States’s careless attitude towards Turkey’s security concerns, Turkey has been brought back to the point of military intervention. Turkish Armed Forces and National Army elements on January 21 2018 at 10:30 to Afrin launched a seven-point land invasion from the border with Turkey (Özçelik and Acun,

2018). In this context, the causes of “Operation Olive Branch” can be listed as follows (CNN Türk, 2018):

- Preventing US support for terrorism
- To ensure the continuity of security established by Operation Euphrates Shield
- Preventing PKK from seeking to reach the Eastern Mediterranean
- To ensure that an area of 10,000 square kilometres is under the control of FSA units.
- To end the possibility of cutting the bond between Turkey and Arab countries geographically.
- To end the PKK-PYD’s from Amanos Mountains attempts to infiltrate Turkey
- To establish the Syria-Turkey border security
- Preventing terrorist structures from opening to the Mediterranean Sea and from this region to the world
- To establish the domination of Tel Rıfat and its vicinity and to ensure that the people return to their homes.

The operational dimensions of the Olive Branch Operation are divided into three phases; The first is the removal of terrorist groups from Afrin centre, the second is the removal of terrorist elements from the urban countryside, and the third is the reconstruction and public order stability of Afrin. In addition, “Operation Olive Branch” has been combined with other operations areas in Syria and operational preparations for possible terror targets have been planned. Within the framework of the operation, a great success was achieved in terms of the preparation and execution of the political and military grounds, and the city centre and rural areas of Afrin were cleared of PKK-YPG elements within 58 days. In this regard, it is among the most successful military operations in the history of Turkey’s cross-border operations (Ozcelik and Acer’s 2018).

#### **4. Turkish-Russian Coalition of Interest in Syria**

Turkey and Russia (Soviet Union) relations during the Cold War were moderate in certain proportions. During the Cold War, for reasons such as Turkey taking sides with the Western bloc against the threat of communism, becoming a member of NATO and Soviet Union’s territorial claims against Turkey, bilateral relations have remained at a low level. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, bilateral relations remained in a

competitive dimension and improvements were observed in some areas towards the end of the 1990s. In the early 2000s change in power in both countries, and the abandonment of the negative legacies of the Cold War had a positive impact on the development of bilateral relations. During this period, various partnerships were established in areas such as politics, economics and energy.

The fact that the two countries have different perspectives on the situation brought about by the Syrian crisis, which has caused a deterioration of the strategic relations established in the early 2000s. In particular, as a result of the shooting down of a Russian Air Force Su-24M by Turkish Air Force F-16 jets, on November 24th 2015, mutual relations have become almost completely broken. Thus, the plane crisis experienced in Turkey-Russia relations, revealed the necessity of revising the relationship qualitatively (Tanrısever, 2016).

Following the fighter jet crisis with Turkey, Russia continued to increase its military presence in Syria and closed Syrian airspace to Turkish jets using its S-400 air defence missile system deployed at the Khmeymim base in Latakia. Moscow also began to improve its political and military relations with the Syrian Kurds –most notably the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed wing the People’s Protection Units (YPG), which are both viewed by Ankara as the extension of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). It also tried hard to exclude Turkey from the Syrian peace process and launched extensive anti-Turkish propaganda operations claiming that Ankara had been supporting ISIS and other terrorist groups in Syria (Erşen, 2017).

At the end of June 2016, Turkey took steps to resolve the existing problems with Russia and the reciprocal ice has melted. In this context, successive steps have been taken in the fields of tourism, trade, energy and security. During the July 15, 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, the giving of support by Russia to the Turkish government has contributed significantly to the improvement of relations. On August 9 2016 the President of the Republic of Turkey R.T. Erdogan made his first overseas trip to Russia following the coup attempt (Kocak, 2017). In this context, the softening of bilateral relations was reflected in the policies regarding the Syrian crisis.

The fact that became an important point in the crisis, was the influence of ineffective US policies in the Syrian crisis, and through strengthening, military intervention was a successful result of Russia’s strategy of balancing the USA. In this context, Turkey’s struggle against terrorist organisations such as, ISIS, PYD-YPG fails to receive the support that is expected from the US and thus Turkey sought rapprochement with Russia. In this regard, relations with Russia were seen as a key factor in the balance strategy against the United States.

On this subject, it can be said that Russia's opening of "Syria's airspace" to Turkey has been a turning point in bilateral relations behalf. Thus, Turkey has realised Operation Euphrates Shield more comfortably. Russia's support for Turkey; the historically to pro-Western and NATO member Turkey, can be interpreted as an attempt to attract it into their own ranks. In this context, Russia has become the main actor in Syria and has shown to the international system that any intervention towards Syria can be carried out as a result of its own support. Turkey has achieved success in the operation in a short time and showed its power to the international system. At the same time, Turkey was able to establish an alternative balance against the US and the West in the context of national interests. In this respect, it can be said that "the through alliances balancing policy" proposed by the neorealist theory is valid in both countries.

The military relations established with Operation Euphrates Shield became the pioneer of political relations. For the solution of the Syrian crisis; "Astana Process" began, under the leadership of Russia, Turkey and Iran. On December 20 2016, Iran, Russia and Turkey published the "Moscow Declaration" after the adhesion of the foreign ministers meeting in Moscow (Çelikpala, 2019). The full text of theirs, which includes the measures agreed to restart the political process to end the Syrian crisis is as follows (Sputnik News, 2016):

- Iran, Russia and Turkey reiterate their full respect for sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, non-sectarian, democratic and secular state.
- Iran, Russia and Turkey are convinced that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict. They recognise the essential role of the United Nations in the efforts to resolve this crisis in accordance with the UNSC resolution 2254. The Ministers also take note of the decisions of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG). They urge all members of the international community to cooperate in good faith in order to remove obstacles on the way to implementing the agreements contained in these documents.
- Iran, Russia and Turkey welcome joint efforts in Eastern Aleppo allowing for the voluntary evacuation of civilians and the organised departure of armed opposition. The Ministers also welcome partial evacuation of civilians from Fuaa, Kafraia, Zabadani and Madaya. They commit to ensure the completion of the process without interruption in a safe and secure manner. The Ministers express their gratitude to the representatives of the ICRC and the WHO for their assistance in conduction of the evacuation.

- The Ministers agree on the importance of expanding the ceasefire, unhindered humanitarian assistance and the free movement of civilians throughout the country.
- Iran, Russia and Turkey express their readiness to facilitate and become the guarantors of the prospective agreement being negotiated between the Syrian Government and the opposition. They invited all other countries with influence on the situation on the ground to do the same.
- They strongly believe that this Agreement will be instrumental in creating the necessary momentum for the resumption of the political process in Syria in accordance with the UNSC resolution 2254.
- The Ministers take note of the kind offer of the President of Kazakhstan to host relevant meetings in Astana.
- Iran, Russia and Turkey reiterate their determination to fight jointly against ISIL/DAESH and Al-Nusra and to separate them from armed opposition groups.

Following the first meeting in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, on January 23-24, 2017, in addition to the regular Astana meetings, the three guarantor countries of Astana have met five times so far at the level of Head of State (<http://www.mfa.gov.tr>). (Sochi, 22 November 2017; Ankara, 4 April 2018; Tehran, 7 September 2018; Sochi, 14 February 2019; Ankara, 16 September 2019), and also five times at the level of Foreign Ministers (Astana, 16 March 2018; Moscow, 28 April 2018; New York, September 26, 2018; Geneva, December 18, 2018; New York, September 25, 2019). Russia and Turkey, which had almost come to the brink of war about a year ago, placed the Syrian issue on the agenda of their relations, this time under a completely different discourse and content. That is a key point in terms of showing the fluctuations in relations. During the process, the parties addressed a myriad of matters such as facilitating talks between the Syrian government and the armed opposition, ensuring the permanence of the ceasefire declared and establishing monitoring mechanisms, identifying and drawing the borders of de-escalation zones and leaving them to the control of guarantors, establishing coordination between them, identifying the elements that would contribute to the drafting of a new constitution to shape Syria's future, and developing trust-building measures between the parties (Çelikpala, 2019).

The two countries have raised their image with the “Astana Process” in the international system as problem-solving actors on the diplomatic ground. In this context, bilateral relations can be interpreted as a coalition created by requirements rather than necessity.

## Conclusion

We could say that the relationship between Turkey and Russia have seen ups and downs over the last three decades, that it was tense at the outbreak of the Syria crisis in particular and that the relations were on the verge of breaking off due to the shooting down of the Russian jet. The efforts of Turkey towards making the conditions normal by making concessions were successful and a moderation in mutual affairs was experienced. It is noticed that the desires to affect the regional balances and even to determine global balances clearly force these two countries that have sufficient experience in terms of not trusting each other to build an alliance which is not obligatory and necessary but fragile and sensitive. The main axis determining the course of the affairs and the speed of the alliance is the cooperation of these countries with the Europe-Atlantic World throughout history and the relations centred upon competition.

In terms of Russia's political approach towards the Syrian crisis, it is possible to see the experiences of the mistakes which Russia made in the Libyan crisis. In this respect, it is significant for Russia to perform a military intervention in terms of its national benefits in order to decrease the efficiency of the USA and to balance the Syria crisis in particular. International terrorism, which the unstable conditions caused by the anarchic structure of the international system, is evaluated as one of the basic threats of the national security. For that reason, Russia, eager for becoming an actor in terms of a global and regional scale, has formed politics towards this aim by contemplating that the area in which the USA is seen as unsuccessful as an opportunity for them. However, it has formed partnerships at certain rates with the regional power Turkey (along with Iran, of course) because it does not have the capacity to balance the USA by itself.

The basic motivations of Turkey for the politics towards the Syrian crisis have been shaped around the threats to national security. In the first years of the crisis, a liberal policy was followed; however, too many casualties due to the activities of ISIS within the country and in Turkey as well, caused Russia to change its policies towards the Syrian crisis. At the same time, the strengthening of the terrorist organization PYD-YPG, the Syrian branch of the PKK, has been perceived by Turkey as a survival problem. In this context, the first period of crisis, Turkey's priority was to ensure national security; "on a liberal level, search for solutions to multinational organisations with the international community" such its policies have failed. For that reason, Turkey moved to a more realist line in order to build its national security and chose the offensive side in the balance of the "offence-defence" balance of the neorealism, and then initiated a military intervention. Along with Russia's opening of Syrian air-space, Turkey

both showed its power and proved that it could form an alternative balance for the USA and the West for their national interests through the success in its military intervention in a short time. Along with the Russia’s support for the military intervention of Turkey, it could be said that the policy of “balancing through alliances”, which the neorealist theory suggests, is valid for both countries.

Though the policies of Turkey and Russia followed during the interventions were similar to each other (within their power capacities), their national interests and the perceptions towards security threats differed in certain ways. These differences manifested themselves essentially in the sensitivity of Turkey to the issue of PYD-YPG, the Syria extension of PKK, and in the efforts of Russia towards bringing Turkey and the Assad administration together in order to solve the Syrian crisis. The two countries showed in the international ground that they are problem solvers and the main actors in the Syrian crisis through both military and diplomatic ways. In this respect, we could express that mutual affairs are shaped around the policy of “balance through alliances” within the framework of the national interests of these two countries, beyond the conflicts and the fragile structure of the interest coalition.

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## CHAPTER 7

# THREAT AND COOPERATION: SYRIA IN RUSSO-TURKISH RELATIONS

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### ABSTRACT

In the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Turkey and Russia emerged as natural allies united around a few important issues of bilateral interest, namely, security and military navigation in the Black Sea, export of natural gas, cooperation in the energy sector, and combatting extremism. However, bilateral troubles have increased between Turkey and Russia since Moscow introduced combat troops to Syria in September 2015 and engaged in action to support the Syrian regime. Although Turkey expressed bewilderment as to the reasons of the Russian intervention in the Syrian civil war, Moscow underlined several very good reasons to side with the Assad government. The most important cause for Russian involvement is to become an important player in the Middle East and to influence the future balance of threats in the region.

The current chapter seeks to explain contemporary relations between Turkey and Russia, with specific attention to the key stages in the bilateral ties that have recently oscillated between close cooperation and violent conflict. The analysis presented here is guided by the balance of threat theory. In other words, we pay attention to certain epistemological aspects of the theory in explaining foreign policy behavior of both the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation in matters of bilateral interests. The main argument of this chapter is that the processes in contemporary Russo-Turkish bilateral relations have been informed by threats, real or perceived, emanating from the civil war in Syria.

**Keywords:** International Relations, Turkey, Russia, Syrian Civil War

## Introduction

The current chapter seeks to explain contemporary relations between Turkey and Russia, with specific attention paid to the key stages in the bilateral ties that have recently oscillated between close cooperation and violent conflict. The analysis presented here is guided by the balance of threat theory, namely, we pay attention to certain epistemological aspects of the theory in explaining the foreign policy behavior of both Turkey and the Russian Federation in matters of bilateral interests. The main argument of this chapter is that the processes in contemporary Russo-Turkish bilateral relations have been informed by threats, real or perceived, emanating from the civil war in Syria. The bilateral troubles between Turkey and Russia started after Moscow introduced combat troops to Syria in September 2015 and engaged in action in support of the Syrian regime. Although the Turkish leadership expressed bewilderment as to the reasons of the Russian intervention in the Syrian civil war, Moscow had a number of very good reasons to side with the Assad government. Most important among them, however, was the Russian calculation of becoming an important player in the Middle East and of influencing the future balance of threats in the region. In the opening years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Turkey and Russia emerged as natural allies united around a few important issues of bilateral interest: security and military navigation in the Black Sea, export of natural gas, cooperation in the energy sector, and combatting extremism. The Russian intervention in Syria subjected this partnership to significant stress, in part due to the involvement of other actors in the conflict, namely the United States and its allies.

For decades, Turkey and Syria have had several long-standing problems that include the Hatay Province question, Syria's support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) instigated terrorism, and water-related issues. None of these problems has been as challenging as the security problems that emerged with the Syrian Civil War, an outcome of the Arab Spring of 2011. The Syrian Civil War has been damaging for Turkey due to the overwhelming refugee waves flowing from Syria that have caused social, economic, and security problems. The events surrounding the war in Syria have been fast moving and requiring quick and effective policies to handle the problems in order to avoid escalations of sensitive socio-economic and political issues in Turkey. Unsurprisingly, Ankara initially struggled to stay ahead of the fast-changing events in Syria, and to produce consistent policies to deal with important developments stemming from the raging civil war in its neighbor. In 2012, Ankara moved against the Assad government in Damascus to bring about regime change in Syria as a remedy. This approach appeared to be contrary to Russia's Syrian policy, as from the very beginning the Kremlin has supported the Assad regime. Moscow has had its own political and economic

interests in Syria since the Soviet times that have been transformed into the Kremlin's new pro-Assad stance. The contending Syrian policies of Turkey and Russia have caused serious problems for Ankara and Moscow, restricting their abilities to manage relations constructively for some time. The disagreements between these two states escalated rapidly causing their economic relations to halt in 2015-2017, requiring the top political leaders to develop new policies of reconciliation. The subsequent de-escalation process brought about some signs of convergence in the Syrian policies of Russia and Turkey.

Originally articulated by Stephen Walt toward the end of the Cold War, the balance of threat theory was derived from the more traditional balance of power discourse in international politics. Walt's key contribution was to disentangle threat from power and propose threat as a better independent variable influencing state behavior (Walt, 1987). Indeed, this distinction has become even more relevant since the Cold War, and the rise of massive international terrorist organizations and asymmetric threats confirmed its validity. In foreign policy, states react to threats, modify their behavior accordingly, and try to balance foreign sources of threat. At the same time, states may completely ignore a material aggregation of power in other states that are not perceived in an adversarial light (Walt, 2004). In terms of the applicability of Cold War notions to contemporary international politics, some assumptions and conclusions can be viewed as outmoded in Walt's original analysis. For instance, the assumed dichotomy between balancing and bandwagoning is too simplistic, especially for a globalized world, in which some states, like Russia, pursue expansionist policies (Schweller, 2006). Whatever bandwagoning states may be engaged in, balancing against external threats should be the foremost in a list of priorities for any state. There is no logical contradiction between balancing and bandwagoning, states engaged in one could also engage in the other, with a various degree of intensity. Moreover, external threats can emanate not only from state actors, but non-state entities as well, e.g. international terrorist organizations or national liberation movements. Interestingly, Walt's theory was first developed for a case study addressing security issues in the Middle East. In this review of the evolution of threat in contemporary Russo – Turkish relations, we address the three phases of bilateral ties that developed around the Syria question. First, we discuss the relations between Turkey and Syria prior to the Syrian Civil War. Then, the relations between Russia and Turkey are examined briefly, as they were developing prior to the bilateral crisis triggered by the shooting down of a Russian military jet by the Turkish Air Force in November 2015. We conclude by addressing the events surrounding the dramatic deterioration of bilateral ties between Russia and Turkey, the efforts to remedy the crisis, and its implications.

## 1. Ankara and Damascus before the Syrian Civil War

Within the general foreign policy philosophy of the *zero problems with neighbors* developed by Ahmet Davutoglu (Davutoglu, 2012), a former minister of foreign affairs and later prime minister of Turkey, Erdogan's government, after coming to power in 2002, pursued a policy to improve the traditional unfavorable relations between Turkey and Syria (Askerov, 2017). Erdogan's charismatic personality, manifested in his uncompromising approach to Israel (Bennhold, 2009), made him very popular in the Arab world. Invigorated with this fame, Erdogan was initially very eager to develop Turkish relations with all the Arab countries, including Syria. The so-called *democratic initiative* policies of the Turkish government included the resolution of the most intractable conflicts such as the Kurdish problem, the Syrian issue, and even the century-long crisis with Armenia. Improving relations with Damascus was among Ankara's top priorities, and its positive signs were not late to appear. Part of the Ottoman Empire since the early sixteenth century, Syria became independent after World War II stripping itself off the French mandate. In 1938, while under the French mandate, Syria lost its Hatay region to Turkey by peaceful means: Hatay Province first became a nominally independent republic, and soon after, it joined Turkey through a referendum. Although the League of Nations played the key role in managing the process, according to the established international rules, ever since the Hatay issue has been one of the major sources of tension between Turkey and Syria. For decades, Syria allowed the Kurdish terrorists to establish bases on its territory to carry out their clandestine actions in Turkey and used this as a deterrence strategy against Ankara's minority policies. Even the notorious leader of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), Abdullah Ocalan, remained in Damascus until 1998 when Ankara's diplomatic pressure finally ousted him from Syria.

Soon after that, when Hafez al-Assad, the father of the current ruler of Syria died in 2000, Turkey and Syria had a remarkable opportunity to open a new chapter in their history, and they did not miss it. Bashar al-Assad, the new president of Syria, visited Turkey in 2004 and a year later, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer of Turkey visited Syria, ignoring the pressures and protests by both domestic and international opposition. Relations developed rapidly due to the responsive policies of the Syrian government under Bashar al-Assad, who seemed to have desired positive change in his country. Shortly thereafter, President Assad and Prime Minister Erdogan initiated new efforts to advance Turkish-Syrian relations, the warmth of which was also reflected in their personal interactions. Assad made informal visits to Turkey, where his meetings with Erdogan were reflected in the media. However, the favorable process of improving their relations did not last long: it started to slow down and then deteriorate with

the Arab Spring hitting Syria in 2011. This was a turning point in Syria's public and political life entailing serious decisions about the future of the country. Naturally, Assad decided to resist the uprising brought about by the 2011 protest movement to preserve the national unity and territorial integrity of his country. Soon, international powers started to intervene in the Syrian conflict either by opposing or supporting the Assad regime.

It took some time for Turkey to define its new position within the meaningfully regional circumstances. The dramatic change of the Turkish policy vis-à-vis Syria was partially a result of Syria's antagonistic policy toward Turkey, as the official Damascus started to view all moves at Syria's border with great suspicion. The first hostile act by Syria was shooting down a Turkish military jet in June 2012 that reportedly slightly violated Syria's air space (*Telegraph*, June 24, 2012). Ankara, on the other hand, started to repeatedly express its concern for civilian casualties in Syria, and came out in general opposition to the policies of Assad's regime. However, the ambiguities of Turkey's Syrian policy have persisted for a long time as Ankara needed more time to examine how Syria was being altered by the warring factions to formulate its policy to serve its national interests in the best way. New challenges emerged for Turkey that not only threatened its security, but also put its territorial integrity in danger. Partially under the influence of US policies, Ankara started to support the Free Syrian Army (FSA) trying to topple the Assad regime. This meant that Ankara severed diplomatic relations with Damascus and put itself in opposition to Russia and Iran who supported the Assad regime. For some reason, Ankara believed in a rapid and decisive victory of the FSA over the regime, and possibly made plans to exercise its influence to shape the new administration in Damascus. Later, when the Obama administration shifted its priorities in Syria and began to cooperate with the Kurdish insurgent group PYD/YPG, Ankara understood that it had miscalculated and made hasty decisions to cut off ties with Syria (Selvi, 2017). Ankara sees PYD/YPG as an extension of the PKK in Syria, a Kurdish terrorist organization that threatens Turkey's territorial integrity. Needless to say, a well-organized Kurdish military force funded and armed by the United States would pose a significant threat to Turkey if it were to decide to pursue an armed struggle against the Turkish Republic.

By severing the diplomatic ties with and withdrawing its ambassador from Damascus, Ankara disabled itself from reaching the Syrian leadership through diplomatic channels, which is a necessary means for managing conflicts peacefully. For a country that has claimed to have zero problems with its neighbors, having leverage is important to manage conflicts peacefully. Ankara's voluntary deprivation itself of this opportunity explained by the circumstances of the time has limited its capacity to produce alternative foreign policy approaches towards

Syria. Moreover, Turkey's new Syrian policy affected its own economy more adversely than that of any other country in the region because of the myriad trade restrictions emerged out of the conflict. Currently, Turkey hosts more than three million refugees from Syria, which is extremely costly. In such circumstances, no political leverage over the Syrian issue was a serious loss for Ankara. Ostensibly, Turkey, as a regional power, weakened its own influence in Syria, and the entire region, by removing itself out of the main stage of the power game. Over time, it has become clear that other powers such as Iran, not to mention Russia and China, started to exercise more power and influence in Syria than Turkey. Erdogan defended this policy by appealing to the themes of justice and human rights, rather valid issues, but Damascus viewed these with some sarcasm since similar allegations were levelled against Turkey itself.

The reality is that Turkey has established itself in a position of gaining more influence in Syria since it abandoned its old *zero problems with neighbors* policy, which helped neither peace, nor war. By rejecting Damascus, Ankara missed the historical opportunity of forging close relationships with the Assad government, which it needed to exercise leverage for a peaceful or relatively less violent transformation of the conflict. Instead, the Turkish government blamed the Syrian government for violating human rights, and called upon the Assad government to resign, which was a move made in line with Western policies (Burch, 2011). Erdogan's government miscalculated the events in Syria thinking that the Syrian government would suffer the fate of the other Arab regimes that had been toppled by the Arab Spring. But it was not only Ankara that failed to weigh the consequences of Russia's presence in Syria, the Western allies remained surprisingly passive in preventing Russia from establishing its dominance in Syria. The shooting down of the Russian military jet by the Turkish Air Force in November 2015 was an attempt to deter Moscow's active and aggressive actions in Syria, which in the end did not yield any positive change for Turkey and its allies. Russia, having imposed economic sanctions on Turkey, managed to masterfully use the incident in its own favor by making Ankara proceed in line with Moscow's design of the reconciliation process.

## **2. Ankara and Moscow before the Deployment of Russian Troops to Syria**

It is important to highlight certain points of strategic importance that would help describe the situation before the Syrian crisis emerged and explain the gap between the pre-crisis and post-crisis situations. One of the most prominent signs of strategic cooperation between Russia and Turkey was the joint project of the Akkuyu Nuclear Plant, which was to be built



in cooperation with the Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom per a contract signed in 2010, over which President Erdogan and President Putin met three times. Each time they met, the leaders stressed that despite the disagreements in their foreign policies, the two countries would promote economic cooperation. Turkey's economic relations with Russia helped Erdogan develop the sense of high tolerance so that he did not react seriously to Putin's statements made during the anniversary of the tragic 1915 events of the Ottoman Empire, which Putin identified as the Armenian genocide, a designation that is normally strongly condemned by Ankara. Undoubtedly, one of the most significant projects between Russia and Turkey was the Turkish Stream project, a pipeline development offered to Ankara by Putin in 2014. The agreement was signed by Moscow and Ankara in Istanbul in the presence of both Putin and Erdogan on 10 October 2016 (*RT*, October 10, 2016). An exciting project for both states, which started to materialize in the early 2015, it envisioned carrying Russian natural gas to Europe through Turkey. Interestingly and strangely enough, the signing and implementation of the project was delayed by the sides. It is generally believed that the primary reason was that the sides could not agree on the price of gas supplies (Holodny, 2015). According to some media claims in Russia, however, Ankara deliberately delayed it to guarantee the discount on natural gas it would buy from Russia (*Sputnik*, December 31, 2015). Eventually, the project halted long enough without being signed by the parties, and the blast of the jet crisis in November of 2015 delayed it further.

Putin's participation in the memorial ceremonies for the alleged 1915 Armenian genocide organized in Yerevan on 24 April 2015, did not anger Erdogan, contrary to expectations. In Yerevan, unlike his earlier written statement, Putin was reluctant to use the word 'genocide' which could have been interpreted as one of the first signs of the mutually satisfactory cooperation between Ankara and Moscow on the Akkuyu project, the foundation for which was laid only ten days earlier. Putin and Erdogan met on 13 June 2015, during their joint visit to Baku for the purpose of participating in the opening ceremonies of the European Games (*Fox News*, June 13, 2015). This summit removed all doubts about the cooling off of relations between Russia and Turkey that started when Erdogan did not honor Moscow's invitation to participate in the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Russia's victory over Nazi Germany in May of 2015 (*Sputnik*, May 7, 2015). Shortly thereafter, the Kremlin's statements about the past meeting appeared publicly; they stressed that President Putin and President Erdogan discussed the joint projects of their countries, in addition to the situations in Syria and Ukraine. The prognosis about the future of the Russo-Turkish relations was positive; the partners envisioned increasing the trade volume to USD 100 billion by 2020. Erdogan's

visit to Moscow in September of the same year consolidated the cooperation, but both presidents confessed that they had different foreign policy worldviews; the main source of stress was the developments and the involvement of both Russia and Turkey in Syria (Idiz, 2015). Erdogan's serious criticism of Russia's policies in Syria started with the use of force by Russia in Syria in late September 2015, even though it was used against terrorists.

Before that, many remarkable events occurred in the region with Russia's direct involvement. Russia's attack of Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the initiation of war with Ukraine are among the gravest events that took place in Turkey's proximity to the north to which it did not react severely, although both Ukraine and Georgia are of significant geostrategic importance to Ankara, let alone the historical ties between them and Turkey. Moscow's antagonism towards Georgia and Ukraine grew consistently with the progress of Tbilisi's and Kiev's pro-Western policies. Those policies of Ukraine and Georgia, developed under their respective presidents Viktor Yushchenko and Mikhail Saakashvili, were perceived by the Kremlin as hostile and incompatible with Russia's interests. Before taking any serious steps in Ukraine – which Russia had seen as its little brother – Moscow wanted to tame what it regarded as an “unruly” Georgia, which geographically separates it from Turkey.

The October 2006 live fire exercise conducted by Russia's Black Sea Fleet in the vicinity of Georgia's main seaport Poti, followed the Tbilisi-Moscow spy row and signaled a sharp deterioration of Russo-Georgian relations. After imposing a comprehensive economic embargo on Georgia, and organizing mass deportations of ethnic Georgians from Russia, the Kremlin highlighted the vulnerabilities of Georgia's defenses – its Black Sea coast has been virtually undefended from a potential sea invasion since the breakup of the Soviet Union. The small Georgian navy and the coast guard could not do much to deter Russia's hostile acts let alone repel a full-scale invasion. Moscow fully utilized this advantage during the August 2008 war with Georgia – although the Georgian ground forces managed to hold off the Russian ground forces advancing through the mountain passes from Russia's North Caucasus, they had little choice but to sue for peace when the Russians deployed the Black Sea Fleet from Sevastopol, Crimea, and landed on Georgian soil virtually unopposed. The Georgian ground troops fighting in central Georgia would have been surrounded and destroyed – their enemy did falter in the mountains, but once gaining control over Georgian lowlands the Russians acquired a huge strategic advantage.

Curiously, Ankara's official reaction to the invasion of Georgia was rather muted despite the fact that Moscow was demonstrating its readiness to wage an unlimited war in Georgia seeking to overthrow its government. As the French-brokered ceasefire took shape, the Turkish

leadership praised President Medvedev of Russia (The Kremlin, August 13, 2008), and then Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan visited Moscow on August 14 2008 to confer with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin (Mynet, August 13, 2008). Similarly, Ankara's reaction to Russia's takeover of Crimea and the invasion of southeast Ukraine in 2014 was reserved as if Russia was dealing with its internal affairs. Ankara issued alarms regarding Moscow's militaristic foreign policy pursuits only after the Russian military deployments in Syria in the fall of 2015 and tried to reverse the changed strategic balance. After disregarding Russia's aggressive moves on its northern borders, Ankara grew alarmed when it found similar Russian actions on its southern borders, essentially surrounding Turkey by Russian combat troops. It is possible that Ankara perceived the Russian invasions of Georgia and Ukraine as a settling of some post-Soviet squabbles, but it did miss important warning signs of how far Moscow was willing to go to settle similar scores elsewhere, including Syria.

Ankara reacted to Russia's involvement in Syria on 30 September 2015, as Russian forces commenced bombing so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other anti-Assad rebels. The first reactions came from Feridun Sinirlioglu, Turkey's foreign minister; but before long, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu accused Russia of hitting the moderate opposition forces in Syria, which Moscow rejected (*RFE/RL*, October 7, 2015). On 3 October 2015, President Erdogan stressed that he had some difficulties understanding Russia's involvement in Syria, as Russia and Syria shared no borders (*BirGun*, October 3, 2015). Erdogan's surprising and rather naïve comment explained a lot why Ankara was so passive on the Georgian and Ukrainian issue.

Despite Ankara's official declarations of not understanding Russia's true motives in Syria, Moscow intended to reach several important goals by giving military assistance to the Assad regime. First, by acting decisively, Moscow hoped to counter and reverse Western involvement in Syria – the United States and its allies openly supported and armed the Assad opposition. In Moscow's quest to restore the global power balance with the United States, Syria presented yet another opportunity to demonstrate Russia's newly rediscovered confidence and resolve. Second, Moscow scored very important points with Iran – an important Assad ally and an enemy of the United States. Tehran was desperate to save the Assad regime, which was targeted not only by Western powers, but by Saudi Arabia as well – Iran's other traditional regional rival. Third, by establishing long-term presence in Syria and becoming an important ally to Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah, Assad's military ally and an enemy of Israel, Moscow has acquired bargaining chips potentially tradable with Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern states that see Iran as a threat. Also, America's powerful Israel lobby must be mindful not

to alienate Moscow by pushing anti-Russian policies in Washington (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). Fourth, by outmaneuvering the United States and obtaining more influence in the region, Moscow has become an important destination for Israeli politicians and diplomats, who have to seek Kremlin's good will if they want to avoid unprofitable military engagements with Iran or militant groups supported by Iran. Fifth, by aiding Assad in Syria, Moscow offered a nod to both Azerbaijan and Armenia – still unreconciled enemies in the Caucasus, but each of them a potential long-term ally of Russia. Azerbaijanis are a fellow Shia nation, a religious relative of the ruling Alawite sect of Syria. Armenians represent a minority group in Syria allied with the Assad regime. An eastern Syrian town Deir ez-Zor (Der Zor in Armenian), besieged by Daesh (ISIS) for three years (2014-2017), and relieved through the Russian military involvement, is home to a significant Armenian minority population and houses a monument and memorial complex to the victims of the 1915 Armenian genocide. Sixth, Russia has sought to maintain access to Syria's military naval base – the only naval base available to Russia in the Mediterranean. Finally, the ruling class in Russia could not let Damascus fall to Daesh for very significant domestic considerations. Damascus is home to an ancient Christian church, the Patriarchate of Antioch, the second oldest Christian church in the world after Jerusalem. The Church of Antioch (the modern city of Antakya in Turkey), is the community where the followers of Jesus were first called Christians, relocated to Damascus in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, where its headquarters have been located since then on the old Roman *via recta*, the only street mentioned in the Christian Bible. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Patriarchate of Antioch, the predominant Arab speaking church in the world, has enjoyed very cordial relations with the Patriarchate of Moscow, the largest of the Orthodox churches. The Moscow Patriarchate is also the most significant national institution in Russia, and no Russian political figure wants to alienate the church if they can help it.

Regardless, the Russian forces started to operate in Syria without always taking into consideration the interests of Syria's neighbors. Specifically, Russian military aircraft occasionally violated Turkish airspace. The first and second violations of the Turkish airspace by Russian jets took place on 3 October and 5 October 2015, respectively. Ankara's concerns expressed through diplomatic channels pushed the Kremlin to make statements that the violations were related to inclement weather conditions (*Radio Free Europe*, October 6, 2015). According to the statements of the Turkish Ministry of Defense made on 6 October 2015, eight Turkish F-16 jets performing reconnaissance flights over the Turkish-Syrian border were put on radar lock (which enables missile systems to automatically follow a target) by an unidentified MIG-29 aircraft for several minutes (*CBS/AP*, October 6, 2015). Alongside

President Erdogan's objections, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg expressed his doubts about Russia's violations of Turkish airspace being unintentional (*CBS/AP*, October 6, 2015). This was indirect support for Turkey from NATO, which encouraged Ankara to oppose Russia's increasingly aggressive involvement in the Syrian quagmire. Although Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, claimed that Putin called Erdogan and apologized for the violations, things continued to deteriorate rapidly, putting the Russian and Turkish militaries on a collision course (*Sputnik*, December 31, 2015).

The last meeting between Erdogan and Putin before the crisis took place on 15 November 2015, at the G20 Summit in Antalya, Turkey, where they discussed the issues of fighting Daesh, and finding a political solution to the Syrian Civil War. The details of the meeting were not publicized. However, the leaders reached an agreement on meeting in Russia on December 15 for the sixth summit of the High-Level Russian-Turkish Cooperation Council. This never materialized due to the crisis that began on November 24. At the G20 Summit in Antalya, Putin implied that Turkey was one of the countries financing ISIS, at least through illegal oil trade. However, Erdogan chose not to react due to the rules of Turkish hospitality (*RT*, November 16, 2015). Just a few hours after Turkey downed the Russian jet on November 24, Putin accused Turkey of protecting ISIS at a press conference organized in the Kremlin. Claiming that Russia's plane was downed over Syrian territory by an air-to-air missile from a Turkish F-16 jet, Putin accused Turkey of supporting terrorists and smuggling oil from the areas controlled by the ISIS (Melvin, Martinez, & Bilginsoy, 2015). This was the beginning of the crisis between Russia and Turkey that would last for about eight months.

### **3. Conflicting Priorities and a Need to Cooperate**

In Syria, Russia has waded into more dangerous and uncharted waters, but by moving smartly, Moscow has managed to force the West to make another step back after the Crimean crisis, now in the Middle East. Russian actions in Syria have also addressed the strategic rivalry with the United States, by forcefully demonstrating Moscow's advantages in this area that remained unanswered by the United States until the April 2017 Tomahawk cruise missile attack on the Russian-protected Syrian airfield in reaction to the use of chemical weapons by the Assad government.

As discussed above, Ankara strongly objected to Russian Air Force combat missions so close to its borders, demanded that Russian pilots cease violating Turkish air space, and threatened Moscow with sanctions. Among other things, Turkey promised that it would stop purchasing Russian gas – about 60% of Turkey's natural gas came from Russia in late

November 2015, when Turkey shot down a Russian ground attack jet in Syria for reportedly violating Turkish airspace, relations between them deteriorated to their lowest point in a very long time (*lenta ru*, October 8, 2015). The Russian pilots survived the attack, but as they parachuted from the doomed jet, one of them was killed in the air by pro-Turkish Syrian rebels. Another Russian serviceman died in the rescue mission for the other downed pilot (*BBC*, December 1, 2015). Presumably, Ankara had a very good reason to pursue a Russian jet. Armed Russian fighter jets on combat missions violated Turkish airspace – the first ever such incident in NATO’s history (*The Washington Post*, October 5, 2015). In response, protests against Russia were issued in Ankara and Brussels, and Moscow responded that they would look into the claims (*Reuters*, October 6, 2015). Ankara found subsequent Russian explanations unsatisfactory and expressed its deep dissatisfaction with Moscow (*The Guardian*, October 6, 2015). President Erdogan had threatened to stop purchasing Russian gas (*lenta ru*, October 8, 2015), and in the end, Ankara took this decisive measure as no other solution seemed to be viable.

The Russians were very bitter about the downed jet, but not because of the fatalities – Moscow has never believed in tears when it comes to war casualties. The Turkish attack on a Russian jet highlighted the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of Russian operations in Syria. It took the Turks only a few minutes to register the jet, track it, and shoot it down without the Russians realizing that they were threatened. The Russian ground attack SU-24 jet was vulnerable to aerial attacks, but it was not accompanied by jet fighters, and no electronic measures were taken by the Russians to protect it. The Russians have suffered similarly embarrassing military setbacks during their war adventures from 2008 on, exposing weaknesses in their military forces. In the August 2008 invasion of Georgia, the Russians lost a number of jets, including their famed long-range Tu-22M3 bomber. Additionally, Russia was not confident it had air superiority in Georgia during the five days of war (*Reuters*, July 8, 2009), and its ground force advance was stalled by the Georgian side. The Black Sea Fleet was very slow to deploy, but once it did, Georgia had to sue for peace as it was lacking a viable naval force and coastal defenses. In Ukraine, only the indecisiveness and incompetence of the Ukrainian side allowed Russia to avoid heavy casualties – the rapid-action light infantry Russian troops deployed in Crimea were essentially defenseless sitting ducks for at least two weeks, as their support was late to show up in numbers.

None of the above-mentioned shortcomings resulted in a major setback for the Russians due to timidity, incompetence or self-imposed moderation by their opponents. However, the April 2017 missile attack on a Syrian airbase by the US Navy turned out to be a serious

warning message to the Russians, and the first credible response to Moscow by the United States since August 2008. More directly, the American Tomahawk cruise missiles countered the spectacular October 2015 Russian cruise missile attack on various targets in Syria aimed at Daesh and other militant groups. The Russian air and missile attacks in Syria posed a significant threat to Turkey, a NATO member with the second largest standing force, especially since the Russian action there went uncontested for almost eighteen months. As Russia entered the Syria war in fall 2015, it undertook the first of a series of impressive cruise missile attacks on ISIS and other targets. The first round was fired by Russia's Caspian Sea Flotilla in a dramatic demonstration of Russia's military capabilities, and its newly found confidence. The attacks were launched by four Russian warships on 7 October 2015, on President Putin's 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday, from neutral waters off the coast of Azerbaijan with 26 nuclear warhead-capable sophisticated cruise missiles (*BBC News*, October 7, 2015). The Caspian cruise missile attack went as expected and it appeared to be a complete surprise to NATO – always an unpleasant combination of words when 'missile attack' and 'surprise' are used in the same sentence. More, the *Kalibr* (*Klub*) missile system used by Russia to carry out this attack can carry nuclear warheads. Four Russian warships participated in the launch of the missiles, meaning that Russia has a significant and very dangerous strategic force in the Caspian Sea, capable of reaching far beyond what had been previously believed. The maximum range of the *Kalibr* missiles is 2,500 kilometers – the Caspian flotilla with these missiles covers the entire Caucasus, the Black Sea, most of the Middle East including the Persian Gulf, major parts of the Red and Arabian Seas, eastern parts of the Mediterranean Sea, parts of NATO members of southeastern Europe, and can reach any part of Turkey, Central Asian states, including Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Most importantly, the Caspian Sea flotilla can easily support in combat Russia's Black Sea fleet – a unique situation given that the Caspian Sea is landlocked and separated from the Black Sea by three states and a series of mountain ranges. This is noteworthy considering the strategic importance of the Black Sea for Russia. The Russian cruise missiles launched from the Caspian Sea entered Iranian airspace and then crossed into Iraq before hitting targets inside Syria (*BBC*, October 8, 2015). Moscow had permission to fly over the airspace from both Iran and Iraq; a good indication of the close cooperation among these three, which should be worrisome news for Washington and Ankara, as Iran is their strategic foe, while Iraq is supposed to be a close ally. Russia has used the war in Syria for an effective demonstration of its conventional and strategic military capabilities – a very useful method of deterring potential adversaries contemplating conventional military operations – but the *Kalibr* missile attack had a far-reaching message.

As it was mentioned above, the *Kalibr/Klub* cruise missiles are capable of delivering nuclear payloads. This missile system is the most sophisticated in its class as it reportedly has two stages, the final stage initiating in as the missile approaches its target. The *Kalibr* missiles, and cruise missiles in general fly very low to the surface and their long-range detection by radar is impossible. They can be detected at about 24-26 kilometers from their target, and it is possible, in theory, to intercept and destroy them, but at this point a *Kalibr* missile's second stage engages and gives it a supersonic speed making it nearly impossible to shoot it down. The message the Russians sent to Washington, Ankara, and all other allied capitals implied in no uncertain terms that Moscow possessed devastating weapons against which the allies had no defense. In other words, the strategic balance between Russia and NATO was now demonstrably in Russia's favor. The cruise missile deployments have been limited since the late 1980s following the US-USSR treaty restricting the intermediate nuclear forces in Europe, the so-called INF Treaty. The Russian advances in the area of intermediate missile technology became very evident through the cruise missile application in Syria. Perhaps, this was the main reason for America's February 1, 2019 withdrawal from the 1987 INF treaty (Nichols, 2019).

The April 2017 American attack on the Al Shayrat air base in Syria was designed to deter Russia from pursuing the path of escalating the conflict. The pretext for the American cruise missile attack was the alleged chemical attack by the Assad regime on al-Qaeda affiliated rebels near the Turkish border few days prior. The 'chemical attack' looked like a false flag operation, but it gave an excuse to the United States to demonstrate its cruise missile capabilities to the Russian leadership. American warships in the Mediterranean launched 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles that perform in a similar fashion to the Russian *Kalibr* missiles, but they do not have a supersonic stage. These missiles can be shot down, but instead of making it a surprise, the American military warned its Russian counterparts of the upcoming missile attack. Despite the advance warning, all missiles reportedly reached their targets inside the air base, in other words, even though the Russians knew about the incoming Tomahawks, and theoretically they were able to intercept and destroy them, the Russian forces could not manage to destroy even a single Tomahawk. The Tomahawks, just like the *Kalibr* missiles, can be detected by radar when they are about 24-26 kilometers from their targets, at which point the tracking device will follow them and aid the ground-based computerized missile interceptors to shoot them down. Each Tomahawk missile will need at least two Russian anti-missile systems firing simultaneously, and if successful, the incoming missile can be brought down at about 8 kilometers from its intended target – an insignificant distance when it comes



to nuclear explosions. In other words, to repel the American attack with 59 cruise missiles, the Russians had to have at least 59 radars and 118 advanced missiles interceptors at the Al Shayrat base. No Russian air base, let alone an expeditionary one in Syria, can ever have this much defense from cruise missiles, and even if they had enough radars and interceptors, nothing prevents the US Navy from launching twice as many Tomahawks in the following round. The same logic applies to other Russian military installations and to everything else with strategic importance. In short, the United States made sure the Russians and everyone else involved in the Middle East understood that they were back in the balance of intimidation game with the Russians, the engagement which they had abstained from since August 2008.

The 2019 developments in Syria have witnessed the fall of the last Daesh strongholds, but national peace in Syria is likely to remain an elusive concept for a long time. The Russian-supported Assad regime continues to face resistance not only from extremist terrorist groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda, but also from groups backed by Turkey and its NATO allies, such as the so-called Free Syrian Army. Iran remains actively engaged in both Iraq and Syria, a matter of some concern for other regional states. Russia's active support of Damascus will have negative effects on American positions in the Middle East itself, and Russia's long-term military presence in the region will make Washington's future attempts of assembling a NATO coalition for regional engagements all but impossible. If Moscow manages to weaken US influence in the Middle East by waging a successful military campaign in Syria, it will be the biggest achievement in this region by any Russian regime in Russia's history.

Conventional wisdom would suggest that due to this new military expedition in the Middle East, the Russians should not be able to afford fresh military troubles elsewhere. Although geographically not far from Syria, the Caucasus has no direct links or relations with the Syrian War. It can, however, become a support region to the front in Syria, especially if things do not go according to Moscow's overall plans. Spillovers from Syria can reignite the Azerbaijani-Armenian stand-off over the Nagorno Karabakh region and its surrounding areas that are controlled by Armenia, but formally belong to Azerbaijan. If Russia's Syria gamble succeeds and ends quickly, Baku will find its positions even more weakened, as Russia's increased influence will embolden Armenia and Iran, Russia's traditional allies and historical rivals of Azerbaijan. If Baku were to elicit any concession from Armenia regarding the issue of its occupied territories in the foreseeable future, it may decide to act militarily while Russia is tied up in Syria.

Ostensibly, Moscow's entry into the Syrian war is another step in Russia's deliberate and well-planned quest to reassert itself as a major world power and to restore a balance of power

with the United States. The Syrian case is an opportunity for Moscow to outmaneuver the United States, and it seems, the Kremlin has successfully used it. The American plans in Syria to bomb ISIS, arm ‘moderate opposition’ to the Assad regime, and force Assad’s resignation have failed – none of these objectives were achieved by the summer of 2017, neither could the United States muster credible support for any of it (*The Wall Street Journal*, January 26, 2015). Moscow’s objective, on the other hand, is much clearer and straightforward: keep the Assad regime in power. Moscow sees only Assad as capable of fighting ISIS (alongside with the Kurdish forces), maintaining state institutions in Syria, and guaranteeing Russia’s military presence in the country, at its Tartus naval base. Therefore, the Russian Air Force in Syria targets all who threaten the Assad regime, including those ‘moderate’ groups armed and supported by the United States (*CBS News*, October 1, 2015), and occasionally those supported by Turkey (not because of the fear of upsetting the Turks, but due to a simple fact that pro-Turkish groups in Syria tend to be numerically inferior and strategically less significant). At the same time, Kurdish groups, allied with Russia and/or the United States, have been targeted by Ankara. By the end of the Obama administration in January 2017, the US was seen in no position to protect its people it supported in Syria from the Russian attacks and this further undermined Washington’s credibility in the region (Hayes, 2015). Moreover, unlike the US, Russia possesses clearly defined and credible allies in the Syrian War – primarily, Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah – both of whom are crucial for Russia’s long-term military influence in the Middle East. This fact, more than anything else, has encouraged the Erdogan government to overcome its hatred of the Assad regime and its suspicions of Iran’s true intentions in the region, and to seek an accommodation with the other two. By the end of 2016, Russia, Turkey, and Iran had agreed on trilateral talks on Syria, and by May 2017, they found common ground on some key issues, including establishing the so-called safe zones in Syria to promote a de-escalation of the civil war (*CNN*, May 4, 2017). Such agreements may not solve much initially, as the warring parties tend to ignore them, especially those affiliated with Daesh and al Qaeda, but the process of bringing Russia, Turkey, and Iran together for a common solution is very significant in post-Cold War Middle East politics.

Being engaged in the Syrian question promises major rewards for Moscow, and its stakes there are not as high as they are in Ukraine. Russia’s long-term gains include establishing a stronghold in the Middle East, and for this Assad must prevail in the war. This is the reason why Moscow has mobilized its diplomatic and military capabilities to reach the outcomes it seeks in the region. Russia also makes its neighbors take notes on how Moscow develops its strategic arms policies. Moscow has been diligently rebuilding its nuclear-capable platforms

as was evidenced by the October 2015 performance of the four Caspian warships. This new Russian military doctrine makes a 'preemptive' nuclear strike against non-nuclear weapon nations an explicit policy of the Russian state (*The Other Russia*, November 24, 2009). This is a worrisome development that would have been regarded with great alarm in the United States only three decades ago: low flying, very fast, long range and accurate cruise missiles tip the strategic balance in favor of Russia. Soviet/Russian military doctrines have always allowed for preemptive nuclear strikes, but only in cases of an imminent nuclear attack by the enemy or a conventional attack by an enemy aimed at crippling Russia's strategic forces (Podvig, 2001). The new strategy of the preemptive nuclear strike has been emphasized by Russian officials to give additional weight to Moscow's threats to defend Russia's territorial integrity and that of its allies. Although Moscow's implicit threats are currently chiefly directed at former members of the Soviet Union, especially Ukraine and Georgia, its new policies indicate to the West its being a potential military threat as well. If Russia's military escapades in the last decade teach its neighbors anything, it is that Moscow will not hesitate to pursue further military campaigns in the areas of its stated vital interests. Lesser former Soviet states will do well to avoid such conflicts and keep Russia's attention directed toward the West or the Middle East, where it rightfully belongs.

## **Conclusion**

By reviewing the November 2015 crisis between Russia and Turkey, we have demonstrated the hazards of two powerful and generally friendly states becoming involved in a regional war on opposing sides. The crisis, which resulted from the downing of a Russian ground attack jet by the Turkish Air Force on 24 November 2015, has been subsequently resolved; despite its injured pride, the Russian leadership left a door open for Ankara to make amends, and the Turkish leadership slowly realized that they alone were powerless to alter the balance of threat with Russia. Soon after the military incident involving a Russian jet, President Putin said that Russia did not see Turkey as an enemy despite the military jet crisis, but it was Ankara who should make the first step for reconciliation (*Sputnik*, December 18, 2015). President Erdogan, who initially said that if there was a party that needed to apologize, it was Russia, also gradually changed his approach to restore good relations with Russia. In fact, shortly after the incident, he also stated that if they had known that the jet was Russian, they would have acted differently, although Putin did not immediately accept these words as credible (*BBC*, November 26, 2015). Nonetheless, Ankara developed deep feelings of remorse over time due to the economic price it had paid. Further, the increasing cooperation of the United States with the Kurdish PYD/YPG forces, despite Ankara's objections, made the latter reconsider

its policy vis-à-vis Russia: the militant Kurdish forces represent a more immediate threat to Turkish security than errant Russian jets. Although Russia's approach to the Kurds of Syria is not much different from that of the US, Ankara found maneuvering its strategy to a balanced policy between the US and Russia more advantageous for its interests. Currently, despite their conflicting interests in Syria, Russia and Turkey are convinced that cooperation would serve their mutual interests much better than hostility involving a power struggle that normally makes the competing parties pursue zero-sum objectives. At the same time, the recently restored cooperation was possible due to the heavy costs paid by both sides. Many ambiguities remain in Russo-Turkish relations, but as the dust settles in Syria, they are more likely to be clarified through diplomacy rather than conflict.

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## CHAPTER 8

# RUSSIA’S POLICY OF PROXY WAR IN SYRIA: WILL IT BE A GAME CHANGER OR WILL NAVAL POWER STAY IN MEDITERRANEAN WATERS

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### ABSTRACT

The development of the Syrian Crisis and seeking for the most suitable solution for it have become complicated and generated different solution problems. The consolidation of political issues in the framework of Iranian, Turkish and Russian cooperation for its Astana process shows just one side of that solution seeking. At the same time, the situation in this region stimulates the participants to reevaluate their policy in Mediterranean Waters as an aim of strategical presence in this sense, Russia decided to cooperate with Turkey, a NATO member since 1952, in its Middle Eastern policy against the United States that controls most of armed opposition troops within Syrian Democratic Forces. Concurrently, the Kurdish People’s Protection Units were also supported by the USA, and that is the reason for the new political challenges in Turkish-American cooperation, both in the framework of NATO and in interstate relations as well. This paper discusses modern Russian-Turkish cooperation regarding the Middle Eastern agenda of the parties, including issues related to the field of study.

**Keywords:** Proxy’s War, Syrian Crisis, Mediterranean waters, Kurdish People’s Protection Units, Turkey’s policy view

## Introduction

*“This remilitarization of the Russian security policy is evident by the construction of an arc of steel from the Arctic to the Mediterranean”* Navy Admiral Mark Ferguson

Putin suddenly deployed a high-profile military intervention in Syria in September 2015, with the aim of retaliating against ISIS terrorism. Russia's military intervention and its support for the Assad Regime in the Syrian Proxy War has received great attention and this bears a critical impact in the war as a “game changer” factor by presenting Russia as having a potential sphere of influence in the Middle East or in the wider world. The beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 should be studied within a background of international politics, as Russia's willingness to support the Syrian regime, and the reason for this willingness, appears highly significant.

From our perspective, the Kremlin has sought to reverse the growing trend of the Great Powers interfering in the domestic affairs of sovereign states, since before the Arab Spring. In analyzing the factors that shaped the Russian foreign objectives and directions during the Arab Spring and the Syrian Civil War, the need to review the recent Russian perspective on the Middle East and how the situation has changed from the Kremlin's point of view becomes apparent. What are the Russian foreign policy priorities shaping Syria?

This paper aims to provide a brief academic analysis regarding international relations by putting major and complex reasons of Russia's presence in Syria under the microscope. Thus, I aim to present answers to the following questions: what are the interests of Russia, why Syria remains Russia's crucial partner in the Middle East, and why Russia supports Bashar al-Assad. I suggest that answers to these questions can be considered as a situation in which the sphere of western-inspired regime changes is finally repulsed.

### **1. Russia's Theoretical Foreign Policy Framework and Objectives on Syria**

If the last century of Russian traditional foreign policy is studied, it becomes apparent that the driving motivations differed radically from the 1917 October Revolution until the disintegration of the former Soviet Union under Gorbachev's administration. Indeed, to understand how the Kremlin's foreign policy structures were shaped by the ideological basis of formal doctrines of Communist Party dominance until 1999, it is necessary to study the last century of Russian traditional foreign policy.

In the doctrinal side, Hans Morgenthau describes prestige as a means of demonstrating power along with other goals. In this context, we can define Russia's Syrian efforts as a



show of force directed to ensure that it receives the respect it deserves so that others do not interfere in its internal affairs. In order to protect its national interests, Putin decided to pursue a series of rational and pragmatic foreign policy objectives which are ruling out costly confrontation, including the modernization of armed forces and even a meticulous harmonization with economic development, raising living standards, and the consolidation of the Kremlin's prestige status as a leading world power again.

Even more serious in Moscow's eyes was the solid infringement eastwards of NATO from the early 1990s onwards, and the initiatives developed by Washington for the establishment of defensive missile systems in Europe. Yeltsin was too busy picking up the pieces in the 1990s, and the people have always obliged to take self-sufficiency and daily subsistence into consideration. Throughout this period, the Russians were evaluating the Americans as lacking in the keeping of their promises, and discourteous of Russia's authentic interests. They became resolute to precise a price for that (Greenstock, 2017).

The following critical step in forming the transformation followed the shock of the collapse of the Soviet Union, changing Moscow's foreign policy dramatically, and restructuring the world affairs to what the Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin now faces in the international system. The reversal of this status loss has caused Putin to push the button to turn Russia's attention back to the Middle East. Putin has directed Russia's interests and policies toward several goals, aiming to increase its global influence and to allow its recently growing economy to keep on flourishing. Why maintaining influence in the region is so significant to Kremlin? One of the reasons Russia has sought to increase influence was that they were forced to accept the United States' status as a hegemonic power that has been inciting global tension in order to assert its shadow, which in turn, caused the formation of a "*Syria-Iran-China Troika*" in the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Recently, the US Army controls %30 of the Syrian territory, which hosts the country's largest oil field, as well as most of its water resources and agricultural lands<sup>1</sup>, and uses it to support and fund the SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces), and formed the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), an affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been engaged in terrorist movements against Turkey. As Russia is a close ally of Assad, Syria is strongly converted into a growing strategic partnership by expanding spheres of influence in the Middle East with Iran, that is an important orbit of pivotal actor against the growing tensions with the Trump administration which terminated the 2015 nuclear deal. In April

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1 Kabalan, Marwan. Russia's New Game in Syria. (2018, 29 October). *Aljazeera*. Retrieved From <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/istanbul-summit-failed-181029102112796.html>.

2018, the Trump administration implemented additional sanctions against Russia. In terms of international law, even if Trump ordered two times Tomahawk missile strikes on Syrian bases, Russia and China have vetoed a UN resolution to impose sanctions on Syria over the alleged use of chemical weapons. China has also aligned itself with Russia in recent clashes that threatened to open an entirely new and deadly front for the region. China is looking to expand its support for Russia in Syria's prolonged civil war as regional powers Israel and Iran escalate a long-running feud that threatens to further destabilize the war-ravaged country and to invest heavily in the reconstruction of Syria.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, Russia has used its veto power for the 12<sup>th</sup> time at the UN Security Council to block action directed at its Syrian ally. By looking at the strategic pattern laid by Russia, the political-military-economic decision makers have been concerned about the new world order becoming dangerously unpredictable since some actors are aiming to interfere in Moscow's sovereign and domestic politics, unipolar world in world affairs with the use of force, and it's threat about using military power as an instrument of foreign policy. In this context, Putin warned the US at Munich Security Conference 2007 that it should not attempt to create a world "of one boss, one sovereign," and that it should stop interfering with Russian domestic politics.<sup>3</sup> Observing the growing number of conflict points around the Russian periphery, Kremlin elites consider that the only way to fill the gap in international security is to reinforce multi-polarity. Meanwhile, for Russian perspective, emerging new geopolitical macroblocks' will be formed. The United States, with its global capabilities and influence through the emerging Trans-Pacific Partnership and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, will be a pillar of one. China, Russia, India, Kazakhstan, Iran, and many other states will embody another geopolitical grouping – a Community of Greater Eurasia. Europe, against this background, will find itself economically and politically weakened and semi-ruptured (Karaganov, Cherniavskaia and Novikov, 2016).

## 2. Syrian Civil War

The dilemma in Syria is a very serious problem, and Syria started to become involved in the tumultuous aspects of Arab Spring, which could be regarded as a peaceful protest demanding the resignation of Bashar al-Assad broke out in Daraa, a town in South Syria. The situation rapidly deteriorated with armed rebels, insurgents and terrorists with dangerous

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2 O'Conno. Tom. China Looks for New Ways to Help Russia in Syria as U.S. Backs Israel against Iran.(2018, 14 May). *Newsweek*, Retrieved From <https://www.newsweek.com/china-looks-new-ways-help-russia-syria-us-backs-israel-iran-924712>.

3 Putin. Vladimir. Speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy. (2007, 10 February). Munich.

regressive and sectarian agendas hijacking the protest. Syria fell into a conflict of both dramatic loss and tragedy. With the loss of more than half million civilians and almost 6 million refugees leaving their countries in mass waves suddenly triggered a potential threat to European security.

This tragic crisis gains more prominence in the international discourse due to gross human rights violations. Therefore, such violations demand the responsibility of the international community to protect fundamental human rights as terrorist violence often fueled by external actors<sup>4</sup> has become increasingly common.

We aim to find out the reasons why Russian decision-makers chose to re-focus on Syria in 2015. In order to properly understand why Russia is involved in the Syrian Civil War, we should examine what foreign policy compliments Moscow's global positioning motivations and influencing other states through their relative positioning with the United States by concerns regarding the Arab Spring. Russia's involvement in the Middle East was reduced following the dissolution of the USSR. After the collapse of its Soviet patron, Syria further tightened its relations with Iran. Since the 1980s, Syria has been an important supporter of Iranian protégé, the Shia-Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah ("The Party of God"), supplying it with arms, money and training (Stern & Ross, 2013).

Russian leaders and policymakers have been recurrently observing that some states might interfere in matters concerning Russia's sovereign rights. Therefore, the only possible way to protect the critical national interests of Russia in the post-Soviet space led to the formula of defense against external sabotage. The first fear is a "conflict spillover": Russia's long, porous southern borders increase the risk of any nearby violence permeating into Russia or demanding Moscow's involvement. The second fear is instability, and subversion short of armed violence. The dangers inherent to some forms of political change—such as a succession, crisis, radicalism, or the failure of governments to maintain power—are perceived in Russia as dangerous in multiple ways (Oliker et al., 2009).

The Georgia-Russia War of 2008 has clearly demonstrated that Russia is ready to use military force when its strategic and geopolitical interests are concerned. The events in Ukraine are in many ways a repeat of the Georgian scenario, with the key difference being the fact that Ukraine occupies a geopolitical space that is far more valuable to Russia. Beyond these arguments, Putin has decided that the West has crossed a red line regarding Ukraine,

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4 The Syria Observatory for Human Rights puts the numbers at 282,283–402,819 people killed in the Syria crisis as of 25 May 2016. See, Eraméh. Nicholas Idris.(2017).Humanitarian Intervention, Syria and the Politics of Human Rights Protection.*International Journal of Human Rights* 21. N.5. 517-530.

infringing the unwritten consensus between Russia, the USA and the EU: to not use tools of political pressure and forced regime change in competition for influence in the post-Soviet space (Alexeev, 2014). Accordingly, Russian security strategy holds that the United States and the European Union are responsible for the 'anti-constitutional coup d'état' and the ensuing armed conflict in Ukraine. Ukraine is portrayed as a chronic seat of instability in Europe, and in the immediate vicinity of Russia's borders' (Pynnöniemi, 2017).

It is widely thought that the turning point in the Russian attitude to the Arab Spring was Libya. Moscow's reactions have rapidly turned critical because of the United States and its allies' military intervention into Libya, and the threat of the spreading of radical religious extremism. Similarly, in Egypt, the economic and political crises which led to the election of the Muslim Brotherhood and then its brutal repression and the reassertion of military rule highlighted the potential for anarchy and disorder in periods of radical change. All of these conflicts, made Russia deeply concerned about "dangerous waters" of the Middle East to turn possibly towards Central Europe and the Caucasus into a struggle against the United States and the EU. So, when President Barack Obama proclaimed on 18 August 2011 that 'the time has come for President Assad to step aside', thus making regime change an official US priority, the window for common ground with Russia at the UN was closed completely (Charap, 2013).

Preventing a similar development of events in Syria became an important task for Russian foreign policy. Both in Libya, and later in Syria, Russia see that she might find itself in a really dangerous situation which was not dictated by the sole desire to prevent foreign military intervention. Russia's most recent version of its Foreign Policy Concept, dated 18 February 2013, contains no mention of "color revolutions" or "Arab spring" either in the list of threats or in the section on regional priorities. The Secretary of the Security Council of Russia Mikhail Popov stated that "the new version was needed due to the emergence of new challenges and threats to Russia's security", which, in addition, "were manifested in the events of the "Arab spring," in the armed conflict in Syria, and in the situation in and around Ukraine." (Nikita, 2014). The Arab Spring added greater uncertainty to international security; the wave of democracy in the Islamic world crashed to produce expanding circles of extremism and radicalism in Syria and Iraq. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, "the Arab Spring was the harvest of seeds shown by Bush Jr. with the concept of the Greater Middle East and democratization of that entire area."<sup>5</sup> It's more likely that Moscow's

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5 Alexander Vyotsky, "Russia and the Arab Spring", *Connections* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 41-64. Lavrov said "The slogans of change and democratization [promoted by the USA] were not agreed by the countries of the region. We have seen a lifetime of revolutions and firmly insist that any changes take place by evolution, resting

policy was influenced by a range of diverse factors. Furthermore, the head of the Russian General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, argued in 2016 that the “The West is conducting hybrid warfare against Russia to weaken its resolve to safeguard its national interests in the former Soviet region.” (Gerasimov, 2016).

### 3. Sea Power at the Coasts of Syria

Why is the Russian military mission’s influence in Syrian coastal bases essential? Considering the Black Sea and NATO roles, will the Russian Naval Fleet and active air bases stay for a long time in the Mediterranean Waters? It is important to note that Russian’s maritime policy has historically been vehemently focused on obtaining free access to the oceans to the North and South of the Baltic, and to the Black Sea, via the Turkish Straits. During the Cold War, the Soviet Black Sea fleet deployed in the Mediterranean Sea was unable to compete with the US Navy 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet. In the context of the worsening situation in the Middle East, the Soviet authorities decided to set up an operational squadron in the Mediterranean. With the Memorandum of 1995, Russian authorities declared their interests in the Mediterranean (Melchionni, 2015). Russia’s naval strategy is based on the concept of “the Greater Mediterranean, a partnership with coastal states”. Russian leaders have been declaring their intention to have a permanent fleet in the Mediterranean. In January 2012, Moscow sent its only aircraft carrier to the Syrian coast. In the first week of April, the *Smetlivy*, a Russian guided-missile destroyer, arrived at the Syrian port of Tartus to carry out unspecified tasks. In 2013, the largest exercises of the Russian Navy took place. Warships of the Black Sea, Baltic and Northern fleets, as well as the long-range aviation joined them. In May 2015, Russia and China held combined exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean dubbed “Joint Sea 2015”. On the other hand, Putin also has been well aware of the possible threats of head-on confrontation with the US and its allies in Syria and the Mediterranean Sea. Moscow is increasingly making its maritime presence flags operating from the “Baltic-Black Sea-Mediterranean” axes, which have changed the security environment after the Cold War. Meanwhile, the China-Russia partnership is paying more attention to the Mediterranean, including the establishment of military bases in the Horn of Africa against NATO naval power. This “Great Power” competition brings to provide one another echoes of naval cooperation. China-Russia naval exercises took place as Mediterranean 2015, Black Sea 2015, and Baltic

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on the desires of the peoples themselves. The fact that the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa, just like the peoples in any other part of the world, want a better life, want to be respected as citizens in their own states – this is absolutely natural, and we actively support these ambitions. When the “Arab Spring” started to happen, this is what we stated. At the same time, we strongly urge external actors to obey the principle of “do no harm.” Interview with Sergey Lavrov, *Rossisyskaya gazeta*, October 24, 2012, <http://www.rg.ru/2012/10/23/lavrov-poln.html> (in Russian)

2018 as part of their wider strategic cooperation. China also aims to send military troops to Syria.<sup>6</sup> All these partnerships reflect China's interest turning to the Mediterranean, as a catalyst instrument in Syria, which aims to send military power to the Idlib region. Indeed, the Chinese military attaché in Syria, Wong Roy Chang, said that "cooperation between the Syrian and Chinese military was "ongoing," adding, "We –China and its military– wish to develop our relations with the Syrian army. As for participating in the Idlib operation, it requires a political decision."<sup>7</sup> Since early 2017, there have been occasional reports claiming that China had dispatched military forces to stamp out possible terrorism flows emanating from the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP)'s influence on China's Uyghur population. Syria is most conspicuously an economic interest for Beijing. Chinese military presence would garner more influence in the economic and geopolitical reconstruction of post-war Syria also, or actively engaged in suppressing radicalized Uyghur terrorist movements.<sup>8</sup> Beijing plans to send special operations units as military power to Syria in order to fight with Uyghur terrorists in ISIS or Chinese al Qaeda in this country. As it is analyzed in this paper, the Russian-Chinese cooperation in the Syrian Crisis is the shadow of an alliance which aims not only to change the power equation of the USA and NATO strategically under UN auspices.<sup>9</sup>

Since the collapse of the former USSR, Russia has launched a project of naval deployment in the eastern Mediterranean off the Syrian coast. Russia has also marked U.S. and Western powers as possible counter-influences in Syria. Russia is a most convenient partner for Syria, motivated by its own expectations for global balance of power positioning, a combination of arms export activity and a more strategic role belief in returning back Moscow's international presence as a dominant player with particular attention on the Middle East. In other words, Russia perceives the possibility of losing Syria as a strategic partner in the region a scenario which would reduce both of their respective weight on the global level. Russian political elites have sought to maintain the Kremlin's global diplomatic significance and ensure its place as a legitimate international influence and as a stabilizing force. Meanwhile, the new format of political priorities and values of Russia motivates it to play the role of Damascus's sponsor

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- 6 Scott.David. Russia-China Naval Cooperation in An Era of Great Power Competition. (2018, 12 June). *Center for International Maritime Security*. Retrieved From<http://cimsec.org/russia-china-naval-cooperation-in-an-era-of-great-power-competition/36773>.
  - 7 Ebrahimian.Bethany Allen. China: We Might Help Assad With the War in Syria.(2018, 10August). *The Daily Beast*.Retrieved From <https://www.thedailybeast.com/china-we-might-help-assad-with-the-war-in-syria>.
  - 8 Pauley. Logan and Marks. Jesse. (2018, 20 August). Is China Increasing Its Military Presence in Syria?.*The Diplomat*.Retrieved From <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/is-china-increasing-its-military-presence-in-syria/>.
  - 9 Korolev. Alexander. Beyond the Nominal and the Ad Hoc: The Substance and Drivers of China-Russia Military Cooperation. (2018).*Insight Turkey*. Retrieved From <https://www.insightturkey.com/author/alexander-korolev/beyond-the-nominal-and-the-ad-hoc-the-substance-and-drivers-of-china-russia-military-cooperation>.

on the international stage, thereby becoming Bashar Assad's indispensable friend. This has led Moscow and Damascus to agree on developing a mutually beneficial cooperation on the fields of economy, research, technology and trade. Energy, irrigation, oil and gas extraction, delivery, rail transport, fertilizer production, and the metal industry are among the priority areas for cooperation between the two countries (Crosston, 2014).

Protests against the Assad and the Syrian Civil War regime began in March 2011. Syria has also become a stage for a proxy war, with "regional and international players arming one side or the other". The deeper problem for Syria was likely to remain an arena of strategic competition between the Big Powers without peaceful solution.

Here it should be asked that "What are the real mission agendas of the Russian Federation in Syria: fighting terrorism, eliminating chemical weapons, controlling Mediterranean energy resources or shifting US power balance?"

Russian strategists have evaluated the ongoing Arab Spring as more of a return to the traditional values of Middle Eastern societies of incorporating a more Islamic identity, than a shift to Western-style democracy. The Kremlin has had its own experience with Islamist extremists in Chechnya and Dagestan, and obviously does not want them bolstered by extremists from the Arab world. For Putin, it was precisely this loss of power of the central state, and the devolution of power to the periphery, which resulted in a vacuum in the North Caucasus, leading to chaos, civil war and the rise of a radical anti-Russian Islamist extremist challenge. There was, therefore, a deeply held conviction, drawn from Putin's direct experience, which viewed the Western export of liberal democracy as a recipe for internal conflict, state disintegration and chaos (Dannreuther, 2015). From the Russian perspective, the Syrian conflict has offered Russian Islamists a sanctuary and a new cause. According to the Russian security service, FSB, as many as 2,400 Russians have fought –or are fighting– for IS or other militant Islamist groups, but Russian experts put the figure at a full 7,000. The war in Syria has brought forward a new generation of Caucasian Jihadists with extensive training and battle experience (Hansen, 2017). These developments have accelerated the contribution tendencies of Russian elites to the immediate military and political assistance for the Assad regime not just because it is a long-standing ally in the Mediterranean, but also because it is seen to defend the interests of the minorities in Syria.

We have to underline that the UNSC has proved itself to be unable to uphold its universal responsibility under humanitarian law to protect the Syrian civilians and hold perpetrators of mass atrocities accountable for their war crimes, and this has been perhaps the greatest

failure of the UN so far in this century. Syria has proven to be one of the most conflictual and problematic countries ever since the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. During the Cold War period, the Baas regime in Syria would collaborate with the Soviet Union, with Russia supplying financial and military sponsorship to the Assad regime against American hegemony. Syria would experience three military coups, 21 cabinet changes and two military dictatorships in the country. After the collapse of the Cicekli government, that had been wiped out by a military coup on February 25th, 1954, the Baas regime would become prominent in Syrian political life, therefore, it would occur that the Soviet Union (USSR) would have a significant place for Syria with the Baas regime ruling the country. The geo-strategic position of Syria and its proximity to Turkey and Iraq remained a noteworthy factor for the security of the balance between the Eastern and Western periphery. This characteristic of Syria would also be effective to prevent an “encirclement policy” against the Soviet Union. Unquestionably, one of the foremost reasons shaping Soviet ambitions in establishing authority on the Middle East remained different from the Western powers, particularly the regional aims of America. In relation to the Western standpoint, The Middle East meant “oil”, but the USSR was not concerned about the future of “oil” in Syria. The regional policies of the Soviet Union remained reactionary in order to hamper the American hegemony on the region. As it is acknowledged, the USSR favored ally with Syria and Egypt, two countries which do not possess any oil resources of consideration, and this stands as a key example of the USSR strategy in the Middle East. The first essential development that triggered the Syria entente with the Soviets was the Suez Crisis. The crisis that held in 1956 would increase the Soviet reputation in the region though the USA professed the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957 in order to conflict the prestige the Soviets have amassed radically. President Eisenhower anticipated the Soviets would become an exceptional political power and would not put up with the Middle Eastern countries’ rapprochement to the Soviets in this geography. Since the beginning of 1957, Syria began altering its political axis towards leftist ideologies and a communist impression in basic cities of Syria. An effective Syrian cabinet member, Halit el-Azm, who had been a strict communism sympathizer, visited Moscow for signing political and economic agreements with the Soviets in 1956. Consistent with these comprehensive settlements, the Soviets assured to deliver 500 million dollars financial and military aids which were used for the construction of a new port in Latakia, roads, railways and new energy projects of the Syrian government. It must be underlined that the Soviets would have a noteworthy place in providing national security to Syria (Kısacık & Kaya, 2016).



Since the start of the Arab Spring or Arab Awakening, analysts have been unable to reach consensus on its influences on the Middle East. On the other hand, the Arab Spring has remained one of the most noteworthy occurrences in the region, almost altering its social and political structure and redesigning a new regional order. In this conjuncture, it was an unavoidable necessity for Russia to pursue new political attitudes towards the region. Specifically, the outbreak of revolt in Syria has endangered Russia's Mediterranean policies and has triggered the undertaking of necessary precautions to ascertain national interest on Tartus and Latakia. Moscow holds that the breakdown of the Assad regime would lead to the strengthening of jihadist powers and trigger insecurity in the Caucasus and Southern Russia.

Moscow plays a significant role in the Syrian policy and economy. Russian investors have been fundamental actors, having investments up to 20 billion dollars in the Syrian economy, that is why; Russian companies have been concerned about losing their investments in Syria caused by the exclusion of Assad from the government. Additionally, arms sales hold a vital place in Russian and Syrian affairs in that it empowers Moscow's position and authority in the Syrian foreign policy viewpoint. Moscow still plans to benefit from the Syrian military infrastructure, that is termed as *Tartus*, as a part of its policy of Russian Naval Forces' continuance in the Mediterranean. (Kısacık & Kaya, 2016).

The economic ties between Russia and Syria are strong. Moscow has accepted to restore the Syrian government's debt to the former Soviet Union. Russian President Putin has maintained controlling Russian foreign policy on Syria, but he ought to consider Washington's national interests as well. In addition, President Putin's involvement in the Syrian case has quite an impact on Russia-Syrian relations. It is clearly seen that Putin does not utterly trust the Assad regime. During the 2000s, Assad started trying to repair affairs with Europe, but when he realized that the initiative had failed, the foreign direction of Syria was turned to Russia again. President Putin has been a very rational leader in Russian foreign policy. This characteristic of the Russian leader helps him refrain from a serious confrontation with the West regarding Syria. Moscow has been trying to hold a dialogue with all related parties in Syria. Until now, Russia has come into contact with all the different opposition groups in Syria. The Kremlin points out that they spent 500 million dollars on their military operation in Syria, which was initiated on September 30. Moscow has probably been trying to demonstrate that it is going to be ready to agree to certain conditions and ready to talk to the new Syrian authorities right after the collapse of the Assad regime. The fallen regimes that have formed post-Mubarak Egypt and post-Qaddafi Libya are main examples of the states supported by Russia. Moscow was one of the first countries to initiate dialogue

with the Egyptian government, making a contact right after the collapse of the Mubarak regime. The Arab Uprising was a serious threat to the relations between Russian authorities and religious leaders in the Middle East. Moscow evaluates the positive improvements of these relations as one of the main factors directly affecting the political stability of the region (Kısacık & Kaya, 2016).

Russia evaluates the USA and NATO's steady withdrawal from the region throughout the past years as an opportunity to pursue the solidification of its political, economic and military presence. Russia and Syria have deep-rooted relations. It displays steadiness for both parties' mutual interests (Kısacık, 2017). Until the downfall of the Soviet Union, Syria had been loyal to Kremlin. After Moscow's revitalization in the Putin Administration, Syria has held the status of being the first country where Moscow heavily demonstrated its presence in the Middle East. Within this framework, the reason why Moscow toughens its stance on Syria is understandable. The bilateral relationships have been very virtuous during the rule of the former president of Syria, Hafez al-Assad, the father of Bashar al-Assad, the current president of Syria. The Middle East has maintained its significance for the Kremlin, and Syria has held a central role in Moscow's regional strategy. With Russia losing interest in the Middle East for a while, Syria has also been negatively affected. Yet with Putin's term, the Kremlin has become a more dominant actor in terms of global politics, and has turned out to be more dominant in the Middle East as well. Russia holds the view that the United States is close to collapse, and thus, Moscow may well return to the Middle East and Europe as a superpower.

Following the end of the Cold War, due to the Kremlin's lack of holding an ideological context towards the region, the practicality which has frequently well-preserved its place in Russian foreign policy has become more popular. In this framework, the Kremlin does not tolerate losing Syria, owing to its importantly declining influence in the Middle East. During Putin's term, numerous mutual visits between the Russian and Syrian officials have been occurring. Thanks to this, as Syria holds the support of a great power, Russia has again professed its role in the Middle East politics. Although Syria does not have a significant amount of oil resources, the Kremlin is aware of the significance of Damascus in the Arab World. The Kremlin also perceives Syria's stance as vital for the Palestine-Israel confrontation. Besides, Moscow has noted Damascus' willingness to further ally with Russia, given the latter's confrontation with Washington. Another factor leading to the Kremlin being sensitive on Damascus is the underlying similarities which Russia underlines that the Arab Spring carries with the Soros-funded colored revolutions. Such concerns began with Serbia

in the 2000s and carried on with the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, and retained their seriousness for Kremlin (Kısacık, 2017).

The Kremlin is seeking closer affiliations with the Syrian government through the possession of a naval base in Tartus, mirroring the Soviet stance on Sevastopol. Currently, the Russian sponsorship of the Assad government against Arab Spring revolutions clearly shows Moscow's ongoing commitment to the traditional Russian naval strategy. On account of Damascus's approach of seeing Moscow as its most important and dependable partner, Syria's military has mostly chosen to purchase Russian-made weapons (Çaşın, 2015). Moreover, the Kremlin has assessed Damascus as a significant market and has invested within that milieu. Throughout this collaboration, the Russian military investments towards Syria have surpassed 26 billion dollars. Even though 90 percent of Syrian military capacity has been equipped with Soviet/Russian weaponry, 80 percent of this capacity needs to be modernized. After the embargoes against Iran and Libya, Syria has turned out to be much more significant for Russian arms exports. The Syrian Army possesses five thousand tanks of Russian origin, more than 500 aircraft, and 41 ships. Furthermore, Moscow supplies Yakhont cruise missile systems used against warships. The total cost of long-term arms agreements of the Kremlin holds with Damascus including missile technologies, weapons of mass destruction and war planes. In addition, Russia, as a creditor, is concerned about the Middle East and Northern Africa countries for more than 12 billion dollars. The sale of S300 missiles and MIG 31 military planes by Moscow to Damascus has deeply concerned Israel and the USA. But the Kremlin has highlighted the fact that this is in compliance with international law, and these exportations will endure. The missiles provided to Damascus hold 200 kilograms of warhead and a 300-kilometer range. These missiles can protect all the shores of the country. They can be fired from land, air and sea. How many missiles Russia has supplied to Syria hasn't been clarified (Örmeci & Kısacık, 2018).

The culmination of the loaning of the Sevastopol Harbor in 2017 and the stipulation of the extension of this port by Kyiv's consent have forced Moscow to search for new options. Sevastopol, being the second biggest naval base of Russia, is critically important for the maintenance of a navy operating on the open seas through passing the Black Sea, the Dardanelles and the Mediterranean. If they lost this base, the Russian Federation would become a landlocked country. The experts on this issue claim that it is difficult to transform Kaliningrad into a navy asset. The Siberian coastline, positioned at the far east of Russia, does not offer a geopolitical advantage given its inappropriateness within the context of munitions

and refueling. Therefore, Moscow has been in search for alternatives to Sevastopol, and finally, the Russian strategists have identified such an alternative at Syria's Mediterranean shores.

The Tartus Port is Syria's second greatest port after Latakia, positioned 220 kilometers away in Syria's northwest, has been hosting the Soviet/Russian naval base since 1971. During Soviet times, this port was more benefited for physical/technical equipping, replenishment and for ship repairing. Even though, the investment on this base has been constrained, Russia increased its naval presence in the Mediterranean after the 2008 Russian-Georgian War and Tartus rose to further relevance as the only Russian naval base in the Mediterranean. In 2002, Moscow and Damascus discussed this issue. In the beginning, Russia considered transforming the Tartus Port into an air and naval base to benefit both Russia and Syria. Although the lending period of the Sevastopol base has been prolonged to 2042, Moscow has not abandoned its plans on Tartus (Çaşın, 2015). As of September 2008, Moscow would have the most advanced naval base away from its territories thanks to a deal signed between Vladimir Vyotsky, the commander of Russian Navy, and his Syrian counterpart, Admiral Talib Al Berri. A resolution taken in 2009 called for almost 10 ships to be stationed in this base and for the Russian Black Sea Fleet Commandership to be renamed as the "Black Sea and Mediterranean Commandership". Moscow has declared that that it will use this base as the main commanding center for its maneuvers in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans besides the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

The importance of the Syrian energy reserves for the Russian Federation should be mentioned here. Syria remains not a fundamental hydrocarbon producer, even though it holds natural gas resources (240 bcm). Nonetheless, its plans for developing these fields, either self-reliantly or in collaboration with foreign investors, were obstructed by the internal war. For now, Syria stays more significant as a potential energy transit country. Both Russia and Iran have attached special attention to Syria's transit capacity before the civil war did erupt. Gazprom stays engaged in numerous infrastructure and refining projects in Syria through its subsidiary Sroytransgaz.<sup>10</sup> In 2008, this company, under the control by Gennadiy Timchenko, began negotiations with the Ministry of Oil of Iraq and Iraq's North Oil Company on the overhaul of the key oil pipeline linking Kirkuk to the Syrian port of Banias. Sroytransgaz would also finish a branch of The Arab Pipeline from the Jordanian border to Homs in Syria. When we come to 2009, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad vetoed the offer of Qatar

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10 Mammadov.Rauf. Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?.(2018,8March).*The Jamestown Foundation*. Retrieved From <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-middle-east-energy-forever/>

for constructing a natural gas pipeline from its North Field to Turkey and to the EU by mentioning its established approachable relations with Russia and Gazprom. As of 2010, Gazprom would reiterate its close attention to participate in the expansion of the Syrian oil and gas industry. Sergei Prikhodko, then an assistant to the president of the Russian Federation, highlighted the support of Gazprom's initiatives for the involvement of a natural gas pipeline project linking Syria to Lebanon. Following this, in July 2011, Teheran, Baghdad and Damascus would ink a pipeline deal to bring South Pars's natural gas to Damascus through Baghdad. The governments of Iran, Iraq and Syria signed a pipeline deal to bring natural gas from South Pars. But the current civil war would prevent the realization of these projects. Russian upstream firm Soyuzneftegas, under the control of Yuri Shafrannik, the former energy minister of Russia, would ink the first ever offshore oil deal in the Mediterranean basin in the Syrian sector, in December 2013, however, then cancelled the plans for the development of this project.

In February 2015, Gazprom CEO Alexander Miller would come together with the Syrian ambassador to Moscow for negotiating the collaboration in the hydrocarbons sectors. Moreover, the CEO of Gazprom's subsidiary Stroytransgaz would visit Damascus in September to meet with Prime Minister of Syria Wael Nader al-Halki to recall his company's initiatives in Syria. Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem would mention in November 2015 that Syria still anticipates to welcome not only Russian military vessels but also offshore drilling platforms. Soyuzneftegas would recall the construction of the North Gas Processing Plant, neighboring Raqqa, in December 2017, after the freedom of the city from the Islamic State. It remains still far from clear how the political map of war-torn Syria will eventually be designed. The country's significance as a transit route linking the energy-rich Gulf region with Mediterranean ports and Turkey will remain a fundamental factor in this process. With the political and military assistance to al-Assad, Russia not only targets to regenerate Syrian markets to Russian energy firms, but also tries to turn out to be an essential actor in terms of pipeline geopolitics within the region.<sup>11</sup> On the other side of the coin, Syria's offshore latent stays still covered as unidentified, even with some drilling activities seismic survey in the late 2000s, most of the times one only perceives references that it is as high-volume as that of Israel, Egypt or Cyprus. A former USGS estimation has set forth Syria's probable offshore natural gas reserves around 24 trillion Cubic Feet (700 billion Cubic Meters), which means more than double of its onshore gas, whereas its oil reserves are situated at a "mere" 50 million tons, a sixth of its onshore oil reserves. Syria's confirmed oil reserves remain 2.5

11 Mammadov.Rauf. Russia in the Middle East: Energy Forever?.(2018,8March).*The Jamestown Foundation*. Retrieved From <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-middle-east-energy-forever/>

billion barrels (341 million tons) and its 10.1 trillion Cubic Feet (285 billion Cubic Meters) natural gas reserves possibly will appear inadequate when compared with the reserves of Iraq and Iran. When the fact is taken into account that one-third of its reserves stay very weighty, and it is sticky crudes, Damascus will be obliged to soften the agreement to bring the great Russian energy companies that can frankly be effective and not only risk it. However, in geopolitical terms, it possibly will be a rational movement. Moscow has been intent on augmenting its sphere of influence within Iraqi Kurdistan (Rosneft, Gazprom Neft) also to tap into Lebanon's offshore gas (NOVATEK) and hold a stronger voice in Eastern Mediterranean politics in general. In order to reach that goal, the attainment of Damascus's oil and gas sector may well remain a very strong, non-military, instrument.<sup>12</sup>

The continuing civil war in Syria, the doubts on Assad's future, a close ally of the Russian Federation, have deeply augmented the strategic importance of Cyprus Island for the Kremlin. After long diplomatic negotiations, Russia and the Greek Cypriot Administration agreed on a military deal on permitting the benefit of Nicosia's ports by the former in February 2015. In return for this permission, Russia promised to restructure 2.5 billion Euros of financial aid supplied to the Greek Cypriot Administration in 2011. The Greek Cypriot leader Anastasiadis opposed the sanctions implemented by Brussels in his Moscow visit in which the aforementioned deal was inked and committed to the augmentation of military collaboration between Moscow and Nicosia (Kısacık, 2017).

The relations, which had then been very well between Ankara and Moscow, were affected negatively by the Syrian Crisis which is ongoing since 2011. As set forth by Aktürk, the Syrian Civil War appears to be called a "proxy war" between Ankara and Moscow. In that sense, Moscow stands as the central power and one of the five permanent members of UN Security Council, strongly supporting the Bashar al-Assad regime since the beginning of the war, and on the other hand, Ankara remains the main regional player sponsoring the Syrian opposition forces. But this support has not occurred at rhetoric or diplomatic levels, Moscow and Ankara both logistically and militarily have been assisting both parties of the war. Nonetheless, the Arab Revolts have been one of most important events to have arisen within the region, effectively forming a new social and political structure, and forging them into new regional order. Within that context, the Russian Federation has inevitably set forth brand-new political doctrines towards the region. The beginning of cataclysms in Syria has predominantly threatened Russia's Mediterranean policies, and it has prompted the establishment of required

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12 Katona. Viktor. Russia Is Taking Over Syria's Oil and Gas. (2018, 14 February). *Oil Price*. Retrieved From <https://oilprice.com/Energy/General/Russia-Is-Taking-Over-Syrias-Oil-And-Gas.html>.

precautions to defend its national interests on Tartus and Latakia. Moscow evaluates that the collapse of the Assad Regime would possibly lead up to the consolidation of jihadist forces and result in a destabilized Caucasus and Southern Russia. One should take into account the fact that Moscow does have an important position in the Syrian political and economic life. The 20 billion dollar-investment controlled by the Russian businessmen have designated the country as a central actor. Due to this, these investors have been anxious about losing these investments if the Assad Regime was to collapse. Furthermore, arms deals carry further significance in Moscow-Damascus relations, as this situation consolidates the authoritarian position of the Russia Damascus's foreign policy. When its motivations are militarily evaluated, the Kremlin seeks to use the Tartus Port as a part of its central strategy for displaying the flagship of the Russian naval power stationed in the Mediterranean geography. President Putin's involvement in the Syrian case has discreetly affected the relations between the two parties. It is noted that Putin does not completely confide in the Assad regime. For the entirety of the 2000s, Assad attempted to restore its relations with Europe, only steering the foreign policy orientation of Syria towards being pro-Russian again when he realized that initiative had failed. President Putin seems to have been a very rational leader in Russian foreign policy. This feat of the Russian leader averts grave hostility with the West concerning Syria and discards the possibility of any close affiliations with Damascus (Kısacık, 2017).

In the beginning of October 2015, Turkish airspace was disrupted by Russian air forces executing aerial operations over Syria, which was condemned intensely by Turkey and NATO, and perceived as an infringement of international law. Russia was notified by Turkey and demanded to be more cautious with the national borders. Russia defended itself claiming that the violation happened because of bad weather conditions, and that the navigation systems failed, but NATO would not take the Russian statements into account. In the beginning, Moscow considered American and Turkish political and military sponsorships to defeat the Islamic State as a necessity. Subsequently, Putin chose to develop Moscow's policies in parallel with the constitution of international coalitions in order to prevent international crises, making joint decisions as well. Russian foreign minister Lavrov laid down the idea that territorial integrity of Syria should not be disrupted. After a short period of time, Russia started to send its aerial, naval and army forces to Syrian territories and performed wide-ranging, effective military operations against the Islamic State. On the flip side, Putin maintained that his country has constantly delivered military assistance and logistics to Damascus, highlighting the official recognition of Moscow's patronage to the Assad Regime. Moscow has asserted that the reason why it has avoided stationing army troops to fight against Islamic

State's terrorist activities is that Damascus and the Kurds were better equipped for such a fight. The fact Baghdadi intelligence and coordination has eased the enablement of Moscow's posture in Iraq needs to be underlined. Additionally, the Kremlin has also worked together with PYD, giving out arms supplies. On November 24, 2015, a Russian SU-24 war plane flying over the Turkish-Syrian border violated the Turkish airspace for 17 seconds. Though notified by Turkish jets 10 times in a span of five minutes, the Russian plane continued to violate the airspace, and had to be subsequently put down by Turkish warplanes. This caused great tensions between Ankara and Moscow. Ankara alleged that the Russian aircraft was violating the Turkish airspace and was shot by Turkish war planes in compliance with the engagement rules (Albayrak, 2016). The Kremlin blamed Turkey for this event, setting and carrying out punitive policies against Turkey, including embargoes in numerous fields and the postponement of energy projects such as Turk Stream and the Akkuyu Power Plant (Caşın & Derman, 2016).

After this crisis, the then-U.S. President Obama came together with the Turkish President at the UN Climate Summit held in Paris. Speaking of the incident, Obama reflected, "Turkey has a legitimate defense right. NATO is an alliance. Washington supports Turkey's right to protect itself and its airspace." In his meeting with President Erdoğan, Obama similarly discussed possible ways of decreasing the tensions between Turkey and Russia. Obama stressed the significance of the diplomatic resolution of the problem, pointing out the fact that the main enemy was the Islamic State and the focus point ought to be fighting against the enemy. Similarly, President Erdoğan stated, "Turkey is willing to use diplomatic language. We would like to calm down the tension". When Sergei Markov, one of the closest advisors to Putin and a member of "Putin's Deputies", similarly assessed the aircraft crisis occurring between Turkey and the Russian Federation, Markov would point out the following as the Kremlin's prerequisites for the re-establishment of relations.

The recognition of downing the jet in Syrian airspace,

An excuse from Turkey due to this incident and

The sentencing of the people in charge (Caşın & Derman, 2016).

Markov also stated:

"The implementation of these three conditions lowers the tension. In case of implementing these three conditions by Turkey, for Markov, the relations between Ankara and Moscow will not return to its old days. These three conditions are



necessary to prevent an economic and diplomatic war between Turkey and Russian Federation. If these requests are met, we will avoid a diplomatic and economic war” (Caşın & Derman, 2016).

The reason of the crisis between Turkey and the Russian Federation still being left unsolved at the time should be examined in terms of the former’s energy security. Ankara still imports almost all its natural gas demand. 85 percent of this import is supplied by Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan through long term contracts and pipelines. 55 percent of the total of 49.2 bcm gas imports, costing 27 billion dollars, is met by the Russian Federation. Turkey is obliged to safeguard its import level roughly for at least ten years in harmony with the long-term deals signed with Russia. There are four pipelines transporting gas to Turkey, namely the Western Line and Blue Stream controlled by the Kremlin, and the lines supplied by Azerbaijan and Iran. While the capacity of the Azerbaijani pipeline remains at 6.6 bcm per annum, 10 bcm of the gas is supplied by Iran. The 14 bcm Western Line and 16 bcm Blue Stream remain under the control of Moscow. These pipelines remain being in standard operation, working at high capacities. It must be highlighted that 64 percent of the pipelines transporting gas to Turkey, holding a capacity of 46.6 bcm, is under the control of the Kremlin. Therefore, Turkey not only remains reliant on Russia for imports, but also regarding the import of infrastructure. An augmentation on a pipeline capacity remains only probable with TANAP, however it is far from being an option for the next 3 years. (Caşın & Kısacık 2018).

While the crisis between Ankara and Moscow remained on the table, with severe statements coming from both sides and Russia laying down restrictions towards Turkey, a significant initiative for the resolution of this crisis was undertaken by Turkey on June 24, 2016. Turkish President Erdoğan sent a letter to his Russian counterpart, including an apology for the downing of the jet on November 24, 2015, and expressing Turkey’s readiness for strengthening relations, and the intent was recognized by Kremlin. Erdogan’s remarks concerning the issue were as follows:

*“As the President of Republic of Turkey, I would like to inform the family of the deceased Russian pilot that I share their pain and offer my condolences to them. May they excuse us. We had no wish or intention to down a plane of the Russian Federation. I share their pain with my whole heart. Russia and Turkey have agreed to take necessary steps without delay to improve bilateral relations, specifically noting regional crises and the fight against terrorism.”*(Caşın & Kısacık 2018).

As the relationship between Turkey and the Russian Federation improved positively in the aftermath of Ankara's apology from Moscow, the Presidents of Turkey and the Russian Federation have met on several occasions. The main goal of the Russian Federation for Syria is not exactly the protection of the Baas regime. Fundamentally, Russia has been trying to construct a new political system in Syria, an order that is suitable for the Russian national interests in Syria. Therefore, the prior Syrian strategy of Russia has been shaping on its advantages in Syrian territories, Moscow uses the Assad regime for frontage against coalition powers. Western coalition powers understand that collaboration with Russia on Syria will provide privileges against ISIS, but they are aware of the fact that some concessions have to be shown mutually in order to reach a permanent agreement. Turkish-Russian relations must be evaluated with a number of serious conflicts which have the potential to threaten ties between two states. They have converging and incompatible interests in neighboring territories, thus Turkey and Russia have become the two powerful countries in Eurasian and Middle Eastern politics. Turkey and Russia should restore developing multidimensional affairs and this rapprochement will pave the way for positive consequences for the Middle East and Eurasian region. For instance, on October 27, 2018, a mini quartet summit was organized in which Turkish President Erdoğan with Russian President Putin, German Chancellor Merkel and French President Macron assembled for a resolution of the Syrian Crisis. At that point, some important statements were delivered by Erdoğan and Putin shedding light on the current and probable developments in Syria. Mr. Erdoğan stated that;

*“Let me first of all underline that the main reason why the Syrian conflict has turned into a global problem is because the international community has not responded to the matter adequately. For a long time, Syrian civilians and neighboring countries have unfortunately had to shoulder the burden of the problems caused by the Syrian crisis. Many countries grasped the gravity of the situation only after the effects of the crisis had reached their borders. This indifference should be brought to an end. The tragedy in Syria will only get worse unless humanitarian, political and diplomatic initiatives are taken. That is the main reason why we have come together today here in Istanbul. We underlined that it is necessary to take concrete steps in the political process by making use of the hope raised by the tranquility secured in Idlib. Within this framework, we called for establishing an early convening, considering the circumstances, by the end of the year, of the Constitutional Committee. The terror threat emanating from Syria is another important topic we addressed during the meeting. On this issue, we reached an agreement to enhance cooperation among the four countries and at the international level. 7,500 members of the terrorist organizations DAESH and PYD*

*have been neutralized and a 4,000-sq-km area has been cleared of terror as a result of operations Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch, conducted with the aim of eliminating both of the terrorist organizations at the source, President Erdoğan stated that peace, tranquility and security prevail now in such Syrian cities as Afrin, Jarabulus and Al-Bab, which Turkey has rendered safe, and that more than 260,000 Syrians have returned to these regions, with more expected to do so. Turkey will not allow terrorist groups to get consolidated along its borders or anywhere in Syria. We will never accept new faits accomplis to be imposed on the ground under the guise of combatting terrorism. We will continue to eliminate threats against our national security at the source east of the Euphrates as is the case west of the Euphrates.”<sup>13</sup>*

In parallel with Erdoğan’s statements, Russian President underscored the following issues:

*“We discussed the situation in Syria and did substantial work on agreeing approaches to the key questions of the Syrian settlement. The Joint Statement we adopted reflects the commitment of Russia, Turkey, the Federal Republic of Germany and France to further expansion of cooperation in the interest of normalizing the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, launching an effective intra-Syrian dialogue and conducting necessary government reforms and transformations. Favourable conditions for that were created thanks to the work in the Astana format with the active involvement of Russia, Turkey and Iran. The larger part of Syria’s territory has been liberated from terrorists, and the country is gradually moving towards peaceful development. All the meeting participants agree on the key point: long-term stability in Syria can be achieved exclusively by political and diplomatic means in total compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and with strict observance of the principles of the Syrian Arab Republic’s unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Importantly, it is the Syrian people themselves who must determine their country’s future. It is in this context that we discussed the prospects for joining efforts within the Astana format and the so-called small group. In our view it would contribute to the launch of a real political process in Syria and attract an increasing number of interested and constructive minded representatives of Syrian society. Above all, it is essential to launch the work of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva, which is designed to consider the fundamental questions of Syria’s future state structure. The decisions taken at the Syrian National Dialogue Congress in Sochi must be taken into account in this process. Even though the*

13 “The reason why the Syrian conflict has turned into a global problem is because the international community has not responded to the matter adequately,” *The Presidency of Republic of Turkey*, October 27, 2018. <https://www.tcgb.gov.tr/en/news/542/99419/-the-reason-why-the-syrian-conflict-has-turned-into-a-global-problem-is-because-the-international-community-has-not-responded-to-the-matter-adequately->

*level of violence in Syria has decreased considerably, the elimination of the remaining radical elements remains a crucial task. We must not let the militants with combat experience continue their criminal activity, establishing sleeper cells in our countries, recruiting supporters and spreading extremist ideology and terror.”<sup>14</sup>*

On September 17, 2018, a Russian Il-20 plane was shot by a Syrian S-200 air defense missile after it was returning from an airstrike in western Syria by Israeli F-16 planes. Moscow blamed the responsive fire occurrence on Israeli pilots expending the larger Russian plane as “cover”. Following the event, the Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov put forward his country’s current and forthcoming stance in Syria Case as follows.

*“According to information of our military experts, the reason [behind the downing] were premeditated actions by Israeli pilots which certainly cannot but harm our relations. The new measures were decided on to boost the security of its troops in Syria. Russia, in this case, is acting in its interests only; these actions are not directed against third countries, but towards defending our own military.”<sup>15</sup>*

Regardless of Russia-US rivalry, the parties reached a consensus in the aftermath of the Trump-Putin summit in Helsinki that will guarantee the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights border with Syria. Russia has endeavored for balancing Tel-Aviv’s doubts on Iran which is forming a position within Syria in terms of its strategic interests. In that manner, Putin highlighted the fact that:

*“This will allow us to return calm to the Golan, restore the cease-fire between Syria and Israel and fully guarantee the security of the State of Israel”.<sup>16</sup> Trump does state that, “Creating safety for Israel is something both Putin and I would like to see very much.”<sup>17</sup> Trump does too underscore that “We both spoke with Bibi and they would like to do certain things with Syria having to do with the safety of Israel. Russia and the United States will work jointly (in this regard).”<sup>18</sup>*

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- 14 “News conference following the meeting of the leaders of Russia, Turkey, Germany and France: Following the talks, Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron held a joint news conference,” *President of Russia*, October 27, 2018. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58935>.
  - 15 “Russia says Israeli role in Syria plane downing was premeditated”, *Al Jazeera*, September 24, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/09/russia-israeli-role-syria-plane-downing-premeditated-180924112220025.html>.
  - 16 Henry Meyer, “Putin Says He Agreed With Trump to Secure Syria Border With Israel,” *Bloomberg*, July 16, 2018. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-07-16/putin-says-agreed-with-trump-to-secure-syria-border-with-israel>.
  - 17 “Helsinki Summit: What Did Trump and Putin Agree?,” *The Guardian*, July 17, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/17/helsinki-summit-what-did-trump-and-putin-agree>.
  - 18 “Trump, Putin Vow to Cooperate on Syria, Ensure Israel's Security,” *Haaretz*, July 16, 2018. <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/trump-and-putin-hold-joint-press-conference-in-helsinki-1.6273846>.

## Conclusion

Surely the regime in Damascus will seek to regain control over all of Syria but doing so will be a difficult and costly effort. A surfeit of worrisome implications faces Assad, if he were to stay in power.

- What is the U.S. military doing in Syria, why, and on what basis?
- What is its mission, rules of engagement, and red lines?
- How will Russia maintain its influence in Syria while avoiding a prolonged military investment?

As the general thesis, this work argues that the novel foreign policy Russia has employed after the Cold War in a challenge against the NATO-EU alliance and the hegemonic superiority of the USA, is constructivist in terms of the realist paradigm, and that as with “Georgian-Ukrainian-Syrian” crises, the possibility of employing conventional power may remain as an option in the future. In analyzing Russia’s policy on Syria, I analyze that it has prioritized its own military security in this game of chess, and aspired to balance out the military, economic and hegemonic superiority in the Middle East, where the USA has enjoyed after the Gulf War of 1991. The Kremlin has turned Syria into a regional constant for the modernization of the Russian military force. Even if the Syrian Civil War were to end, the Russian Army now has a shared border with Turkey. Russia has also risen to be the most important “Playmaker” actor in the Syrian Crisis, despite the USA and the Coalition Forces. By the grace of providing military and aerial support to the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war, Russia has obtained naval and aerial bases in Latakia and Tartus, solidifying its security in the Mediterranean. As it was repositioning itself in the Mediterranean in accordance with the Syrian “Proxy Wars,” it has employed Syria in the board of chess against the US 6th Fleet and set out to balance it in the Iraqi-Yemeni-Egyptian-Iranian Gulf Line, and signed a 49-year deal in 2017 on military bases with the Assad regime, including nuclear warships. In this context, Lavrov said, “the USA has been trying to use this land to forge a would-be State over its Syrian allies, and Kurds, over all else. The USA is trying to find would-be states in a manner that is absolutely illegal and is doing everything within its power to ascertain a normal standard of life for those under its protection.”

Russia has also been able to secure some facilities which would allow aerial forces to be stationed in Southern Cyprus and would undertake maintenance on and fulfill the needs of ships. Russian Admiral Viktor Chirkov stated that the Tartus Port, carrying importance as the

last fortress, “possesses vital significance” for Russia. Moscow has formed an Anti-Access / Area Denial: A2 /AD Region over a portion of the Eastern Mediterranean from Syria to Crete. In a geopolitical sense, Dugin has claimed that the main designating factor of the era we live in now is “war.” The Russian Federation, being a model for the “Continental Civilization” and the USA, being a model for the “Naval Civilization,” are also engaged in a conflict, or perhaps, even a war, between a commerce-based system (the USA) and a civilization of valor (Russia). Dugin claims that the Kremlin has been waging a Proxy War against Washington in Western Europe and the Middle East.

Since Russia is a nuclear power, its active involvement in the Syrian Civil War has completely changed the conflict at hand, evolving the civil war from being a regional dispute to a global one. When the subject of natural gas is analyzed in specific relevance to Syria, it must be pointed out that the Russian Soyuzneftegaz firm has signed a contract, scoring research, exploration, development and manufacture deals. Moscow seeks to forge a Shiite alliance over Damascus in order to connect its power to energy routes. Additionally, Russia has made it a goal to protect its economic interests in energy markets through the sharing of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. Overall, Russia’s main goal is not the protection of the Assad regime but the holding of the balance against the US, and the preservation of the ports of Tartus and Latakia as the local outpost and logistic center alongside the Crimean military bases in the Black Sea. The Kremlin has, for the first time in history after the Cold War, obtained the support of China and ran a military drill with the Chinese navy in the Mediterranean back in January 2014, projecting a new power from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, against the USA and NATO. It has employed the most modern weapon systems during the Syrian Proxy Wars, and has reconstituted its image as a “Great Power.” Russia has coincidentally built on its arms market, gaining significant advantages over the US market through supplying S-400 missiles to Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Northern Africa countries and Egypt. The Russian political elite deems it that the “Great Powers” have interfered with its domestic affairs after the Cold War, and they seek to carry the instability, chaos and radical terrorist threats emerging after the “Colored Revolutions” and the “Arab Spring” within its own borders as a leverage.

Russia, strongly opposing the “unipolar” power balance as put forwards by the US, has returned to the Middle East with the Syrian Civil War, assuming the role of “Playmaker”. Russia is trying to balance its economic and political alliance with China through military drills. Russia has been attempting to thwart the alliance bloc the USA has founded with “Israel-UN and the Gulf States” through the Syrian Proxy War, and to block the US from

using the “Kurdish Card” in Syria. For this purpose, Russia has been formatting the “Astana Process” with Iran and Turkey and made possible for the Assad regime to stay in power. Russia has interfered in the Syrian Civil War, making it a considerably unlikely scenario for the ISIS terror wave to take root within its borders. The Russian Army has legally grounded its military presence in Syria based on the facts that the ISIS terror threat is still present, chemical weapons are being used, and that such realities make the battle legitimate. All in all, Russia has obtained the status of a permanent player in the Mediterranean. Russia has limited the USA’s and NATO’s military projection with the Tartus and Latakia ports. The energy policies of the USA-Israel-Gulf States have risen to the status of a decisive actor in the Syrian conflict. The possibility of the insurgency in Syria spreading in its own land has been avoided with the new military intervention doctrine adopted by the Russian army, and its conventional modern military might.

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## CHAPTER 9

# DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND KAZAKHSTAN REPUBLIC IN YELTSIN'S PERIOD: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to analyse the interstate relations in the Post-Soviet period. The beginning of 1990's was a turning point for the new states which were to appear after the collapse of the USSR. Regarding sovereignty and independence, different conditions occurred for the Soviet states. President Nursultan Nazarbaev's dominance of Kazakhstan's national security agenda offers a partial explanation for the cooperation, but somehow, he stayed as a prominent leader in the post-Soviet era. Yeltsin's period became crucial for Kazakhstan's national and confessional identity. Democratic elections and a national growth plan for Kazakhstan became an important challenge for the economy, national policy and international relations. It was also challenging to create new forms of cooperation with ex-Soviet partners and European countries. During the process, the Russian Federation tried to influence Kazakh policy.

**Keywords:** Russian - Kazakh relations, collapse of USSR, Yeltsin's period

On December 16, 1986, on the recommendation of M. S. Gorbachev, Russian G. Kolbin was elected as the first secretary in place of Kazakh Kunayev, who had been general secretary since 1964, at the general meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. This was an appointment that was contrary to the party norms at the time. In this case, the Republic was ruled by someone who was not Kazakh. He was not even a member of local party organizations. This was considered a national insult by the Kazakh youth and caused spontaneous protests. Between December 17 and 18, mass student demonstrations arose in Alma-Ata. During the protest, which was suppressed by the police and soldiers, 22 students were killed, more than one thousand were injured and more than two thousand were arrested. News about the events spread all over Kazakhstan and demonstrations were held in all cities. After that, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan began to clean the high schools in the republic, komsomol and party organizations. The Central Committee of the Soviet Socialist Communist Party announced the events as a manifestation of the emergence of Kazakh nationalism (Nazarbayev, 2003; Kara, 1997; Kara-Yeşilot, 2007).

During the liberalism process that began in the USSR, the Alma-Ata events went down in history as “Jeltoksan” (December) which signifies an effort to increase the political activity of the Kazakh people. In spite of the prosecution of the authorities between 1987 and 1988, informal organizations, which were initially accepted as periphery movements, started to emerge in Kazakhstan. In early 1989, the first parties emerged as an alternative to the Soviet Socialist Communist Party. G. B. Kolbin put forward the idea of using the Kazakh language in the work on the state, trying to seize their initiative, but he did not earn community support with this. In June 1989, Gorbachev had to call Kolbin back to Moscow and N. A. Nazarbayev became the new leader of Kazakhstan (Sheretov, 2003; Kazakbalasi, 1988; Alaşbek, 1987).

On April 24, 1990, the presidency was established in Kazakhstan. N. A. Nazarbayev, formerly the Supreme Soviet President of the Kazakh SSR, was elected as the first president of the Republic. On October 25, 1990, the Republican Parliament adopted a declaration that the Kazakh SSR was the sovereign state. In the declaration, it was declared that Kazakhstan as a sovereign state united with other voluntary republics and had relations with them on the basis of agreements. The declaration stressed that the most important duty of the Kazakh SSR was the revival and development of the Kazakh people. The document regulated the principles of the political and economic structure of the republic and took the first step in recognizing it as an independent subject in international law (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

However, Nazarbayev did not attempt to gain popularity in the republic by discrediting the center of unity or the communist party. During 1990-1991, he did not even once declare that

Kazakhstan should leave the SSSR. On the contrary, while commenting on the proclamation of the sovereignty of the Russian Federation on June 12, 1990, Nazarbayev underlined: "... We approach indulgently to people who are in the congress of the people's representatives of the Russian Federative Socialist Republic of Russian. However, we hope that this will not lead to the collapse of our state, because only Russia has the ability to fulfill the mission of unification..." (Gorbachev, 2007). Nazarbayev actively worked on the establishment of the new unity agreement, which was a priority for him in August 1991. In this plan he manifested himself from the outset as a moderate and pragmatic thinking politician, who understood the importance of the local rulers of that time. During the course of his work, Nazabayev met Gorbachev, Yeltsin and the leaders of the unity republics many times and tried to create a general approach for the restructuring of the USSR. Not surprisingly, Kazakhstan participated in the most active referendum on the future of the Soviet Union on March 17, 1991. Voter turnout in the Republic exceeded 88%, while 94% of votes were favored by the SSSR<sup>1</sup>. Nazarbayev signed the "9+1 declaration" on 23 April 1991<sup>2</sup>. In the meantime, he said he was personally prepared for the maintenance of the restriction of being subject to the center within the revised SSSR. He then supported Gorbachev, stating that they had ratified the new draft unity agreement which was being worked on by them (Gorbachev, 2007).

The events of the State Emergency Committee were a challenge for Nazarbayev. During the whole coup d'état, the situation remained stable in Kazakhstan. After a series of meetings on 19 August, 1991, the president made a statement of political neutrality. The statement confirmed that all power in the republic belonged to Soviet organs, but did not clarify exactly who was the contractor (Vasilyeva, 1991). He made a second statement the following day and underlined that the State Emergency Committee was of an anti-constitutional character and called on all republics involved in the union to sign the unity agreement (Nazarbayev, 2009). Nazarbayev condemned the State of Emergency Committee and won the support of Yeltsin and increased his authority among his own citizens. Although the independence of the republic was not declared after the end of the coup d'état, the sovereignty of Kazakhstan became more active. Nazarbayev was aiming to maintain the renewed unit the way it used to be and refused to participate in the signing of the Beluzezha agreements (Nazarbayev, 2003). When Nazarbayev learned that Yeltsin, L. M. Kravchuk and S. S. Shushkevich had annihilated the SSSR, he became one of the initiators of the meeting of the executives of

1 "Obitogah referanduma SSSR, sostoyavshegosya 17 Marta 1991 goda: Soobshcheniye Tsentralnoy komissii referanduma SSSR", Pravda, 1991, 27 March; Gorbachev, 2007: 242.

2 "Sovmestnoe zayavleniye o bezotlagatelnh merah postabilizatsii obstonovki v strane i preodoleniyu krizisa ot 23 aprelya 1991 g.", Pravda, 1991, 24 April; Gorbachev, 2007: 242.

Central Asian countries and Kazakhstan in Ashgabad on December 13, 1991. It was decided to unite the “Central Asian Quintet” in the Commonwealth of Independent States (*Sodrujestvo Nezavisimikh Gosudarstv*) (Nazarbayev, 2003). The Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan, the last of the parliaments of the Union republics, adopted an independent state law on 16 December (Kara-Yeşilot, 2007). On December 17, 1991, the Russian Federation announced the recognition of Kazakhstan and on December 20, Kazakhstan recognized the Russian Federation (Oğan, 2002). On December 21, Kazakhstan merged with other post-Soviet republics in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Interestingly, the documents that make up the Commonwealth was fully signed in Alma-Ata (Oğan, 2002). This shows that Nazarbayev attaches great importance to the development of integration processes in the post-Soviet space and respect of the leaders of the new states. From this moment on, the President of Kazakhstan became the main leader of the idea of integration into the Commonwealth of Independent States. In addition, Russian-Kazakh relations improved to a billetteral level.

Kazakhstan has established much closer relations with the Russian Federation from the very beginning due to its broad borders and the existence of many economic and social ties compared to other Central Asian countries (Safranchuk, 2014). From the moment of the dissolution of the SSSR, Russia and Kazakhstan established inter-state relations with each other. Their cooperation was organized according to the agreements signed in 1990-1991. The parties recognized each other as sovereign states. Both sides granted equal rights and freedoms to all citizens, regardless of their nationality, and guaranteed the cultural and linguistic freedoms of minorities living on their territory. In Kazakhstan, minorities were important for Moskow because of the considerable proportion of Russian origin. The parties agreed to respect each other's territorial integrity within existing borders. In the early 1990s, the consensus on territorial integrity protected the interest of Alma-Ata, as there were loud calls for the integration of inhabitants of Russian origin in the northern regions of Kazakhstan to Russia, as in the case of Orenburg. The Parties decided to improve cooperation in different areas, maintaining the common security system and providing the most favorable conditions for each other in terms of trade<sup>3</sup>.

Despite the efforts of Yeltsin and Nazarbayev to continue to develop Russian-Kazakh relations, after signing the Alma-Ata Agreement on 21 December 1991, the situation in Kazakhstan started to change very rapidly. Nationalism, officially condemned by the Republican administration, struck the local community at the grassroots level. The activities

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3 “Dogovor mejdu Rossiyskoy Sovetskoy Federativnoy Sotsialistiçeskoj Respublikoy i Kazahskoy Sovetskoy sotsialistiçeskoj Respublikoy ot 21 Noyabrya 1990 g.”, Vneshnyaya Politika Rossii: Sb. Dokumentov, 1996: 19-23.

of political parties and non-governmental organizations, which endeavored to rewrite the history of the country and bring down the situation of Russian population, began to be clearly felt. Kazakh authorities accelerated the use of the Kazakh language instead of Russian in the office. In response to this, the anti-Kazakh mood increased in the north of the republic. Their main spokesmen were the Russian movement “Lad” (Republican Slavic Movement) and the Kozak of Kazakhstan. Their movement saw Alma-Ata as a major threat to national security until the mid-1990s. The Kozaks were banned from wearing uniforms and forming a military unit. They described themselves as a separate ethnic group on an equal level with the Kazakhs and the Russians, and acted to establish an autonomous republic by uniting the territory of Northern Kazakhstan and Southern Siberia. They crossed the border of Russia and joined the troops of the Orenburg and Omsk Kozaks. Since the external Kozaks were not seen as separate from the Russian inhabitants of Kazakhstan, local authorities began to distrust the entire Russian population and welcomed their departure from the republic, even though they did not admit that it had become generalised (Olkott, 2003). In the beginning of 1992, a large portion of the Russian population left Kazakhstan, adversely affecting Russia-Kazakhstan diplomatic relations, though this did not cause a major crisis.

On May 23, 1992, Kazakhstan signed the Lisbon Protocol which had already been by the SSSR and United States on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive weapons. Accordingly, Kazakhstan, like the other republics emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union having nuclear weapons in its territory, and was obligated to quickly participate in the agreement on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and destroy the existing nuclear ammunition<sup>4</sup>.

Kazakhstan, which still has land issues that have not yet been resolved with its neighbors, was also under pressure from political instability and separatist movements. Even so, Kazakhstan could look at its nuclear legacy as a means of maintaining security in the event of a possible conflict with Russia or China.

Kazakhstan had 1216 nuclear warheads installed on 104 ballistic intercontinental SS-18 rockets (Kazakhstan: 20 Let Nyezavisimosti, 2011). This amount was several times greater than that of Great Britain, France and China at the time. In Kazakhstan, there was a large amount of natural uranium and non-ferrous mines needed for the production of the nuclear-powered rockets of the SSSR. High-tech complexes for the production of the latest nuclear technologies

4 "Protokol k Dogovoru mejdu SSSR i Soyedinennimi Shtatami Ameriki o Sokrashchenii i Ogranichenii Strategicheskikh Nastupitelnih Vooruzheniy ot 23 Maya 1992 g", Rossiya-Ukraina. 1990-2000. Dokumenti i Materiali, 1, 2001: 69-71.

were established on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the framework of the Soviet program on the production of nuclear-headed rockets (Kazakhstan: 20 Let Nyezavisimosti, 2011).

Kazakhstan did not have the technical means to use nuclear weapons or, if necessary, the financial means to accommodate such powerful ammunition (Kaipov, 2008). On this ground, Kazakhstan had been under great pressure from the United States since January 1992 for rapid disarmament. These western countries have become the main condition for Kazakhstan to be accepted as a country with full rights in international relations and to be provided with economic assistance (Tokayev, 2009). Thus, Kazakhstan's acceptance of a largely nuclear-free status was the result of its mutual relations with the United States, not Russia.

Nazarbayev, after signing the Lisbon Protocol on May 25, 1992, went to Moscow for official discussions. The Presidents of the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan agreed on new agreements on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance (Oğan, 2002). Russia wanted to protect its border if necessary because Kazakhstan did not have national military forces in order to guarantee the security of its southern borders. Russia would help Kazakhstan to build and develop an army. On the other hand, Kazakhstan would not object to Russia's use of military points and polygons on its territory. In the event of an attack against one of the parties in Russia or Kazakhstan as military allies, the other would give him all the necessary assistance, including in military matters<sup>5</sup>. Thus, Kazakhstan, which would be cleansed of nuclear weapons, strengthened its defense with the support of Russia. Politically, both sides respected each other's territorial integrity and borders. In the field of economy, they underlined the issues of energy, transport, and the development of the ecosystems of the Caspian and Aral Sea, providing convenience. They were also committed to developing relationships in culture, art, sports, tourism, education and health<sup>6</sup>.

Yeltsin visited Alma-Ata on 10 October 1992. As a result of the negotiations between the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, both leaders discussed the issues of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance. The two countries reached an agreement: Trade-economic cooperation, military and scientific partnership, mutual territorial integrity and the invariance of borders (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

Towards the end of 1992, Russian-Kazakh relations began to be strained due to different interpretations of the status of the Caspian Sea. In connection with the crisis in the national

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5 "Dogovor o Kollektivnoy Bezopasnosti ot 15 Maya 1992", Vneshnyaya Politika Rossii: Sb. Dokumentov, 1996: 357-360.

6 "Dogovor o Drujbe, Sotrudnichestve i Vzaimnoy Pomoshchi mejdu Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Respublikoy Kazakistan ot 25 Maya 1992 g.", Diplomaticheskiy Vestnik, 1992: 36-43.

economy, the Kazakhstan administration had adopted a policy of actively attracting Western investment to the country, particularly in the oil industry. Nazarbayev was trying to attract Western investors to the oil fields in the area of the continental shelf in the Caspian Sea. As a result, Alma-Ata proposed that every country on the Caspian Sea should be able to extract the resources in its own part of the sea. This was against Russia's point of view because Russia was in favor of the joint use of all the Caspian Sea resources (Jiltsov-Zoni-Ushkov, 2003; Oğan, 2002).

In this tension, the Russian government decided to block Kazakhstan's access to "the new type of ruble zone". Moscow seemed inconsistent and unreasonable. V. Chernomyrdin, who met Nazarbayev in December 1992 and January 1993, assured him that after the introduction of the new currency in Russia, Kazakhstan would remain in the ruble zone. However, as of 1 April 1993, when the Russian Federation began to implement monetary reform throughout the country, the Russian Central Bank refused to hand over the new banknotes to the commonwealth countries, including Kazakhstan. This decision was officially announced to Nazarbayev on June 30, 1993, when Kazakhstan actively poured out the old money leaked from Russia, thus leading to a serious failure in the republic and economic instability with arising panic (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

Kazakhstan was not yet ready to mint money because it did not have the necessary financial instruments and was worried that it might worsen its relations with Russia from a political point of view. So, Kazakhstan had to accept the extremely strict conditions of Moscow for the unification of the monetary system. At the same time, Kazakhstan had to agree with Russia on the direction of all its macroeconomic policies, compromising its economic independence. At the same time, Kazakhstan had to transfer some of its gold reserves and other high liquid assets to the common fund in exchange for the Russian ruble it used. However, after the armed clashes in Moscow in October 1993 and the shooting at the Russian parliament, the Russian government decided to support the protesters who opposed the creation of a new type of ruble zone. On October 19, Russian Prime Minister A. N. Shohin, who had gone to Alma-Ata, informed Nazarbayev that the ruble zone would not be officially created. In this situation, the president of Kazakhstan enacted urgent measures on November 15 to introduce the tenge as the national currency (Mlechin, 2010).

The above-mentioned events undoubtedly shook the Kazakh administration's confidence in Russia to a certain extent. This situation played an important role in Kazakhstan's diplomatic relations with the West. The Russian Federation expressed a desire to agree on the development of fuel-energy complexes in order to improve its relations with Kazakhstan, and

an agreement was reached on 25 December 1993. This document addresses the preservation of the shipment of Kazakh fuel to Russia and the mutual consultation of the parties on the construction of national energy programs. Russia and Kazakhstan had to take measures to ensure the stabilization of power lines, oil and gas pipelines<sup>7</sup>.

From the beginning of 1994, the Russian administration began to put the Russian-speaking people in Kazakhstan in the background of bilateral relations. Moscow had adopted the policy of establishing close diplomatic contacts, avoiding Kazakhstan's departure from its sphere of influence. In this context, Nazabayev was invited to Moscow for the first time since the start of the bilateral diplomatic relations. During this visit, which was held between 28-30 March 1994, the parties agreed on the solution of the problems in order to ensure close mutual cooperation, economic cooperation and integration, establishment of a customs union, conditions regarding use of the Baikonur space base, and a consular agreement. In total, they signed 23 agreements (Oğan, 2002). Accordingly, there would be a close cooperation on the fields of energy complexes, mining, chemical industry, transportation etc. The Baikonur space base was to be operated by the Russian Federation for 20 years for an annual payment of 115 million dollars<sup>8</sup>.

The year 1994 was critical in resolving issues concerning Russian-speaking people. With the adoption of the new constitution, all powers of the state were held in the hands of the president (Meshcheryakov, 2014). Residents of Russian origin in Kazakhstan could not obtain dual citizenship, but they were entitled to equal rights with Kazakhs (Ölçekçi, 1996).

As a result of the negotiations with the US counterparts after 1992, the Kazakhstan administration quickly attempted to eliminate nuclear weapons in the territory of the country. In November 1994, however, Kazakhstan sold 600 kg of uranium to the United States, which is enough to make 24 atomic bombs. The operation was carried out in a very secret manner and did not cause any interpretation by the Russian Federation. On December 5, 1994, during the OSCE summit in Budapest, Nazabayev, Yeltsin, B. Clinton and J. Meycor, in connection with the accession of Kazakhstan to the non-proliferation agreement, would be responsible for any damage to Kazakhstan's territorial integrity or political independence, by signing the declaration guaranteeing against all kinds of threats. Later France and China also provided

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7 Soglashenie mejdu Pravitelstvom Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Pravitelstvom Respubliki Kazahstan o Sotrudnichestve i razvitii Toplivno-Energeticheskikh Kompleksov ot 25 Dekabrya 1993 g", Byulleten Mejdunarodnih Dogovorov, No:9, 1994: 33-36.

8 Dogovor o Dalneyshem Uglublenii Ekonomicheskogo Sotrudnichestva i Integratsii Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Respubliki Kazahstan ot 28 Marta 1994 g.", Diplomacheskii Vestnik, No:9-10, 1994: 49-51; Oğan, 2002: 147.



similar guarantees. As a result, the last nuclear structure on the territory of Kazakhstan was destroyed in the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Polygon on May 31, 1995 (Meshcheryakov, 2014; Kazantsev, 2008; Oğan, 2002).

On 20 January 1995, Kazakhstan joined the agreement on the establishment of a customs unions with the Russian Federation and Belarus. This agreement revealed Kazakhstan's commitment to rapprochement with the Russian Federation<sup>9</sup>. As a matter of fact, Yeltsin and Nazarbayev signed a declaration on the enlargement and deepening of cooperation which involved economic, trade, energy, security, border protection and coordination in foreign policy<sup>10</sup>.

On April 26, 1996, the President of the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which had borders with each other, signed a memorandum of understanding in Shanghai city on solidarity in the military area in the border areas (Kazantsev, 2008).

On October 18, 1996, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on the prevention of double taxation<sup>11</sup>.

Kazakhstan had finally decided to settle the Russian-speaking population issue. In 1996, the Russian Kozaks clearly obtained the right to dress in uniform, to rally and to organize other activities. Thus, their opposition to the Kazakh administration was also substantially eliminated. At the same time, it was officially decided to use Russian language in state departments and organizations and local administrations on an equal basis with Kazakhs (Meshcheryakov, 2014; Somuncuoğlu, 2016; Oğan, 2002).

On April 24, 1997, the Russian Federation, People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed a mutual agreement on the reduction of military forces in the border regions (Babayan, 2016).

On 10 December, 1997, the capital of Kazakhstan moved to Akmolla. On May 6, 1998, the city was renamed Astana. On 10 June 1998, the international presentation of the new capital was made. In this event, Russian was not present.

9 "Soglashenie o Tamojennom Soyuze ot 20 Yanvarya 1995 g.", Byulleten Mejdunaronnih Dogovorov, No:6, 1995: 11-12; Kazantsev, 2008: 132; Oğan, 2002: 151.

10 "Deklaratsiya o Rasshirenii i Uglublennii Rossiysko-Kazahstanskogo Sotrudnichestva ot 20 Yanvarya 1995 g.", Diplomaticheskiy Vestnik, No:2, 1995: 40-42.

11 Konventsiya mejdu Pravitelstvom Rossiyskoy Federatsii i Pravitelstvom Kazahstanov Ustraneni Dvoynogo Nalogooblojeniya i Predotvrashchenii Ukloneniya ot Uplaty Nalogovna Dohod i Kapital ot 18 Oktyabrya 1996 g.", Byulleten Mejdunarodnih Dogovorov, No:6, 1998: 34-50.

In 1998, another controversial issue was resolved between the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan in relation to the division of the northern part of the Caspian Sea between the two countries. The agreement was reached on July 6, 1998, which separated the borders between Russia and Kazakhstan by a modified line that appropriately eliminated the land and bed of the bottom of the sea. Both parties would open the northern part of the sea to common use including the free passage of ships, fishing etc.<sup>12</sup>. Russia and Kazakhstan later signed the protocol to determine the geographic coordinates of the modified midline and the controversial deposits separating them (Kurmangazi, Tsentralnoe and Hvalinskoe). Accordingly, Russia received Hvalinskoe and Tsentralnoe while Kazakhstan received Kurmangazi deposits<sup>13</sup>. As well as the agreement, Yeltsin and Nazarbayev claimed a declaration on “Permanent Friendship and Cooperation towards 21st Century”. The declaration emphasized the close cooperation between the two countries in the fields of education, science and culture stating that an agreement was reached on the establishment of Russian-Kazakh and Kazakh-Russian joint universities. The parties also agreed that Yeltsin would pay an official visit to Kazakhstan in the autumn. Meanwhile, on August 17, Russia declared a moratorium that Russia could not pay its debts. Despite the extreme depreciation of the ruble, the Kazakh administration took extraordinary measures to preserve the value of the tenge, but did not succeed. As a result, it became necessary to devalue the tenge. Thus, inflation in Kazakhstan increased considerably and the republic entered into an economic crisis. This also led to a decrease in trade between Kazakhstan and Russia (Meshcheryakov, 2014; N. A. Nazarbayev, 2006).

Yeltsin came to Alma-Ata on October 12, 1998 to make official contacts. Yeltsin visited Uzbekistan the day before. He was unconscious for a moment because he was ill when he was met by İ. Kerimov at Tashkent airport. This prompted rumors that the Russian leader's health had deteriorated considerably. After that, Nazarbayev's relations with him changed significantly because he could no longer rely on his unconditional guarantee of Kazakhstan's security. The half-day visit was limited to a few hours. Nevertheless, it was emphasized that both countries would continue their co-operation to overcome economic difficulties (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

Nazarbayev came to Turkey on October 29, 1998 to negotiate the construction of the oil pipeline project “Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan” which wouldn't pass through the territory of the

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12 "Soglashenie mejdu Rossiyskoy Federatsiey i Respublikoy Kazahstan o Razgranichenii na Severnoy Časti Kaspiyskogo Morya v Tselyah Osuščestvleniya Suverennih Pravna Nyedropolzovanie ot 6 İyulya 1998 g.," Byulleten Mejdunarodnih Dogovorov, No:1, 2004: 68-71.

13 "Soglashenie mejdu Rossiyskoy Federatsiey i Respublikoy Kazahstan o Razgranichenii na Severnoy Časti Kaspiyskogo Morya v Tselyah Osuščestvleniya Suverennih Pravna Nyedropolzovanie ot 6 İyulya 1998 g.," Byulleten Mejdunarodnih Dogovorov, 2004, No:1, s.71-77.

Russian Federation and deliver Caspian hydrocarbons to Turkey. After negotiation, president of Azerbaijan H. A. Aliyev, president of Georgia E. A. Shevardnadze, president of Uzbekistan İ. Kerimov, president of Turkey S. Demirel and Nazarbayev issued the Ankara Declaration on construction of “Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan” oil pipeline and stated that their intention was to start the construction as soon as possible. This move by Kazakhstan caused anger in Russia because with such a project, Central Asia could no longer depend on Moscow for energy transport. Undoubtedly, Russia’s influence over Central Asia was also diminishing (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

At the beginning of 1999, the Russian Federation announced its readiness to withdraw state borders with Kazakhstan and to reconcile the agreed divisions. This reveals the belief that Russia’s existing borders were unchanging and allowed only some minor parts to be corrected. This was also a positive development for Kazakhstan because it began to maintain border control and thus prevented the infiltration of ideas or persons capable of causing confusion on its territory (Olkott, 2003).

On July 6, 1999, Russian-Kazakh relations faced a new challenge because the proton loaded heavy Russian missile launched from the Baikonur space base crashed shortly after the launch. Parts of the rocket full of unburned toxins fell on the steppe of Karagandinsk. Astana then announced that Russia would not be allowed any further launches from the space base until the cause of the accident was explained. In addition, Kazakhstan demanded immediate repayment of the debt exceeding 37 million dollars for use of the Baikonur space base. The ban on the use of the space base was abolished when the Russian Federation immediately met the demands of Kazakhstan (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

The new president of Russia V. Putin played an important role in solving the concrete problems observed in the Russian-Kazakh relations for the first time in connection with the fall of the rocket. As the official successor of Yeltsin, his visit to Astana on September 24, 1999, was of great importance for the Kazakh side. This was the first official visit of the highest level of the Russian administration to the new capital of Kazakhstan. During the visit, an agreement was signed in Astana on the border cooperation between the two countries between 1999-2007. After that, with the close cooperation of Putin and Nazarbayev, the problems between the Russia and Kazakhstan would be minimized and relations would reach the best level since the dissolution of the USSR (Meshcheryakov, 2014).

In 2000, the situation began to change significantly. Putin’s election as president of Russia was instrumental in achieving political and economic stability in Russia, strengthening the

position of Russia in the world arena and changing the principles of diplomacy. This also affected the immediate recovery of Russian-Kazakh relations. Thus, Russia and Kazakhstan became strategic partners and were in mutual cooperation. They discussed being active in political and military fields. They began to take quick steps to improve commercial-economic and inter-regional cooperation. They expanded the links in humanitarian fields. They set the course to deepen bilateral integration. This trend remained constant even after the arrival of the US and its NATO allies in Central Asia. Unlike Russia's relations with other countries in the region, Russian-Kazakh cooperation continued to develop at a high level and the support of the parties to each other increased much more.

## **Conclusion**

The Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan established political relations from the moment they were founded. However, in the first decade of bilateral relations, the pace of growth of trade-economic cooperation between the two countries was observed to be lagging compared to the mutual political and military alliance. In the mutual trade balance, the balance was against Kazakhstan. In this way, Russia purchased mostly raw materials and semi-finished products from Kazakhstan, and in return sold Kazakhstan finished products. Investment partnership initiatives, one of the important elements of economic cooperation, were inadequate in many areas, particularly in energy transport. Kazakhstan's efforts to limit Russia's infiltration into areas strategically important for its economy (oil, uranium industry, space exploration) and to create concrete conditions suitable for the market were among the factors that negatively affected the course of relations.

Russia's technological backwardness and its inability to participate in the modernization of Kazakhstan's economy and education system also failed the expectations of mutual agreements. It was seen that the Russian government was reluctant and inadequate to help Kazakhstan during the economic crises. This caused Kazakhstan to lose its confidence in Russia. In spite of all these economic problems, there were important developments during the reign of Yeltsin in terms of the discussions on the use of the Caspian Sea as well as the future of Russian origin people in Kazakhstan, who had high potential to cause problems. In addition, maintaining a high cooperation policy between Russia and Kazakhstan, strengthening the general defense field of the two sides, expanding the military-political and military-technical cooperation, reaching a consensus on the main international problems of Russia and Kazakhstan, and trying to observe Russia's foreign political interest by Kazakhstan. Besides this, the mutual support of the sides to each other was strengthened and many positive steps were taken to improve inter-state cooperation in the cultural-human sphere.

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## CHAPTER 10

# THE ASTANA PROCESS AS AN INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM FOR MIDDLE EASTERN REGIONAL SECURITY: THE RUSSIAN MISSION

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### ABSTRACT

This chapter deals with the problem of stability in Syria in the wake of the Civil War. The research underlines the main purposes of the Astana Process as being an instrument for regional security. Recent events threaten global security, especially the ones that happened in Syria make cooperations necessary to keep balance in the region. As the conflict started, the main actors were involved in a process and new forms of dialogue and cooperation appeared in international relations. The actors involved in the Syrian crisis had their own interests. According to some NGO's, the reasons for the Syrian crisis are energy sources and oil in the region. As a result of the Civil War, a prosperous country became a hostage in a world of disasters. The Syrian government is confronted by the political and military opposition and this situation has shown an immaturity, disunity and inconsistency of the government in solving problems. At the same time, it must be said that the opposition is part of the Syrian people, on which the future of the country depends. Currently, the Syrian crisis, despite the decrease in the intensity of fighting, is still far from being resolved. And the Astana process with its new stages appearing should help in resolving this conflict. The Russian Federation, Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran became key actors interested in the stabilization of regional confrontation between the government and the opposition forces. The Astana Platform became an instrument of international regional security policy.

**Keywords:** Astana process, UNSC, Syrian crisis, Syrian Government, Syrian opposition groups

## **1. The Narrative Basis Of United Nations For Syrian Crisis**

The UN Security Council is the so-called traditional instrument of the Yalta-Potsdam world order, which was based on the principle of consensus of five permanent members - Russia, Great Britain, China, the USA and France. The rules of procedure of the Council were objectively responsible for the alignment of forces in the international arena, upholding the principle of consensus of the five permanent members. The desire of the system of international relations is to become multipolar and, as a result, the objective strengthening of new centres of power, so it raises the question of the applicability of the UN Security Council methods to new conditions. In this sense, it is especially important to consider the activities of the Security Council in relation to Syria. A situation in which non-members of the UN Security Council (Iran, Turkey, KSA, Qatar, etc.) have active roles, poses the question of how much of the discussion and decisions the Council and the decisions represent the political balance of power in the international arena, and how this will affect the possibility of implementing international obligations at a domestic level.

The UN Security Council had a significant impact on stabilization and in resolving the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. Between the years 2011-2017, 22 different resolutions were adopted in the field of chemical demilitarisation of Syria; termination of hostilities; humanitarian assistance to the population; the fight against terrorism, etc.

We also need to pay attention to the briefings that are held on a regular basis at the UN Security Council, led by the UN Deputy-Secretary-General for Syria (A. Amos, S. O'Brien, M. Lowcock) on topics such as humanitarian assistance to the region. It has been considered as an attempt by the West to maintain its influence on the world stage, which was acquired during the unipolarity period, and the Council was united with human rights and humanitarian organisations.

Throughout the Syrian crisis, the Russian Federation is under all sorts of pressure. At the beginning of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, the United States and its allies were determined to obtain a legal basis to overthrow the ruling regime of Bashar Assad with the support of the UN Security Council. Thus, attempts to approve the relevant draft resolutions and a very aggressive response to the opposition from Russia led to the politicisation of the work of the UN Security Council, to the accumulation of mistrust among its members, to an insufficient analysis of the threats created, as well as the refusal to exchange information and other forms of cooperation. The hostility in the UN Security Council was caused not only by the diminishing capabilities of Western countries. First of all, Washington was unprepared to



conduct a military operation to overthrow Bashar Assad, bypassing the UN Security Council. In addition, the US experience in Iraq in 2003, when the Americans used force without the direct consent of the Council and also in Libya in which the humanitarian consequences of a broader interpretation of the United States and NATO appeared, were settled in the UN Security Council resolution 1973 (2011). In this regard, Washington and its allies continued to demand the adoption by the UN Security Council of sanctions for their actions. In the Syrian context, the task was to ensure the adoption of a Security Council resolution on Chapter VII of the UN Charter under any pretext: violation of human rights, worsening of the humanitarian situation, use of chemical weapons, need for transitional justice, etc. The next step of Western allies would be supported by the decision of the Council and by the Security Council's subsequent adoption of a new resolution on the conduct of military operations. In this context, the documents proposed by the West link the imbalance in the signals of the parties to the conflict, the unilateral criticism of the Syrian Republic authorities by the special administrative bodies and the automatic punishment of Damascus for non-compliance with the resolution provided for in the texts. The Russian initiative to adopt a UN Security Council resolution to solve the problem of Eastern Aleppo at the end of 2016, which forced the armed opposition to distance itself from Jabhat-en-Nusra (whose activities are prohibited in the Russian Federation), also did not receive support. The collective position of the Western partners in the UN Security Council was stronger than Russia's position. For example, for the United States, Great Britain and France, there was no need to veto Russian draft resolutions that did not receive the required nine votes in support. Despite the politicisation of the work of the UN Security Council and the high level of confrontation, a number of important resolutions were agreed on various aspects of the Syrian dossier: political, humanitarian, counter-terrorism, etc.

Generally, many resolutions have been adopted to resolve the conflict in Syria. Firstly, Security Council Resolutions 2042 and 2043 (April 14 and 21, 2012, respectively), consisted of six points and developed by the UN / LAS (League of Arab States) Special Envoy for Syria K. Annan are adopted. They declared about monitoring the cessation of armed violence in Syria (UNSC-R 2042, 2012). This Mission lasted 90 days. The UN Secretary General was supposed to submit a report to the UN Security Council on the result of the work, so after two weeks he could not determine what results the Mission brings about. Then, gradually, the United States began to lead the process of folding. Thus, the UN Security Council resolution 2059 (July 20, 2012) extended the UN Observation Mission for a final period of 30 days (UNSC-R 2059, 2012). Later, the United States refused to enter into the co-authors of the advisory decision, which contradicted the US line to forcefully overthrow the Bashar al-Assad regime.

Secondly, resolutions on global issues which were related to the issue of chemical weapons and also were proposed by V. Putin during a meeting at which Russian-American agreements were reached on chemical demilitarisation in Syria in Geneva on September 14, 2013. The document recorded modalities for the destruction of the chemical arsenal with the leading role of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The Syrian government and all opposition groups were fully obliged to cooperate with the OPCW and the UN, providing inspectors with access to chemical weapons storage facilities and personnel. The resolution obligated the states neighbouring Syria to prevent chemical weapons and their delivery vehicles from falling into the hands of non-state actors (UNSC-R 2118, 2013).

However, after the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 2218, the issues related to the use of chemical weapons did not leave the Council's agenda. In resolution 2209, adopted on March 6, 2015, the UN Security Council welcomed the intention of the Director General of the OPCW to include Mission reports in his monthly reports to the UN Security Council (UNSC-R 2209, 2015). The next step was the establishment of the Joint OPCW-UN Investigation Mechanism by the UN Security Council resolution 2243 on August 7, 2015 to identify organisations, groups or governments that used chemicals. The text also called for the provision of full access to all necessary points, to all persons and materials in the Syrian Republic, which were deemed relevant to control by the Joint Investigation Mechanism (UNSC-R 2235, 2015). The construction and installation's work was to coordinate the mission in the process of establishing the facts of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Resolution 2319, adopted on November 17, 2016, also included a paragraph urging the Joint Investigation Mechanism to pay attention to the identification of individuals, organisations or groups associated with ISIS or Jabhat-en-Nusra who used chemicals as weapons in the Syria, as well as obliging the countries of the region to provide the Joint Investigation Mechanism with information on the access of non-state actors to chemical weapons and their components (UNSC-R 2319, 2016).

The UN Security Council unconditionally rallied on a platform of the necessary development for effective steps to combat against the terrorist organizations in the region. At the initiative of Russia, a statement made by the Chairman of the UN Security Council declared the inadmissibility of transactions for the purchase of oil from the territories occupied by Jabhat-en-Nusra and ISIS (UNSC-R, 2014). UNSC resolutions 2170, 2178 (August, September 2014), and 2199 (February 2015), adopted at the initiative of Russia and resolution 2249 (November 2015) (UNSC-R 2249, 2015) proposed by France, outlined a number of measures to counter the spread of terrorism, including the fight against financing and the recruitment of

militants, the measures against extremist ideology, the inadmissibility of oil and oil products trade with ISIS and Jabhat-en-Nusra, the supply or transfer of weapons to them. Furthermore, the resolutions also outlined the ways of interaction between states in this scope, including extending the exchange of information. In this regard, it should be underlined that the terrorist threats faced by Western countries themselves and other states, including the attacks in Sousse, Ankara, over the Sinai Peninsula, in Beirut and Paris in 2015, which were condemned by the UN Security Council resolution 2249 had a significant role (UNSC-R 2249, 2015).

Thirdly, the Security Council is actively engaged in humanitarian issues. Russian diplomacy has managed to make progress in the humanitarian sphere. Because of the declaration of the Chairman of the Security Council (UNSC-R, 2013) and the resolutions of the Council on humanitarian assistance to the people of Syria - 2139 and 2165 (2014) that facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected population. This not only helped to save lives, but also contributed to the de-escalation of the situation - after all, during the distribution of aid, the Syrian authorities tried to negotiate a temporary ceasefire with the armed opposition. On the other hand, the UN Security Council supported such local reconciliations only after persistent demands from the Russian side.

After a period, the shortcomings of the armed opposition in Syria became more apparent especially because of the presence of jihadist groups. The counter-terrorism agenda was increasingly added to the issues of resolving the conflict in Syria. The first step in this direction was the adoption at the initiative of Russia of a statement by the chairman of the UN Security Council, which dealt with the inadmissibility of transactions for the purchase of oil from the territories “Jabhat-en-Nusra” and ISIS. Subsequently, a number of the UN Security Council resolutions in 2014 and 2015 (No. 2170, No. 2178, No. 2199, No. 2249, No. 2253) noted the seriousness of the terrorist threat in Syria. A set of measures were taken to counter the spread of the jihadist threat, including the financing and recruitment of militants, measures against extremist ideology, the inadmissibility of oil and oil products trade with the Islamic State and Jabhat-en-Nusra.

The compromises on the current problems of the Syrian conflict reached the UN Security Council site made it possible to address the main problem defined as creating the format for resolving the armed confrontation. In August 2015, a statement by the Security Council Chairman was unanimously approved, in which he supported the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria S. de Mistura to implement the Geneva Communiqué and, in particular, his initiative to create four Working Groups, within discussion of various aspects of the conflict resolution by the Syrians themselves should be organized. This statement was the

first unanimously approved by the UN Security Council document in which all Council members were able to prescribe a consensus to solve the Syrian crisis. This was followed by the approval in the UNSC resolution No. 2249 of two statements by the International Syrian Support Group of October 30, 2015 and November 14, 2015 that became important consensus documents of interested states and international organisations with written stages and a sequence of steps to resolve the Syrian crisis.

These documents aimed to underline the list of existing problems and the procedure for solving them. In addition, the UN Security Council resolution adopted in December 2015 with the number 2254 recorded the separation of roles of foreign intermediaries and the parties to the conflict proper. This resolution enshrined the principles of settlement (statements by the International Syria Support Group and the Geneva Communiqué), the format of consultations of all influential external players (Vienna) and the mechanisms of interaction for the preparation of inter-Syrian negotiations under the auspices of the UN Special Envoy for Syria S. de Mistura. The resolution entrusted the UN Security Council with control over the implementation of the agreements reached in Vienna. In other words, a number of controversial issues were moved beyond the UN framework, which allowed the organisation to maintain neutrality and impartiality, and to continue discussions in several negotiation formats at once. As a result, a certain hierarchy of institutions of inter-Syrian settlement was formed. The function of interaction with the Syrian parties - both political organisations and groups in the region were assigned to the International Syria Support Group (“Vienna Format”), which, among others, includes Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Egypt. Moreover, the major powers have the opportunity to adjust and control the settlement process in the framework of the UN Security Council meetings. Thus, the sequence of Russian diplomacy allowed to postpone the most radical options for resolving the Syrian conflict and ensured the achievement of important compromises, which enabled the consolidation of the principles of the settlement of disagreements.

It is also important to remember that the system of collective measures to ensure international security, provided for by the UN Charter, includes a number of matters, such as the prohibition of the threat of force or its use in relations between states (paragraph 4 of article 2); measures for the peaceful resolution of international disputes (chap. VI); disarmament measures (arts. 11, 26, 47); measures for the use of regional security organisations (chap. VIII); temporary measures to stop the violation of peace (Article 40); compulsory security measures with and without the use of armed forces (Article 41 and Article 42). Deviation from these principles and norms is violation of international law (Chernenko, 2015).

As a result, we may consider that the UN and the platform of the UN SC became an important actor in the Syrian crisis. Discussions in the framework of UN SC did not stimulate a faster solution of the crisis but created the conditions for searching the most suitable and acceptable solution.

## **2. Astana Process As An Instrument For Political Discussions: Periods And Results**

The first round of negotiations was held in Astana on January 23-24, 2017. In addition to the government delegation of the Syrian Republic and the bloc of armed groups, the talks in Astana were attended by representatives of the Russian Federation, Turkey, Iran - the guarantor countries of the Ceasefire Agreement, as well as the UN (Vashiteh, 2018).

The second round of negotiations in Astana to resolve the Syrian conflict took place on February 15-16, 2017. The delegation was attended by the UN delegation, the delegation of guarantor countries - Russia, Iran and Turkey, the delegation of Damascus under the leadership of the Permanent Representative of Syria to the UN, Bashar al-Jaafari, the opposition delegation of nine people, led by the representative of the "Jaysh al-Islam" Mohammed Allush. The representatives of the UN, USA and Jordan acted as observers.

The third round of talks in Astana on the Syrian settlement took place on March 14-15, 2017, however, this time it was without the participation of the armed opposition. Due to the lack of opposition, the planned general plenary meeting did not take place, and the parties focused on consultations in various formats. The guarantor countries reviewed the current state of the ceasefire and the situation in the areas that joined the ceasefire. The parties discussed and reached a preliminary agreement on the creation of a working group on the release of prisoners, as well as on further demarcation of the moderate opposition from terrorist groups. In addition, a discussion began on a difficult issue that is the creation of a constitutional commission, and also a completely new topic was raised on the restoration of the destroyed ancient monuments of Syria, in particular, the legendary Palmyra.

The fourth round of negotiations in Astana, held on May 3-4, 2017, was more successful. The representatives of the UN, the representatives of guarantor countries (Russia, Iran and Turkey), the Syrian government and of the opposition, as well as the representatives of the United States and Jordan participated in the negotiations. During the second day of negotiations, one of the most important documents of the Syrian negotiation process was signed - the Memorandum on the establishment of "four security zones" in Syria, which were in the province of Idlib, in parts of neighboring Latakia, Aleppo and Hama, in the north of

the province of Homs, in Eastern Ghouta, as well as “in certain areas in southern Syria, in the provinces of Deraa and Kuneitra.” (Hazem, 2020).

On July 4-5, 2017, the fifth round of talks in Astana, which was about a Syrian settlement, was held. It was preceded by a series of bilateral meetings at an expert level. The negotiations were attended by delegations of key actors; Russia, Turkey and Iran, the Syrian government and the Syrian armed opposition, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Syria Steffan de Mistura, as well as the representatives of Jordan and the United States as observers (Irhin, 2018). The main topic of the negotiations was the definition of de-escalation zones. Following the meeting, the delegations of the guarantor countries - Iran, Russia and Turkey - adopted a joint statement in which they declared their determination to strengthen the cessation of hostilities and the inadmissibility of its violation, as well as to help build confidence between the parties of the conflict. The guarantor countries welcomed the establishment of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on de-escalation and approved its regulation. The sixth round of the international meeting on Syria in Astana was held on September 14-16, 2017.

The talks were attended by delegations of the Government of Syria and the Syrian armed opposition, the guarantor countries of the cessation of hostilities, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Staffan de Mistura, as well as high representatives of Jordan and the United States. As a result of negotiations, the creation of de-escalation zones in Syria was announced: the north of the city of Homs, in the suburbs of Damascus - in the East Guta region, on the Syrian border with Jordan - in the province of Deraa, as well as in the province of Idlib. In addition, a number decisions were taken: the rules for the operation of security bands, checkpoints and observation posts; the rules for the use of military force by units of the De-escalation Control Forces; the mandate to deploy a De-escalation Control Force; the regulations on the joint Iranian-Russian-Turkish coordination centre to consider issues related to compliance with the cessation of hostilities in de-escalation zones (Irhin, 2018).

The seventh round of the Syrian talks in Astana was held on October 30-31, 2017. The negotiators discussed the proposal of Russia to hold a Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue (CSND) in Sochi, which was initiated by the Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Valdai Forum. As stated by the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Syria, Alexander Lavrentyev, the decision to hold the CSND outside Syria was made and one of the reasons for this was the problem of security. According to the Astana-7 outcome document, the guarantor countries agreed to discuss the congress as part of the Geneva process under the auspices of the UN. The Joint Statement of Iran, Russia

and Turkey was adopted, which reflected issues of a comprehensive settlement of the Syrian conflict. The statement emphasizes progress in the fight against terrorism and the elimination of ISIS / Daesh, Jabhat-en-Nusra and other terrorist groups as a result of the realization of the project of de-escalation zones. It also noted the need to increase of international humanitarian assistance and the importance of expanding measures trust, such as the release of detainees, the transfer of the bodies of the dead and the search for missing persons.

According to Press-Release on UN sources on 27 January 2018, “the Secretary-General, having been fully briefed by his Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, and taking into account the statement by the Russian Federation that the outcome of the Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue, which will be held in Sochi on 29 and 30 January, would be brought to Geneva as a contribution to the intra-Syrian talks process under the auspices of the United Nations in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015), has decided to accept the invitation of the Russian Federation to send a representative to attend the Sochi Congress. The Secretary-General has designated Mr. de Mistura for that purpose (*UN*, 2018).”

On December 21-22, 2017, the eighth international meeting on Syria was held in Astana. Following it, a joint statement was adopted by Russia, Iran and Turkey, and also two other important documents about humanitarian de-mining in Syria and on the release of detainees / hostages. The countries guaranteeing compliance with the cessation of hostilities reaffirmed a firm and unchanging commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic; expressed satisfaction with the implementation of the Memorandum on the establishment of de-escalation zones in the Syrian Arab Republic on May 4, 2017; reaffirmed their determination to continue cooperation in the interests of the complete and final elimination of ISIS, Jabhat-en-Nusra (banned in the Russian Federation) and other terrorist organisations; noted the need for effective and immediate international steps to restore the unity of Syria and to achieve a political settlement of the crisis in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2254 through an inclusive, free, fair and transparent process that is led and carried out by the Syrians themselves. This process aimed at adopting a constitution that enjoys the support of the Syrian people and holding free and fair elections with the participation of all eligible Syrians under appropriate UN supervision (Hazem, 2020).

On January 25–26, 2018, the ninth round of inter-Syrian consultations was held in Vienna with the participation of representatives of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the opposition Syrian Negotiating Committee, mediated by UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura. The discussions continued on a political settlement of the Syrian crisis in accordance with UNSC resolution 2254 and based on the agreements reached

within the framework of the inter-Syrian negotiation process. The particular emphasis was placed on the problems of constitutional reform, as well as preparations for the upcoming Congress of the Syrian national dialogue in Sochi. In the Vienna meeting between the Russian side and the UN representatives, the parties reached a mutual understanding on a number of issues. Moscow noted the high significance of the statement said by Staffan de Mistura following the results of the Vienna round, and also welcomed the decision of the UN Secretary General A. Guterres to send a special envoy for Syria to Sochi to participate in the Congress.

The tenth round of negotiations in the Astana format was held on July 30-31, 2018. For the first time, it was not in the capital of Kazakhstan, but in Sochi. During the negotiations, the formation of the constitutional commission of the SAR was discussed: on the first day of negotiations, consultations were held on the composition of candidates for the commission from civil society in Syria, on the second day the UN special envoy, Staffan de Mistura, presented the preliminary lists of the commission and methods for appointing its members to the guarantor countries. The discussion also focused on issues such as the extension and expansion of the ceasefire in Syria, the release of prisoners and abductees, and the situation around the province of Idlib.

The eleventh round of negotiations was held on November 28-29, 2018 as part of the Astana format. It was attended by delegations of guarantor countries of Russia, Turkey, Iran, the UN special envoy, the representatives of the Syrian government and the opposition. At the talks, Astana-11 discussed the current situation in Syria. They also highlighted the importance of strengthening tripartite agreements. The guarantor countries examined the situation in the Idlib de-escalation zone in detail and confirmed their readiness to fully implement the Idlib Stabilization Memorandum. The guarantors also confirmed their determination to continue cooperation in the interests of the final elimination of ISIS, Jabhat-en-Nusra (whose activities are prohibited in the Russian Federation). The guarantor countries condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria and welcomed the successful implementation of the “pilot project” as part of a working group to release the detained hostages, transfer the bodies of the dead and search for the missing. They also discussed joint efforts to launch the Constitutional Committee in Geneva, which will enjoy the support of the Syrian parties in accordance with the decisions of the Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue in Sochi and decided to intensify their consultations at all levels in order to complete its formation as soon as possible. The participants in the talks expressed gratitude to the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, for his efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis, as well as for constructive interaction and cooperation with the Astana format.



On April 25-26, 2019, the twelfth round of negotiations took place. Russia, Turkey and Iran adopted a joint statement following the results of the international meeting on Syria in the Astana format. They reaffirmed their continued commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. The guarantor countries appreciated the enormous contribution of the first President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to the launch of the Astana format and its successful work. They expressed sincere gratitude to the Kazakh authorities for hosting the twelfth International Syria Meeting in Astana in Nur Sultan.

The thirteenth meeting within the Astana format took place on August 1-2, 2019 with the participation of Russia, Turkey and Iran. Following the meeting, they agreed to take specific measures to ensure the safety of civilians in Idlib. The guarantor countries of the Astana process responded positively to the participation of the delegations of Iraq and Lebanon as new observers of the Astana format and expressed their belief that they would contribute to the establishment of peace and stability in Syria. They also discussed the completion of the formation and the launch of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva in accordance with the decisions of the Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue in Sochi.

The fourteenth round of talks between the Russian Federation, Turkey and Iran in Astana took place on December 10-11, 2019 in Nur Sultan. The participants of the meeting welcomed the start of the Syrian Constitutional Committee in Geneva and condemned attempts to create self-government and illegal initiatives in the north-east. Iriy under the pretext of combating terrorism.

The Astana format is based on the interaction of three countries - Russia, Turkey and Iran. Its strength was the presence of both a “great power” and two large regional players. This made it possible to provide an operational solution to specific problems, which contributed to the division of responsibility between members of the “triangle” for the implementation of certain agreements, and did not allow for the disunity typical of the International Syria Support Group. Moreover, in view of the multiplicity of forces that were at war in Syria, it was envisaged that other interested states should be involved in work on the Astana platform.

The launch of the Astana format by Russia, Turkey and Iran became a powerful incentive for the UN to resume the political process of the Syrian settlement: the next round of inter-Syrian negotiations was launched, which Russia has sought since April 2016.

The parallel work of the Astana and Geneva formats for the Syrian settlement made it possible over time to identify the most popular formulas for discussing various aspects of the Syrian crisis, the optimal combination of interested parties needed to resolve the conflict in modern conditions.

### **3. Russian Mission in Astana Process**

The Syrian conflict from the very beginning had the format of a regional crisis with the participation of many external actors. The first to be involved in the conflict were the United States and its allies - Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which were primarily interested in changing the current regime in the person of President Bashar al-Assad. Iran and Russia joined the settlement of the Syrian crisis in the second stage, upon the request of the Syrian government in order to support the Syrian people. The Russian approach to the Syrian crisis from the very beginning was expressed clearly as follows: conducting direct negotiations between the parties about the conflict without international intervention and regime change.

Russia's position on the Syrian crisis was expressed quite unambivalently in the work of the United Nations. In the framework of the UN Security Council, Moscow has consistently acted and advocated (Hazem, 2020) for a polycentric world order and the achievement of equal and indivisible security for all countries, with unconditional respect for sovereignty and the right of people to independently choose their development path. Moscow also advocated to the formation of a broad anti-terrorist front with the participation of all countries to the best of their ability and with the consent of the states in whose territory the fight against terrorists is conducted, with the central coordinating role of the UN and the observation of the principles and norms of international law.

Russia has pursued and is pursuing an active policy to promote a peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis within the framework of the Geneva negotiations under the auspices of the UN. Russia takes side with the inter-Syrian dialogue, advocating for its inclusiveness, supports the idea that the future structure of the country should be determined by the Syrians themselves, while maintaining continuity in government and also in secular and multicultural nature of the state.

In addition to participating in the Geneva talks on Syria, the Russian Federation initiated the creation of the Astana site. The Russian Federation prevents the politicisation of the "humanitarian dossier" and the pressure on the government of the Syrian Arab Republic (SAR), and it opposes the creation and use of the so-called "international mechanism for conducting investigations of individuals who carry responsibility for the most serious crimes under international law committed in the SAR since March 2011." (Vahshiteh, 2018)

Russia pursues an active policy to promote a peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis within the framework of the Geneva negotiations under the auspices of the UN, supports the inter-Syrian dialogue. The Russian Federation is advocating for inclusiveness of Syrian civil discussions and supports the idea that the Syrians themselves should determine the future

structure of the country, while maintaining continuity in government and also in the secular and multicultural nature of the state. Russia has managed to advance a settlement agenda based on the Russian regulatory approach: direct negotiations between the parties of the conflict without international intervention and regime change. At the Geneva-2 talks in Syria in January 2014, differences in the positions of Russia and the United States regarding the role of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the future transitional government remained, but Assad's departure, at least, was no longer a precondition for direct negotiations between the Syrian opposition and the government.

According to Salih Bıçakçı, there is an important project related to sphere of energy sources between Russia and Syria which is about 960 million USD\$. It shows the depth of Syrian-Russian relations (*BBC, 2019*). This fact was determined as a part of Russian national interests in the region but it is necessary to remember the limited financial sources of the Syrian government for humanitarian aims. Therefore, Russian-Syrian cooperation appeared as a way to investment in the economy.

According to the Turkish experts, the peace process in Astana played a huge role in reducing tensions and ensuring a ceasefire in Syria. On December 20, 2016, following the results of negotiations in Moscow, the foreign ministers of Iran, Russia and Turkey adopted a Joint Statement on agreed measures aimed at revitalising the political process aiming to end the Syrian conflict.

Iran, Russia and Turkey have affirmed respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, democratic and secular state.

The Syrian conflict has been lasting for seven years. After the victory over ISIS, achieved with the decisive role of the Russian Aerospace Forces, the prerequisites for decisive progress along the path to ending the internal conflict and political settlement of the crisis that divided Syrian society have developed. However, after the military operation, Moscow became one of the main mediators of the conflict settlement. With the Russian active participation, it became possible to make a qualitative breakthrough in the framework of the Astana negotiation platform. In Astana, at the negotiating table, both representatives of the government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the armed opposition met. It should be underlined that they had not been represented in the Geneva discussions before. As the permanent result of the direct dialogue in Syria, the "de-escalation zones" that significantly reduced the level of violence in the Syrian conflict were created (Kuz'min & Sokolov, 2018).

Furthermore, the loss of Syria as an ally in the Middle East could lead to the weakening of Russia's geopolitical aspirations in the Eastern Mediterranean. Russia has a logistics point in the Syrian port of Tartus. This strategic objective, despite its modest scale, is important in terms of the presence of the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean Sea, especially in light of Russia's intentions to strengthen its geopolitical role in the Middle East. In addition, since Russian foreign policy is currently gaining an ideological dimension, and also as the Russian Orthodox Church is becoming one of the Kremlin's key political allies and partners, the defence of the declining Christian minority in Syria and the Middle East as a whole seems to be turning into one of its new geopolitical interests.

In addition, Syria has been supplied by the Russian defense industry for decades. Syrian army uses Soviet and Russian weapons, and some Syrian officers have been trained in Russia (*Carnegie*, 2019). That is why Russian Mission aims to determine all the actors of the civil war and to reveal the most acceptable solution for all opposition groups and Syrian government. The Syrian opposition is divided into traditional and new. The traditional Syrian opposition includes those parties and movements that are aimed to change the political regime in the state. The new opposition is represented by all participants in the project movement directed against B. Assad. It arose spontaneously in April 2011 during the prevention of riots in the city of Deraa by army units. The events that took place in this city were marked by strong anti-government protests throughout the country, which was presented in the form of a full-scale war (Arbatov, 2018).

To take all thoughts and interests in the region into the agenda, The Russian Mission insisted on Constitutional Committee with participation of the liberal opposition groups. The creation of the Constitutional Committee required negotiations throughout the year. In Sochi on January 30, it was decided to create a constitutional committee at the Syrian National Dialogue Congress. The main condition of the peace process in Syria, which was prescribed by Security Council Resolution No. 2254, was the formation of a Constitutional Committee under the auspices of the United Nations based on constitutional reform in Syria.

De Mistura argued that the Constitutional Committee would consist of three groups of 50 people, each representing government, the opposition, and civil society.

The lists of committee members from the Syrian government and of the opposition were agreed in September. The question was about the third group, which were represented by civil society. All parties involved in this issue feared for a certain advantage by any party in the future committee. Later, on December 14, Foreign Minister S. Lavrov confirmed the

readiness of the list of representatives from civil society and said they could hand it over to De Mistura. On the eve of the Geneva meeting, Çavusoglu substantiated the confirmation of the list, despite the insistence of Damascus in representing the loyal forces of state authorities (Kulai, 2018).

## Conclusion

The Syrian conflict has been going on for the last ten years since 15 March 2011. After the successful results against ISIS troops achieved with the decisive role of the Russian Air forces, prerequisites have been formed for decisive progress towards ending the internal conflict and political settlement of the crisis that separates Syrian society.

From the very beginning, the Russian Federation took an active part in the negotiation process on Syria under the auspices of the UN. However, after the military operation, Moscow became one of the main mediators of the conflict settlement. Because of Russia's active participation, it became possible to make a qualitative breakthrough within the framework of the Astana negotiation platform.

In Astana, at the negotiating table, both representatives of the government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the armed opposition met with the ability to present their political positions as they had not been represented in the Geneva discussions before.

Thus, Russia, Turkey and Iran consider the Astana process as the only effective mechanism that allows them to make correct decisions. The Astana format allowed the cessation of hostilities in Syria, the creation of de-escalation zones and the restoration of normal life there.

The expansion of dialogue between the countries contributed to the creation of bilateral and multilateral mechanisms of interaction both at the governmental and expert levels, which enabled them to form a system of control over the development of the situation in the conflict zone and the implementation of agreements.

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## CHAPTER 11

# UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT-COOPERATION NEXUS IN TURKEY-RUSSIA RELATIONS: 2011-2016\*

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyze Turkey-Russia relations within the period of 2011 and 2016. Since the selected time period in bilateral relations has been characterized by rapid rapprochement after a severe political crisis, the study particularly concentrates on the impact of the Su-24 crisis caused by the downing of a Russian jet in 2015. The paper in this aspect aims to give an answer to the question of how bilateral relations between Turkey and Russia have recovered from the detrimental effects of the 2015 crisis towards the achievement of high-level political cooperation within a short period of time. In order to analyze this research question, the study draws on the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism as a theory of foreign policy analysis in international relations. The study in this respect is divided into three parts. While the first part intends to evaluate how the change of relative distribution of power in bilateral relations have affected the course of political relations between Turkey and Russia, the second part focuses on the impact of domestic factors that stem from internal political developments in both countries. The last part, on the other hand, attempts to complement this analysis with an overlook on the individual dynamics by analyzing the impact of state leaders for the resolution of the Su-24 foreign policy crisis. In this endeavor, the paper attempts to validate the argument that the dramatic change in Turkey-Russia relations is the outcome of intertwined relations between structural factors, internal political developments, and individual dynamics.

**Keywords:** Turkey-Russian relations, Russian Jet Su-24

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## Introduction

Being the only Russian aircraft to be shot down by a NATO member since the Cold War, the Su-24 crisis led to the beginning of a process determined by economic sanctions and worsened political relations. On 24 November 2015, Turkish authorities announced that they had shot down an unidentified aircraft as a response to a violation of Turkish airspace, and later that the aircraft was a Su-24 Russian aircraft. Turkey's justification had formed around the argument that, although several warning signals had been sent to the aircraft crew to halt its airspace violation, they had not received any reply from the aircraft and decided to shoot it down. Turkey later stated that there had been two unidentified aircrafts violating Turkish airspace. After Turkey's warning signals, one of the aircrafts left the airspace while the second one continued to violate Turkish airspace for 17 seconds and was shot down due to its continual violation (Henry, 2016).

After the downing of the Russian aircraft, different arguments were framed by the authorities of the two states. According to Turkish officials, the incident was in compliance with international law because Turkey previously declared that it would implement new engagement rules due to the ongoing destabilization and military threats to Turkish territorial space. For this reason, Turkey drew on the argument that, although several warning signals (10 times in 5 minutes) were sent to the Russian aircraft to end its violation of Turkish airspace, the Russian jet did not give a reply. Though Turkey's new engagement rules clearly stated that any airspace violation would be responded to without any prior warning, Turkish authorities emphasized that several warning signals had been sent to the Russian aircraft. As the last resort, however, Turkey had to hit the Russian jet (Henry, 2016).

In contrast to Turkey's arguments on the downing of the Russian jet, Russia's policy-makers have insisted that it was a disproportionate reaction given by Turkish authorities. Besides, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that the jet had not even violated Turkish airspace since it was at that time flying over one kilometer distance from Turkish territorial space. Additionally, Russian authorities rejected that there had been a warning signal sent by Turkish authorities prior to the downing of aircraft. Moreover, Russian authorities claimed that similar airspace violations in small scale had been observed due to operational requirements but Turkey had not resorted to any similar strict measures. Russia therefore drew on the argument that it had absolutely been a disproportionate act and incompatible with the requirements of customary international law (Özertem, 2017).



In response to the downing of the Russian jet, the Russian President issued a Presidential Decree that envisioned a package of economic sanctions against Turkey. As a retaliatory step in the economic sphere, Russia's restrictions had targeted particular import goods in addition to sanctions that directly targeted Turkish citizens working for Russian businesses. Russia's sanctions even included a ban on Russian tour operators selling trips to Turkey and also the cancellation of the visa exemption that had previously been agreed on by the two countries (The Guardian, 2018).

Considering that Russia was Turkey's second largest trading partner, the economic effects of the Su-24 crisis brought about serious consequences as did its political impact. During the implementation of sanctions, it had been considered that Turkish economy was affected due to the loss of the large numbers of Russian tourists who regularly visit Turkey in addition to the sharp decrease in the amount of imported goods to Russia in the field of agriculture (BBC News, 2018).

In addition to economic consequences of the Su-24 crisis, the main political consequence of this incident has been observed in Turkey's declining political and military capacity in Syria. Although Turkey had attempted to carry out more effective policies before the Su-24 incident, the crisis put Turkey's operational capacity in an unfavorable position, and it has even restricted Turkey's ability to control PYD activities in order to secure its southern border from PKK threat (Sputnik News, 2017).

As an example of how the Su-24 crisis has hindered Turkey's active military operations in the field, Russian authorities have disregarded the possibility of a military operation in northern Syria by designating it as an attempt of invasion which needs to be resisted by Russia. On February 4, 2016, the Russian Defense Ministry spokesman, Igor Konashenkov stated that:

*“We have good reasons to believe that Turkey is actively preparing for a military invasion of a sovereign state – the Syrian Arab Republic. We're detecting more and more signs of Turkish armed forces being engaged in covert preparations for direct military actions in Syria”* (Sputnik News, 2017).

Moreover, Russia's attempts to discourage Turkey's political capacity in Syria have even reached the level of overt accusations against Turkish authorities. For example, the Russian Defense Ministry spokesman, Konashenkov, claimed the existence of an alleged link between Turkey and some terrorist organizations in Syria.

Surprisingly however, the same short period between 2011 and 2016 was characterized by another turning point in Turkey-Russia relations. After a deteriorating period, the two states managed to carry out various cooperation attempts in the political and military fields. Moreover, the political cooperation attempts between the two states culminated in joint military operations in Syria along with the dynamic phase of the Astana process, which aims to end the Syrian war under the aegis of Turkey, Russia, and Iran.

Therefore, in a short span of time, political relations between the two states witnessed a rapid transition period from economic sanctions towards the actualization of high-level political cooperation.

In order to find a viable answer to the question of which factors led to the rapid betterment of bilateral relations from the negative atmosphere of the Su-24 crisis to the positive atmosphere of ongoing political cooperation, the study drew on the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism as a theory of foreign policy analysis.

Through finding an answer to this question, the study intended to understand whether the factors that led to the rapid development of Turkey-Russia relations after a process of political crises could be examined under the categories of systematic, state-level, and individual factors.

By establishing a correlation between dependent and independent variables, neoclassical realism distinguishes itself from other variants of realist theories. According to the representatives of this theoretical view, the analysis of international relations needs to be supplemented by additional variables. Norrin Ripsmann explains these variables under the categories of leader images, strategic culture, state-society relations, and domestic institutions (Ripsmann, Jeffrey & Lobell, 2016).

While the term “leader image” deals with the influence of decision-makers in international politics, the term “strategic culture” concentrates on the ability of political and military institutions to mobilize societal resources for particular policy aims. On the other hand, “state-society relations” focus on the impact of domestic actors and interest groups over foreign policy-making processes (Ripsmann, Jeffrey & Lobell, 2009).

From the point of these arguments, the study added two intervening variables for the analysis of Turkey-Russia relations. While the first intervening variable concentrates on the impact of leader images in the crisis-resolution process, the second intervening variable aims to interrogate how respective state-society relations in Turkey and Russia affect their foreign policy outcomes.

The intent of adding the impact of leader images as an intervening variable has the purpose of assessing the role of state leaders in overcoming of the Su-24 crisis. The incorporation of the second intervening variable (i.e., state-society relations), on the other hand, aims to examine whether the autonomous positions of foreign policy executives from the constraining factors in domestic politics such as institutional oversight on foreign policy decisions enabled the two state leaders to achieve rapid normalization in bilateral relations.

Another point that distinguishes neoclassical realism from structural realism becomes visible in the notion of the balance of power. According to a neorealist view, states tend to enact counter-balancing measures against rising powers (Smit & Snidal, 2008). Because of the zero-sum approach of structural realism, which presupposes that the gains of one state equals the loss of others, structural realism argues that states apply to balance-of-power politics in order to achieve security for state survival (Walt, 1990).

In contrast to the above-mentioned view, neoclassical realists put forward another explanation for alliance formation besides the balance-of-power theory. Randall Schweller, for example, argues that the balance-of-power theory overstates the importance of security problems. This, in effect, leads to a misreading for the explanation of alliance formations (Rose, 1998).

According to Schweller, the achievement of security is not the main motivation of international politics. Instead, he claims that states tend to act in accordance with the expected gains rather than immediate threats. Schweller explains it through the notion of bandwagoning, which presupposes that states tend to act with more powerful actors in order to gain more benefits. According to this view, states apply to the method of bandwagoning in order to benefit from opportunities in the international system (Schweller, 1994).

The usage of bandwagoning on the basis of expected utility confers another advantage for the analysis of foreign policy problems. This advantage is especially evident for the distinction between status-quo and revisionist states. While balancing policies are enacted with the aim of sustaining the existing international order against rising threats, bandwagoning is implemented by the desire of achieving additional gains from international politics (Walt, 1990).

The utility of applying the concept of bandwagoning for the analysis of Turkey-Russia relations is twofold. One of these fields is observed through Russia's presence in the Syrian Civil War. Since Schweller's theory of bandwagoning rests upon the idea that states that pursue revisionist strategies look to exploit policy opportunities, like power vacuums in

regional politics, Russia's military presence in Syria seems to reflect its regional and global ambitions in terms of Schweller's presumption of expected utility (Notte, 2016).

On the other hand, the concept of bandwagoning confers another theoretical utility for the explanation of Turkey's sidelining with Russia in the Syrian Civil War. In contrast to the initially opposite positions of the two states, the current efforts for further cooperation such as the introduction of Astana peace process under the aegis of Russia, Turkey, and Iran illustrate that Turkey prefers to realign with Russia instead of the predictions of the balance-of-power theory (Flanagan, 2013).

The question of why Turkey prefers to realign with Russia rather than enacting balancing policies despite Russia's increasing political and military presence in Turkey's neighborhood stands as a disjuncture from the perspective of the balance-of-power theory. This discrepancy, on the other hand, constitutes a convenient field of study for the implication of Schweller's concept of bandwagoning.

Additionally, neoclassical realism makes a distinction between restrictive and permissive strategic environments. While restrictive international environments refer to the imminency of foreign policy threats, permissive international environments point out the absence of immediate challenges against state security. From this distinction, neoclassical realists argue that the two types of international environments are expected to bring about different foreign policy strategies. While restrictive international environments compel states to implement short-term strategies between the choices of balancing and bandwagoning, permissive international environments allow states to carry out long-term strategies outside the narrow alternatives of balancing and bandwagoning (Ripsmann, Jeffrey & Lobell, 2016).

For example, the combination of a restrictive strategic environment with the immanency of direct security threats enhances the decisive influence of leader images. In such circumstances, other intervening variables such as the impact of a domestic group's orientation are expected to fall behind the influence of individual dynamics. The figure below demonstrates how the coexistence of a restrictive environment and immanency of security threats increase the importance of individual actors (Ripsmann, Jeffrey & Lobell, 2016).

		Degree of Systemic Clarity (High to Low)	
		High Clarity	Low Clarity
<b>Nature of Strategic Environment (Restrictive to Permissive)</b>	Restrictive Environment	<i>Leader images and Strategic culture</i>	<i>Leader images and Strategic culture</i>
	Permissive Environment	<i>Strategic culture, Domestic institutions, and State-society relations</i>	<i>Indeterminate—all four clusters could be relevant.</i>

**Source:** Norrin M. Ripsmann, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro and Steven E. Lobell, (2016). *Neoclassical Theory of International Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 95.

Given that the study took its dependent variable from the rapid normalization of bilateral relations after the Su-24 crisis, the independent variable is formulated around the question of how the post-Cold War period has affected the relative distribution of power among the two states. More precisely, the study in this regard interrogates the question of whether the dissolution of the Soviet Union reduced the necessity of counter-balancing policies from Turkey's foreign policy objectives vis a vis Russia.

In addition to the formulation of independent variables, the study added two intervening variables for the analysis of Turkey-Russia relations. While the first intervening variable concentrates on the impact of leader images in the crisis resolution process, the second intervening variable aims to interrogate how internal political developments in Turkey and Russia affected the course of their bilateral relations.

From this point of view, the study argues that Turkey is located around a restrictive environment due to the security threats of Syrian Civil War. This situation, in effect, compels Turkey to be torn between the alternatives of balancing and bandwagoning. Unlike permissive strategic environments that give room for long-term strategies in the absence of immediate security challenges, Turkey's positioning under the restrictive environment of the Syrian War required the implementation of either balancing or bandwagoning strategies. In relation to this view, the study in the following part argues that Turkey's realignment with Russia -despite their initially divergent positions in Syria- reflects the realities of this restrictive strategic environment.

## **1. How does Neorealism Explain Turkey-Russia Relations?**

The neorealist tradition in international relations explains the changing dynamics in bilateral relations by taking the relative power capabilities of states as the starting point of analysis. According to this view, the implementation of counter-balancing measures takes

place against rising threats. The rise of threats, on the other hand, is understood by the increase in material capacities. As the gap of material capacities between states, enlarges the necessity of implementing counter-balancing policies also increases due to the perception of rising threats. The decreasing power gap, on the other hand, diminishes the importance of balance-of-power politics (Welch, 2014).

Although neoclassical realists mostly agree with this analysis, they argue that two other factors are required to explain systemic changes in bilateral relations. These factors, according to them, consist of threat perception and domestic variables. Therefore, the evaluation of Turkey-Russia relations after the Cold War era from a neoclassical realist perspective are supposed to concentrate on three interrelated variables: relative power capacities, threat perceptions, and domestic variables (Rose, 1998).

Neorealist thinking suggests that the comparison of material capacities help researchers to draw conclusions about the individual foreign policy choices of states. According to the results of this comparison, it becomes possible to conclude whether balancing policies are required (Ripsmann, Jeffrey & Lobell, 2016).

This logic of comparing material power resources also confers an advantage for the evaluation of Turkey-Russia relations. According to the changing dynamics in these three pillars of material power, it becomes possible to realize why Turkey-Russia relations during the initial stages of the post-Cold War period displayed a relative rapprochement of cooperation like in the field energy politics (Aktürk, 2007).

Accordingly, the comparison of material capacities also enables one to differentiate the initial stages of the post-Cold War period from the early 2000's, when Turkey began to feel the requirement of balancing policies as a result of Russia's assertive policies in Turkey's neighborhood.

According to the studies that aim to analyze Turkey-Russia relations from a structural point of view, the dynamics of change in bilateral relations need to be explained in terms of structural changes after the Cold War period. Şener Aktürk, for example, applied this logic of comparison to the analysis of Turkey-Russia relations after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Aktürk, 2014).

In his studies, Aktürk compared how the three pillars of material power gap between Turkey and Russia changed over the course of the post-Cold War era. Through comparing the shifts in economic, military, and population sizes in this period, Aktürk reached the conclusion

that the initial stages of the post-Cold War period brought about a convenient environment for rapprochement in Turkey-Russia relations. According to him, the main reason behind this rapprochement was the result of the reducing power gap in terms of material power (Aktürk, 2007).

To begin with the economic dimension of this diminishing power gap, Aktürk stated that Russia's economic difficulties led to a considerable decline of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while Turkey's GDP increased twofold in comparison to the Russian economy during the 1990's.

In terms of military strength, Aktürk argues that Russia's internal problems in the Chechen conflict illustrated how its conventional military capability and power projection ability were exposed to a visible reduction after the Cold War while Turkey's successful military advancement against the terrorist organization of the PKK, like in the case of the capture of the PKK's leader in 1999, displayed Turkey's developing military capacities (Aktürk, 2007).

Like the reducing power gap on the basis of economic and military strength, the demographic features also signaled a similar trend in this comparison. As a result of the secession of the Caucasus and Central Asian states in addition to Ukraine and Belarus from the Soviet Union, Russia's population retreated vis a vis Turkey's steadily increasing population growth.

Since the military, economic, and population sizes between the two states became closer during the 1990's, Aktürk claims that the seriousness of balancing policies against Russia lost its justification among Turkey's foreign policy goals (Aktürk, 2007).

As a result of this diminishing material power gap between the two states, Turkey-Russia relations gained an impetus for rapprochement (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016). Instead of implementing counter-balancing measures, two states began to interrogate whether they may manage to enlarge potential fields of cooperation. In addition to the mutual efforts to enhance cooperation in energy policies, such the construction of Blue Stream pipeline, Russia became a new alternative for Turkey's attempt to diversify its foreign policy options. Especially in the field of defense policies, Turkey's desire to acquire technology and to transfer and develop an indigenous defense industry that was not backed by NATO members led Turkey to find a new partner in Russia (Aktürk, 2014).

The implementation of the same comparison for the current political events on the other hand does not validate the theoretical propositions of structural thinking because Russia's assertive policies in this period constituted an adverse impact on Turkey's security priorities.

For example, while Russia's increasing naval power in the Black Sea region increased the material power gap in favor of Russia, the 2008 Georgia intervention showed that Turkey's northern borders were exposed to potential political instability (Özertem, 2017).

Moreover, Russia's military capacities in the Black Sea region displayed a visible increase as a result of its annexation of Crimea following the Ukrainian crisis in 2014. As part of Russia's State Armament Program, spanning between 2011 and 2020, a new complementary military program was endorsed in the Black Sea region. In this aspect, the Russian Black Sea Fleet was strengthened by the inclusion of four vessels between 2015 and 2017 (Erşen, 2017).

Furthermore, Russia's Armament Program was intended to improve its naval capabilities to carry out cruise-missile strikes that might confer additional advantages for Russia in order to reach beyond its near proximity. Russia's deployment of the S-400 missiles system to the region is considered an important step in establishing an anti-access/area-denial zone (*The National Interest*, 2018).

These military moves, on the other hand, constituted a contrary position when compared to the political efforts of Turkey and Russia during the 1990's. Especially, the political efforts to establish a regional security mechanism under the framework of BlackSeaFor and Black Sea Harmony, for example, had been backed up by the littoral states of the Black Sea region. In addition to the importance of these efforts in terms of establishing regional mechanisms, they were also the reflections of Russia's diminishing material capabilities. Due to the relative power decline in this period, Russia preferred to achieve regional security through the facilitative mechanism of regional organizations.

The changing power relations during the 2000's, however, resulted in a different direction. As a result of a relative increase in Russia's material capabilities, these regional efforts were put in a less important position. Instead of a regional collaboration among littoral states for the achievement of security in the Black Sea, changing dynamics in Russia's material power led to the implementation of individual policies.

This policy view was also supported after the political results of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and Russia's active presence in Eastern Ukraine and Syria. In this atmosphere, Russia embarked on a decisive modernization program of its Black Sea fleet and also strengthened its military forces in Crimea.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, in this respect, explained this political change by arguing that, "Russia will continue to strengthen its forces around the Black Sea in order



to neutralize the security threat in the Black Sea region from NATO.” (*The National Interest*, 2018).

In addition to Russia’s strengthening its position in the Black Sea region, another area that witnessed Russia’s assertive policies was Georgia. Through its support of South Ossetia’s secession, Russia’s 2008 military intervention in Georgia resulted in the increasing military presence of Russia in Turkey’s northern neighborhood (Allison, 2014). Moreover, Russia’s ongoing military intervention in the Syrian War has led to a visible advancement of its political and military existence on Turkey’s southern borders (Dannreuther, 2012).

Furthermore, the initially diverging positions of the two states in the Syrian War enhanced the potential security challenges that Turkey encountered after Russia’s military intervention in Syria (Ünver, 2015).

Consequently, Russia’s assertive policies in the 2000’s constituted an adverse impact on Turkey’s security priorities. While Russia’s increasing naval power in the Black Sea region increased the material power gap in favor of Russia, the 2008 Georgia intervention showed that Turkey’s northern borders were exposed to a potential political instability. Additionally, Russia’s decision to directly involve itself in the Syrian War resulted in its increasing military presence in Turkey’s southern neighborhood (Aktürk, 2017).

As a result of these factors, it is pertinent to raise the question that, from the perspective of structural realism, why Turkey was expected to carry out counter-balancing policies due to Russia’s assertive movements. However, the question of why current Turkey-Russia relations are characterized by the efforts of cooperation instead of potential sources of divergence illustrates the inadequacy of merely applying systemic factors to the analysis of Turkey-Russia relations.

Since neorealism claims that an evident increase in military capacities is expected to require the implementation of counter-balancing policies, the current Turkey-Russia cooperation in the resolution of the Syrian conflict stands in contrast to the premises of neorealist theory. According to the premises of neorealism, an appropriate response to Russia’s assertive policies in this aspect needs to develop along the line of counter-balancing policies.

Given that relations between Turkey and Russia are overshadowed by Russia’s foreign policy actions in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean, it is proper to ask the question of how current cooperation between the two states takes place despite Russia’s assertive actions around Turkey’s northern and southern borders.

This in turn necessitates the incorporation of state-level and individual factors as intervening variables. For this reason, the next part aims to interrogate the internal political factors that influenced the current course of bilateral relations.

## **2. What is the Role of State-Level Factors in Bilateral Relations?**

Since neoclassical realism claims that domestic political actors within state organizations may represent varying foreign policy visions, a research concentrating on political groupings in Russian politics is expected to yield an answer to the question of how these political groups position Turkey's role in their respective foreign policy visions (Ripsmann, Jeffrey & Lobell, 2016).

The study in this aspect argues that a Eurasianist perspective as the dominant policy view in Russian politics among these political groups attaches a special importance to rapprochement in Turkey-Russia relations.

The origins of Eurasianism in Russian politics lies in the 19th century political debates for the determination of optimal foreign policy orientation that Russia needs to follow between the alternatives of Westernizers and Slavophiles (Zimmerman, 2015).

As a result of philosophical movements during the 19th century, Slavophiles in this period advocated that Russia had a unique characteristic which required a different path of development than Western countries. Westernizers, on the other hand, supported the idea that Russia needed to adopt the features of Western civilization, including its political system and cultural traits (Zimmerman, 2015).

After the disintegration of the USSR, the division between Westernizers and Slavophiles was revived in a new geopolitical setting. In a similar vein to the 19th century intellectual movements, political debates in this period concentrated on the question of whether Russia should follow a Western developmental path or, instead, pursue its own unique characteristics outside the scope of the Western example. For the latter view, the main argument was gathered around the theme that Russia has unique historical and geographical features and these differences require Russian politicians to implement a different developmental path (Nugraha, 2018).

According to the arguments of Westernizers in Russian politics during the 1990's, Russia's development in economic and political spheres rested on the incorporation of a market economy along with a liberalized political system of parliamentary democracy (Senderov, 2009).

For the neo-Slavophiles, the main endeavor was to struggle for reunification with Belarus and Ukraine. This view found its repercussions, particularly, in economic cooperation efforts in addition to attempts for the establishment of a customs union with these states (Nugraha, 2018).

Neo-Eurasianist in this atmosphere took up the anti-Western sentiments of Slavophiles on the basis that Russia needs to implement its own unique developmental path. Instead of theoretical discussions between Westernizers and Slavophiles, the neo-Eurasianist view also preferred to give more importance to the real political problems taking place around Russia's immediate vicinity. For the purpose of reinstating Russian influence in the Caucasus region and Central Asia, this political view also became a theoretical justification for Russia's attempt to restore its status in international politics. In addition to the Russia-Georgia War in 2008, political developments in Ukraine as a result of the EU's rapprochement with Ukraine exacerbated the anti-Western side of the neo-Eurasianist view (Senderov, 2009).

For the aims of Eurasianists, it is apparent that Russia is required to establish strategic partnerships with third countries. Among these partnerships, for example, Alexander Dugin, the main representative of neo-Eurasianist thinking in Russian politics, pays special attention to Turkey's geostrategic significance. According to him, realignment in Turkey-Russia relations is a vital requirement on the grounds of Russia's achievement of a great power status and gaining leverage against Western influence in the context of its regional neighbors. Furthermore, Dugin argues that Turkey-Russia realignment needs to be consolidated through the extension of this strategic partnership towards Iran. In his book, "Eurasian Mission: An Introduction to Eurasianism," Dugin clearly describes this situation as follows:

"Our main regional partner in the integration process of Central Asia is Turkey. The Eurasian Idea is already becoming rather popular there today because of Western trends that have become interlaced with Eastern ones. Turkey acknowledges its civilizational differences with the European Union and recognizes the importance of Eurasianism for its regional goals and interests, as well as in countering the threat of globalization and a further loss of its sovereignty. It is vitally imperative for Turkey to establish a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation and Iran. Turkey will only be able to maintain its traditions within the framework of a multipolar world. Certain factions of Turkish society understand this situation, from politicians and socialists to the religious and military elites. Thus, the Moscow-Ankara axis can become a geopolitical reality despite a long period of mutual estrangement." (Dugin, 2014).

According to this view, the optimal policy option for Russia is to resist a unipolar world order that is dominated by US unilateralism. This, in turn, requires implementing particular policy initiatives that enable the consolidation of a multipolar international system. However, the establishment of such an international order is considered to lie in the restoration of Russia's lost influence in Eurasia. Eurasianists, in this regard, see Russia's growing assertiveness as a prerequisite for the realization of their foreign policy visions in order to gain a great power status on an equal basis vis a vis the Western states (Dugin, 2014). More precisely, the foreign policy orientation of Eurasianists serves for Russia's grand strategic adjustment to gain an equal status in world politics. This policy view, in turn, renders Eurasianism to adopt a pragmatic policy view. This pragmatic side, on other hand, enables the selection of balancing and bandwagoning policies under the requirements of different circumstances. Instead of a fixed orientation, balancing and bandwagoning turn into complementary instruments for Russia's grand strategic orientation from the perspective of Eurasianism (Shlapentokh, 2007).

These views of Eurasianists, on the other hand, are considered to have a direct influence over the foreign policy objectives of Russian decision-makers. It is therefore needed to analyze how these policy views over the prospect of Turkey-Russia relations represent the policy activities of Russian decision-makers. In this regard, it is pertinent to remember that Russia's current foreign policy activities are described by two key terms. While the first dimension of this term concentrates on the pragmatic side of the Russian President, the other dimension refers to Russia's overemphasis on the necessity of establishing a multipolar international order, which in effect refers to implement counter-balancing measures against US influence (Tellal, 2017).

Given that Dugin also establishes a direct linkage between Russia's multipolar objective and Turkey's role in this endeavor by saying that, "Turkey will only be able to maintain its traditions within the framework of a multipolar world," it is plausible to argue that the foreign policy aims of Russian decision-makers coincide with the policy views of Eurasianists.

From the perspective of this view, the resolution of the Su-24 crisis appears to be strictly linked with the abovementioned policy vision. Despite the initially souring bilateral relations under the pretext of Russia's economic sanctions on Turkey, both states have managed to bring about a rapid normalization in their relations. These rapidly changing dynamics in bilateral relations therefore support the argument that the Eurasianist foreign policy perspective gives a special importance to Turkey's constructive role for the implementation of Russia's strategic goals on the basis of multipolarity in world politics (Tellal, 2017).

In order to achieve this goal, however, the Eurasianist perspective emphasizes the necessity of consolidating Turkey's realignment with Russia, as in the case of the current bilateral relations for the resolution of the Syrian Civil War (Piet & Siamo, 2016).

### **3. The Impact of the 15 July Coup Attempt in Turkey**

Like Russia's domestic views that enabled the normalization of bilateral relations, internal political developments in Turkey also brought about positive results for the development of Turkey-Russia relations. The consequences of the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016 constituted a major turning point for the prospect of Turkey-Russia relations (Kalkışım and Erdoğan, 2018, pp. 339-410). As a result of Turkey's dissatisfaction with regard to the US's attitude towards this terrorist attack, Russia's overt support to Turkey brought about a positive effect toward overcoming the negative impact of the Su-24 crisis (*Foreign Affairs*, 2016).

Apart from the severity of this incident for Turkey's internal political structure, the event indirectly contributed to the normalization of Turkey-Russia relations due to the unwillingness of Western states to accede that the coup attempt had been executed by the terrorist network FETO. While the Western reaction to the coup attempt displayed a low level of support for Turkey's political acts and brought about the resentment of Turkish decision-makers, Russia's overt support to Turkey was evaluated as a sign of mutual willingness to normalize bilateral relations after the Su-24 crisis (Özertem, 2017).

As a result of this support, the Turkish Foreign Minister stated that, "Russia gave us unconditional support during the attempted coup. We want to thank President Putin and all of Russia's officials for that support" (*The Moscow Times*, 2017).

The unwillingness of EU states to articulate their overt support to Turkey's political measures after the coup attempt gathered around two arguments: violation of democratic principles and the in compliance with the rule of law due to the purges of FETO-linked groups in several institutions by Turkish authorities.

In response to these criticisms from the EU states, Turkish politicians stated that the EU members intended to utilize political consequences of the 15 July coup attempt in order to reflect their anti-Turkey sentiments along with their personal hostility to Turkish President Erdoğan.

On August 10, 2016, the Turkish Foreign Minister also argued that, "Unfortunately, the EU is making some serious mistakes. They have failed the test following the coup attempt. Their issue is an anti-Turkey and anti-Erdogan sentiment." (*Reuters*, 2017).

Behind Turkey's souring relations with the EU lies the argument that the member states either preferred to apply a wait-and-see policy or preferred to sustain their silence about the perpetrators of this terrorist act. As Turkey restored democratic mechanisms following the coup attempt, the EU states then felt the obligation of stating their support to Turkey, albeit in an ambiguous way (Kakışım & Erdoğan, 2018).

While Turkey tried to take necessary precautions due to the damages caused by the FETO terrorist organization, the EU states insisted on the rhetoric which continuously called Turkey to return to constitutional and democratic mechanisms without taking into consideration the difficulties that Turkey had to face after the failed coup attempt (Kakışım & Erdoğan, 2018).

As a result of the unwillingness of EU members to overtly condemn this incident, Turkey emphasized that the enthusiasm for the EU accession process had considerably diminished among Turkish people. The Turkish Foreign Minister described this reducing level of enthusiasm for Turkey's accession to the EU by stating that:

“We have worked very hard towards EU (membership) these past 15 years. We never begged, but we worked very hard. Now, two out of three people are saying we should stop talks with the EU.” (*Reuters*, 2017).

Like the EU's unfavorable response to the 15 July coup attempt that led to the worsening of EU-Turkey relations, the US response was also found to be insincere by Turkish decision-makers. The relations between the two states in this aspect were overshadowed by the extradition of the FETO terrorist leader to Turkey. However, the US's reluctance for the completion of this extradition process constituted a significant motivation for Turkey's determination to normalize its relations with Russia.

The Turkish Foreign Minister explicitly articulated how Turkey had been alienated by the US policies by stating that, “sooner or later, the United States of America will make a choice. Either Turkey or FETO” (*AA*, 2017).

Consequently, the political results of the 15 July coup attempt constituted a strong motivation for the betterment of Turkey-Russia relations. The favorable attitudes of Eurasianist groups towards Turkey because of Turkey's intimate ties with Russia would be a prerequisite for Russia's grand strategic adjustment. Like this, the dominant policy groups in Turkey also came to the conclusion that a rapprochement between Turkey and Russia may serve Turkey's national security objectives in contrast to the US's overt support to the YPG terrorist organization along with the EU members' reluctance to condone Turkey's political measures after the coup attempt.

#### 4. The Impact of the Syrian Civil War

Another factor that led to the betterment of Turkey-Russia relations is linked with the US's overt support to the YPG terrorist organization in Syria. As a result of this policy, Russian presence in Syria turned into an alternative policy option in the eyes of Turkish decision-makers.

The main reason for Turkey's opposition to US military support for the YPG terrorist organization originates from its legitimate border security concerns that could lead to border security deteriorating by the establishment of a PKK-affiliated political structure in northern Syria. Since the YPG is a branch of the PKK terrorist organization, there is a growing concern of Turkish policy-makers on the grounds that any advancement by the YPG in northern Syria may find repercussions on Turkey's southern borders. Turkey's concern on this issue was clearly stated by President Erdoğan on June 29, 2015 as follows: "I say to the international community that whatever price must be paid, we will never allow the establishment of a new state on our southern frontier in the north of Syria." (*NY Times*, 2018).

This situation also deteriorated due to the debate on creating safety zones in Syria. The safety zone proposal was put forward by Turkey due to the increasing level of security threats on Turkey's southern borders. However, the proposal was not supported by the US on the grounds that safety zones could draw the US into Syrian Civil War. Considering the US's determination to maintain its off-shore balancing strategy in order to avoid ground involvement in Syria, Turkey's safety zone proposal could not find a favorable reply from US decision-makers.

The US's avoidance in this aspect was described by former President Barack Obama at the G20 summit in Turkey as follows: "A true safe zone requires us to set up ground operations, who would come in, who could come out of that safe zone? How would it work? Would it become a magnet for further terrorist attacks? How many personnel would be required and how would it end?" (*The Guardian*, 2017).

The US's avoidance from the safety zone proposal created another impetus for Turkey's rapprochement with Russia in the Syrian War. Moreover, Turkish policy-makers displayed their enthusiasm to carry out more concrete steps with the Russia-Iran axis for the resolution of the Syrian conflict. In response to Turkey's willingness, Russian policy-makers also supported the fact that Turkey had justifiable grounds for the safety zone proposal. For example, the Russian President on May 4, 2017 stated that, "*We both proceed on the basis that - and this*

*is our common position - the creation of safe zones should lead to further pacification and cessation of hostilities.”<sup>1</sup>*

## **5. What is the Role of Individual Factors For the Resolution of Foreign Policy Crises?**

Although the abovementioned domestic political dynamics constituted a significant motivation for the betterment of bilateral relations, these factors do not explain how the two states managed to overcome the severity of the Su-24 crisis within a very short period of time. Therefore, this part of the study endeavors to supplement the arguments that were deliberated in the previous parts by leaning towards the impact of individual actors in the foreign policy crisis. In this endeavor, the study firstly aims to elucidate how neoclassical realism evaluates the positions of decision-makers in moments of foreign policy crisis. Afterwards, the study attempts to evaluate the respective positions of the Russian and Turkish Presidents during the management of the Su-24 crisis.

In order to analyze the role of individual actors in international politics, neoclassical realism presents two components for their research programme (Rathbun, 2008). These components consist of the clarity of threats and the type of strategic environment in which individual actors are involved. Neoclassical realism makes a distinction between restrictive and permissive environments. While the former type represents the immanency of security threats and challenges, the latter stands for a more loosened situation in which security threats are not directly encountered. Among these two components (i.e., the clarity of threats and type of strategic environment), neoclassical realism argues that it becomes possible to assess the role of individual factors in foreign policy analysis (Walker, Schafer & Young, 1999).

According to this view, the combination of restrictive strategic environment with the immanency of direct security threats enhances the decisive influence of leader images. In such circumstances, other intervening variables such as the impact of domestic groups' orientation are expected to fall behind the influence of individual dynamics (Rose, 1998).

As a prominent representative of neoclassical realism, Steven Lobell puts a special emphasis on one particular decision-maker among a wide range of relevant policy actors. This particular decision maker is called the Foreign Policy Executive (FPE). According to Lobell

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1 Russia's safety zone proposal has envisaged constituting four safety zones in northern, central and southern parts of Syria. As a result of Turkey's Euphrates Shield Operation however, a de facto safety zone has been constituted in order to secure Turkey's southern borders from the advancement of terrorist networks. See, "Turkey and Russia Push for Safe-zones in Syria", <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/russia-turkey-push-safe-zones-syria-170504053138097.html> [05.08.2018].



“The FPE (i.e. state leaders) assesses threats at the systemic level, but also at the sub-systemic and domestic levels. Specifically, threats can emanate from other great powers and extra-regional actors, regional powers in the locale, or domestic opponents. The implication is that state leaders can act on one level, but the objective is to influence the outcome on another level(s).” (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro, 2009).

Since the management of policy crisis requires the implementation of effective responses, neoclassical realism argues that the autonomous role of state leaders enhances the capability of implementing efficient policy actions.

Like Lobell’s emphasis on the autonomous role of state leaders in crises, Norrin Ripsman claims that the domestic constraints such as legislative control may retard the enforcement of rapid reactions. Since state leaders in such circumstances are expected to overcome the undesirable consequences of a political crisis, institutional limits on decision-makers may limit the FPE’s reaction ability (Ripsmann, Jeffrey & Lobell, 2016).

Norman describes how the successful management of a policy crisis is strictly linked with the autonomy of state leaders in relation to the effects of domestic dynamics as follows:

“In a democratic polity, the most important institutional rules relate to the autonomy of the executive— be it presidential, parliamentary, or mixed— and its relationship to the legislature and the bureaucracy. Important institutional variables affecting the foreign policy of democracies include the degree to which power is concentrated in the executive’s hands... These variables will affect whether state leaders can harness the nation’s power, ... and whether democratic states can adjust and adapt readily to external shocks or shifts in the international distribution of power.” (Ripsmann, Jeffrey & Lobell, 2016).

According to this view, the management of a foreign policy crisis is highly influenced by the perception of state leaders. The impact of perception, on the other hand, could be derived from the statements of decision-makers.

The statements of the two leaders during the management of the Su-24 crisis also illustrates how perception plays a decisive role in moments of foreign policy crisis since the respective periods of deterioration and normalization in bilateral relations mostly reflect the statements of the two decision-makers (Keser & Meral, 2016).

While the initial statements given by the Russian President seems to bring about a deteriorating course in Turkey-Russia relations, the normalization of bilateral relations

accordingly appears to be influenced by more favorable statements of the two decision-makers. Just after the downing of the Russian aircraft, for example, the Russian President - referring to Turkish decision-makers- stated that “they stabbed us in the back.”<sup>2</sup>

Considering President Putin’s individual efforts to enhance Russia’s great power status within a multipolar world order, Turkey’s decision to shoot down a Russian aircraft seems to be perceived as a symbol of damaging Russia’s credibility in the international sphere (Sakwa, 2008).

This damaged credibility in effect caused to the worsening of the Su-24 crisis. Accordingly, the softening of this political crisis was achieved by Turkish President Erdogan’s statements that endeavored to change this damaged credibility towards a more favorable direction. One of these statements, for instance, was an attempt to emphasize how Russia constituted an important position in the eyes of Turkish decision-makers. In this statement, Erdogan argued that, “If Turkish authorities had known the aircraft was a Russian one, it would not have been shot down” (Özertem, 2017).

## **6. The Examination of President Putin’s Operational Code Analysis**

Before starting to talk about the autonomous role of the FPE in Russia, it must be emphasized that the presidency as an institution is endowed with a primary role in the policy-making process. Moreover, this primary position of the presidency is extended to incorporate the realm of both domestic and foreign policy. The Russian Constitution in this aspect clearly states that “ the president determines the basic guidelines of the state’s domestic and foreign policy.” (White, Sakwa & Hale, 2010).

Furthermore, the constitutional aspect of the president’s position in foreign policy-making gives a personalized character to the presidency. Instead of delineating the limits of the presidential institution, the constitution in this regard endows the president sole leadership in the policy-making process. This personalized aspect of the presidential institution could be inferred from the following article of the Russian constitution which indicates that, “the president exercises leadership of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation” (Sakwa, 2008).

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2 “Turkey Downing of Russia Jet 'Stab in the Back' – Putin”, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34913173> [20.12.2017]. Putin’s statement especially reflects a marginalizing dimension for the prospect of Turkey-Russia relations. This dimension on the other hand seems to be linked with the phrase of “stabbing back” which could be interpreted as a sign of the unreliability of Turkish policy-makers. Accordingly, President Putin has made distinction between Turkey as a friendly partner and inadequate leaders who currently govern the country by stating that “*Turkey has been, and remains, a friend and partner of Russia.* However, problems arise with the leaders of countries whose responses to situations are inadequate.” See, “Turkey Blocks Russian State-Run Sputnik News Agency”, <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/turkey-blocks-russian-state-run-sputnik-news-agency-52559> [20.11.2017].

Another sign of the personal character of the presidency in Russian politics is evident in the presidency's relation with other institutions that are involved in the conduct of foreign policy. For example, the Security Council in Russia is supposed to play an influential role in the determination of foreign policy strategies. However, the constitution also prioritizes the role of the president over the operations of the Security Council. The Russian constitution in this aspect states that the right of arbitrary selection and dismissal of the members of the Security Council belongs to the realm of the presidential institution (White, Sakwa & Hale, 2010).

The personalized character of Russian politics is exacerbated by President Putin's interpretation of state power. According to Richard Sakwa, the strengthening of state institutions from the perspective of President Putin does not mean that domestic institutions and the rule of law need to be strengthened. Instead, Putin's interpretation of a strengthened state equals to a more strengthened presidency as an institution in Russian politics. This in turn necessitates the enlargement of the president's autonomy in the policy-making process. Sakwa, in this aspect, describes the intimate correlation between a strong state and a strong presidency as follows:

“While Putin stressed the strengthening of the state, too often it appeared that his interpretation of state strengthening was synonymous with the consolidation of the regime, and within the regime, the enhancement of the presidency.” (White, Sakwa & Hale, 2010).

Consequently, the autonomous position of the Russian President -without the existence of constraining domestic dynamics originating from constitutional barriers or restrictive influence of public opinion- reminds one of the arguments of neoclassical realism, which argue that the management of a foreign policy crisis requires the rapid implementation of policy responses by an autonomous FPE. Since the overcoming of such circumstances necessitates enacting effective policy measures without being exposed to the constraining effects of domestic dynamics, the personalized aspect of the presidential institution in Russian politics appears to have contributed to the rapid normalization of the Su-24 crisis.

Within the framework of these theoretical positions, it is pertinent to concentrate on the question of how the two state leaders behaved in the moments of foreign policy crises. According to studies that analyze the foreign policy vision of President Putin, the main pillar of the Russian President's policy is based on pragmatism.

The notion of opportunism in these studies reflects the presence of power vacuums that President Putin finds utilizable in the absence of great power resistance. Russia's political

and military involvement in the Syrian War, for instance, presents the implications of this opportunism (Stephen, 2018).

According to a study made by S.B. Dyson and M.J. Parent, the notion of President Putin's pragmatism refers to the elimination of ideational factors from the conduct of Russia's foreign policy. For them, the pragmatic aspect of President Putin's foreign policy stands as complementary to his opportunistic view of international politics, which entails the utilization of power vacuums in regional politics (Stephen, 2018). To put it more precisely, President Putin's determination to utilize power vacuums in regional politics through the notion of opportunism requires becoming pragmatic in his dealings with other state leaders.

The complementary dimension of Putin's pragmatic approach may also be observed through the development of Turkey-Russia relations in Syria. Since the prospect of Russia's political influence in Syria necessitates establishing favorable relations with regional states, such as Turkey and Iran, the opportunistic dimension of President Putin's foreign policy vision brought about the result of being pragmatic in his relations with Turkey's decision-makers (William & Souza, 2016).

The two dimensions of President Putin's foreign policy approach (i.e., opportunism and pragmatism) become evident through the assessment of Russia's assertive foreign policy actions. According to the abovementioned study, President Putin's rhetoric which emphasized the precedence of Russia's sphere of influence under the framework of regional doctrine demonstrates the opportunistic aspect of President Putin's foreign policy vision.

However, in order to find international support for this rhetoric, Putin's pragmatism necessitates obtaining the support of regional states (Dyson & Parent, 2018). As stated in the previous part, Turkey's opposition against the US policies in Syria constituted an important motivation for this purpose.

Therefore, one of the main determinants of individual factors for the normalization of the Su-24 crisis seems to be motivated by the two dimensions of Putin's foreign policy vision. The combinations of these two pillars along with Turkey's alienation from US policies appeared to constitute a field of convergence between Turkey and Russia. In addition to this convergence, Putin's opportunistic side, which refers to the utilization of power vacuums in the absence of great power resistance, seems to have enabled the further improvement of Turkey-Russia relations in Syria.

## 7. The Examination of President Erdoğan's Operational Code Analysis

Studies that aimed to analyze the leader image of President Erdoğan, on the other hand, lay special emphasis on his talent of being resilient in moments of foreign policy crisis. According to these studies, like Putin's pragmatic dimension in the conduct of foreign policy-making, President Erdoğan also benefits from the advantage of implementing pragmatic policies (Derman & Oba, 2016).

Besides his pragmatism on the international stage, however, President Erdogan also takes advantage of being flexible during the resolution of political stalemates. Therefore, while President Putin's foreign policy approach contains the implementation of opportunism and pragmatism, President Erdogan's policy view contains the tenants of both pragmatism and resiliency (Görener & Uca, 2011).

As an example of his flexibility in foreign policy, it would be proper to remember that President Erdoğan attempted to alleviate the severity of the Su-24 incident by stating that, "if Turkish authorities had known the aircraft was a Russian one, it would not have been shot down" (Özertem, 2017). This statement came after a short period when President Erdoğan replied to the question whether Turkey would apologize for the downing of Russian jet by clearly stating that, "We are not the ones who should apologize; those who trespassed on our aerial territory should."

Although these two statements seem to represent two contradictory positions at first sight, they become consistent when looking from the perspective of flexibility, which gives room for maneuverability during the management of a foreign policy crisis (Derman & Oba, 2016).

Another individual factor relating to the normalization of the Su-24 crisis is linked with President Erdogan's domestic policy approach. As stated during the analysis of President Putin's leader image, the foreign policy approach of state leaders is in a strict relation with their treatment of domestic political dynamics.

Like President Putin's emphasis on the maintenance of his credibility in internal political sphere, President Erdoğan accordingly represents another perspective for his role in domestic politics. In this respect, the two leaders share a similar priority. Like Putin's emphasis over the importance of strengthened leadership, President Erdogan puts a special emphasis on the maintenance of stability in domestic politics. This stability, on the other hand, encompasses economic and political dimensions. However, the results of the Su-24 crisis posed particular challenges on the basis of President Erdogan's insistence on stability.

From the perspective of an economic dimension, Russia's unilateral economic sanctions in the fields of agriculture and tourism generated a potential damage to the long-run economic stability of Turkey. From the perspective of a political dimension, Russia's opposition to Turkey's political objectives in Syria posed a political challenge to Erdogan's credibility in domestic politics.

Thus, the flexibility of President Erdogan's foreign policy approach along with his priority of maintaining stability in internal politics constituted a decisive motivation that inclined Turkey to normalize bilateral relations with Russia. As emphasized before, President Erdogan's personal letter for the purpose of alleviating the severity of the Su-24 crisis stands as a supportive example of this political objective.

Consequently, the ability of both state leaders in terms of being resilient during the management of foreign policy crises contributed to the alleviation of the Su-24 crisis. Considering the fact that short-term crisis situations give more autonomy to the decisions of state leaders, the ability of foreign policy executives became a decisive element for the successful resolution of this foreign policy crisis (Walker, Schafer & Young, 1999).

## **Conclusion**

This study has attempted to explain the dynamics of change in Turkey-Russia relations between 2011 and 2016. By asking the question of how bilateral relations normalized so rapidly following a severe political crisis in international politics, the study aimed to put forward a theoretical analysis under the titles of structural, domestic and individual factors.

Through examining the arguments of structural realism, which argues that the decreasing material gap between states reduce the urgency of counter-balancing policies, the study concluded that the systemic factors originating from the shifts in relative power distribution between the two states after the Cold War fall short of illustrating the impact of domestic and individual factors that contributed to the rapprochement of Turkey-Russia relations.

Accordingly, the second part of the study was dedicated to the analysis of domestic factors behind the improvement of Turkey-Russia relations. In this respect, the study claimed that the foreign policy orientations of the Eurasianist perspective in Russian politics have played a facilitating role. Since the foreign policy notion of this perspective argues that Russia needs to resist a unipolar world order under the dominance of the US, the study concluded that the implication of this policy enabled the rapid normalization of bilateral relations.

The last part of the study on the other hand leaned on the question of how individual factors affected the course of the Su-24 crisis. In this regard, this study concentrated on the theoretical arguments of neoclassical realism, which argues that moments of foreign policy crises require the implementation of rapid movements by state leaders. By analyzing the traits of the foreign policy executives in the two states, the study showed that the individual talents of the two state leaders contributed to the current rapprochement in bilateral relations.

Consequently, the question of how Turkey-Russia relations normalized within a very short period of time after one of the most severe policy crises in the post-Cold War era lies in the combination of structural, domestic, and individual factors. Since such a combination requires incorporating a theoretical framework, the study tried to draw on the theoretical arguments of neoclassical realism. By briefly examining how neoclassical realism constitutes its self-coherency in the first part, the study moved on the analysis of bilateral relations, and it finally reached the conclusion that the dynamics of change in Turkey-Russia relations consist of the interrelated effects of structural, domestic, and individual factors.

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## CHAPTER 12

# THE EFFECT OF RUSSO-TURKISH WARS ON THE MARTIAL ARRANGEMENT OF RUSSIA (1696-1878)

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to reflect the historical growth of the army and the effect of the wars between Russia and the Ottoman Empire on the martial arrangement of Russia between 1696 and 1878. The role of Peter the Great in army reforms and the main changes in the sphere of defensive strategy was significant, even compared with the most recent periods. According to the sources that are used for this paper, we may observe the crucial points of Russo-Turkish relations since 1696. The main steps for military development were made by Peter the Great to provide control of Russia by the Government Senate even in case of his absence. This underlines the importance of leader figures for the Russian Army in those critical moments. The analysis of the Catherine the Great period shows significant advantages gained after the Russo-Turkish Wars in the eighteenth century. This paper addresses a wide group of readers interested in Russian-Turkish relations and their co-integration during this regional coexistence for both states.

**Keywords:** Russo-Turkish Wars, Martial Arrangement, Peter the Great, Russian Military Academy, Crimean War

The aim of this study is to address the effect of Russo-Turkish Wars on martial arrangements made in the Russian Empire in the contemporary age. The length of the process, and the technical and martial details of the subject necessitate a general assessment. In this sense, martial reforms in Russia are not completely being addressed in this paper; and martial arrangements made during and after the Russo - Turkish Wars are examined. The process began in the period of Petro I. However, the Turkish influence in Russia's military reforms is known to have started earlier. In particular, it is possible to observe this effect in the period of Ivan III and Ivan IV. (Nefedov, 2002) Ivan Semyonovich Peresvetov, one of the prominent Russian thinkers of the sixteenth century, describes Fatih Sultan Mehmed as a virtuous and absolute power in his own work "The Conqueror of Sultan Mehmet" "Skazanie o Magmet-saltane". (Öksüz, 2013) Peresvetov considered Mehmed's empire as a model that must be imitated by Ivan III in Russia. (Agoston, 2012)

## **1. Effect of Turks on Martial Arrangements in the Period of Peter the Great**

The armed forces of the Russian Army before Peter the Great consisted of Drujins of the Grand Duchy, volunteers and foreign mercenaries. In this sense, its formation was far from a regular army (Danilov, 1902, стр. 1-2). The Russian military system was mainly based on defence until the end of the seventeenth century (Golitsyn, 1878). This structure faced a radical change during the period of Peter the Great. The reforms being shaped and developed by wars in that period contributed to strengthening of the Russian Army. The desire of Peter the Great to establish dominance in the Black Sea, and his awareness that this could only be achieved by a victory over the Turks led him to consider Turkey in military reforms.

Russia was aware that the only way of attaining the objective was making Turkey ineffective in the region. Peter the Great, who read well this reality, attempted to conquer Azov in order to keep the Crimean Khanate under control. In that period, in addition to weakening effects of the wars which were made with Sweden in the north, and with Turkey in the south, they also ensured Peter the Great to focus on its objectives and to make reforms in the light of the experiences obtained from these wars. The period of Peter the Great witnessed transition to regular army, and ship building process at Voronezh with the purpose of forming the fleet of Black Sea, and steps taken for breaking the effect of Turkey. Consequently, all of this played a great role in the conquest of Azov in 1696. It was also the first significant triumph of the Russian Fleet. After this event, Turkey and Russia came across for many times. This condition caused both countries to inevitably consider each other especially in martial reforms.

A. N. Petrov, being in charge at General Staff of Russia, in his work named “*Vliyaniye Turetskih Voyn s Polovim Proşlago Stoletiya na Razvitiye Russkago Voennago İskusstva (Effect of Wars Made with Turks as from the Second Half of the Past Century in the Development of Russian Martial Art)*” speaks of the role played by Turkey in the historical fate of Russia from the period of Peter the Great until the war with France in 1812 (Petrov, 1893). In this sense, we can see that the structure of the Turkish army was followed by Russians in a vital way (Petrov, 1893).

The triumph that Russians gained by the Treaty of Constantinople of 1700 did not last long. In 1711, Azov was taken back by Turks. This war provided significant data about how the reform period that Russia initiated under the leadership of Peter the Great should reflect its effects in the battlefield. Accordingly, in 1711 when the war was continuing, remarkable changes occurred in Russia. In March 1711, Peter the Great established the Government Senate which would manage the government in the case of his absence. His active participation to the battlefield was effective in this decision. The senate would also administer the armed force of the country. Right after the war, that was ended by the Treaty of the Pruth on July 23, a commissariat was established in Moscow. The commissariat would operate for relieving the army and its financial management. The authority of commissariat was increased by regulations made until December, 1711. Moreover, in 1714, artillery chancellery was formed (Danilov, 1902), and thus three significant institutions were organized under the effect of the Russo - Turkish War, and they played significant roles in the reform process of the army.

Russia, which measured the quality of its own power by considering the army structure of the enemy learned new things from the Swedes as well as Turks. In terms of the skill of weapon use, the Russians were far behind the Swedes. For the Russians, reaching the triumph could only be possible by the presence of troops superior in number compared to the enemy or by good infantry and artillery troops. In the by-law signed by Peter the Great in 1716, there was the provision of “*We have to form our army as per the power and intent of the enemy in order to forestall the enemy in each field. And we have to make all kinds of effort in order to defeat it.*” (Petrov, 1893). These statements indicate that mainly the troops of the enemy were followed-up, and the reform was applied in the formation of the new army from the viewpoint of Peter the Great. The empires that Russia fought in this period were Turkey and Sweden. Undoubtedly, Peter the Great considered the army structures of these two countries.

## **2. Russo - Turkish Wars in the Period of Catherine the Great, and Their Effects on Russian Army**

The geographical location of Russia, climate characteristics and terrain structure of Russia had increased its desire to tend towards the south in the eighteenth century. At that time, reaching the Black Sea over Azov was the most important purpose. The importance of reaching the Caspian Sea was not comparable to the facilities that the Black Sea would provide to Russia. Likewise, reaching the Baltic Sea as one of the significant successes of Peter the Great's period failed to fully meet the expectations of Russia. The Black Sea had a great importance to Russia in terms of the defense of its territory and the expansion strategy as well as the economic contribution it would provide. In addition, the dream of being close to the Slavic society in the Balkans, and being heir to the Byzantine Empire were the other factors that motivated Russia to dominate the Black Sea (Petrov 1893).

The Great Northern War and Seven Years' War increased the experiences of Russian soldiers on the battlefield. However, as a result of the war with the Turks between 1769 and 1774 they gained real combat experience (Petrov, 1893, 38). Russia faced no state that made it deeply feel the deficiency in its army structure. The wars that had been fought until that time were not long-term battles against a great power. This required a strong and durable army. In the reign of Peter the Great, during the wars fought with the Turks, Russia realized the deficiency in their fleet and an attempt to close this gap was made by the establishment of a dockyard. In fact, there was a degree of success. As it was mentioned before, the encounter with the Turkish Army, which was one of the prominent land armies of the world, helped Russia to see their deficiencies. In addition, the Russians read the situation well and then made progress.

Catherine the Great intended for Russia to take part among the great empires and she knew that it could be accomplished with a strong Russian army. By this purpose, she gave importance to the land and sea troops. In this regard, the Russo - Turkish Wars, that took place consecutively and each lasting for about four years, had a significant effect on the arrangements. John A. Lynn stated that for this period it would not be right to describe the Russian army as an example of a Western model, rather it had its own transformation. (Lynn, 1996, 528). This transformation would continue throughout the Russo-Turkish war of 1769-1774.

The high number of soldiers of the enemy led the Russian army to follow a tactical route, and an improvement in this sense. At the beginning of the Russo - Turkish War of 1769-

1774, the land troops of the Turkish Army were expected to reach 300,000 and the Crimean Khanate would also provide support from the south with 60,000 individuals. Moreover, a third army was formed for the military operation at Caucasians (Russkaya Voennaya Sila-Ocherk Razvitiya Vıdayushihsy Voennih Sobitiy Ot Nachala Rusi Do Nashih Dney, 1890, 48). There were 250 ships in the Black Sea and nine of them were large. On the other hand, the land force of Russia was as follows: the first army was under the command of Knez Golitsin and it had 71,530 individuals in total: 47,280 infantry, 14,250 cavalry and 10,000 Cossack soldiers at Kiev; and another one under the command of General Rumyantsev had 43,728 individuals in total: 27,724 infantry, 13,000 cavalry and 9,000 Cossack soldiers around Samara and Bakhmut; and the artillery unit had 100 artilleries. The number reached a total of 115,000 : 69,000 infantry, 27,000 cavalry, and 19,000 Cossack soldiers (Petrov, 1893).

The difference in the numbers of the armies was effective in terms of Russian commanders' tactical steps. The commanders directed the army to move in square formations from the beginning of war. There were some examples of tactics being changed after the defeats in the battles such as on July 2, 1769, the decision for the usage of bayonets against the Turks bycatapult using soldiers who were attacked twice by the Turks. (Petrov, 1893).

The strategies of the two armies commanded by Golitsin and Rumyantsev were determined at the beginning of the war. According to that, the main duty of the army commanded by Golitsin was to conquer Kamianets and Khotyn. And the army of Rumyantsev would defend the southern borders and conquer Azov. For this, a blockade unit consisting of 75 ships of different sizes, 12,000 crews and soldiers, and 1,035 artilleries were ready. In addition, a special battalion under the command of Berg was formed to invade the Crimea. The most important strategy of the Russian army was to succeed in sending a small fleet (Russkaya Voennaya Sila- Ocherk Razvitiya Vıdayushihsy Voennih Sobitiy Ot Nachala Rusi Do Nashih Dney, 1890, 47-48) under the command of Aleksey Orlov to the Mediterranean Sea via the Baltic.

However, the strategy of Russians changed because of the delays in the implementation of plans before the war, and also because of the recognition of deficiencies. The army of Golitsin passed Dniester twice and reached Khotyn. However, he did not attempt to conquer the fortress due to the lack of blockade artilleries. This gave an opportunity to the Turks to strengthen the garrison at Khotyn. The Turk's troops under the command of Moldovancı Ali Pasha, after strengthening their position, mobilized against the army of Golitsin after August 29, 1769 but this situation became beneficial for Golitsin, and the Turks were defeated and they were forced to surrender the fortress. Meanwhile, Golitsin decided to retreat rather than

start a movement against the Turks. In response to the fallacy of this decision, Rumyantsev was assigned instead of Golitsin and Panin was appointed to the commandership of the second army which had been commanded by Rumyantsev. Despite the Turkish army's insufficient provision of ammunition, Golitsin's decision about not operating forward was seen as incompetent. (*Russkaya Voennaya Sila- Ocherk Razvitiya Vıdayushihsya Voennih Sobıtiy Ot Nachala Rusi Do Nashih Dney*, 1890). In this regard, as mentioned before, while the Russian war strategy concentrated on defense, significant progress was made on offense especially during the Russo - Turkish War of 1769-1774. Thus, the process of conquering the Georgian Kingdoms and the significant fortresses such as Bender and Izmail were initiated (Petrov, 1866; Stone, 2006). So, it can be said that after the war of 1769-1774 Russia went beyond its borders and took the next steps for progress.

Since the deficiencies of the Russian cavalry were observed against the fast-moving Turkish cavalry, it was not possible to organize an offensive operation. After the defeat, the Russian army could not return quickly. General Petrov noted that the most important reason for this was the lack of a military convoy method (Petrov, 1893).

Following the realization of the weak side of Russian infantry during the war, General Rumyantsev resorted to a rapid improvement in this field. For this purpose, 300 shotguns were ordered from Tula, and they were brought to Khotyn in order to increase gun powder. In addition, it was decided that 60 shotguns would be provided for each regiment (Petrov, 1893).

The situation of the Russian cavalry was worse compared to the infantry units and they were also very slow, so, General Rumyantsev, carried out an arrangement quickly in the outer appearance of the cavalry. Accordingly, the accessories previously used as ornaments were prohibited. Besides, the cavalry's use of swords and bayonets was improved. The most important reason for this effort was that the cavalry could be subjected to a close attack of the enemy after using the firearm, and the Russian cavalry was defeated because it was not moving much from its current position. The most significant superiority of the Turkish cavalry was in this area. Therefore, it was necessary to learn the use of bayonets well to be able to stand against them. In this regard, Rumyantsev showed great effort in increasing the warfare skills of the cavalry.

Another significant activity of Rumyantsev was conducting intelligent operations to learn the structure of the Turkish Army well. These operations were carried out by the spies recruited from Wallachia and Moldavia for a good salary. The spies were chosen among reliable people

who knew how to keep secret. Doctor Nikolo was among the spies who provided significant benefits. Moreover, Squadron Leader Bastevin was appointed to communicate with Tatar beys, and got them onto the Russian side (Petrov, 1893).

In the Russo - Turkish War of 1769-1774, the presence of commanders such as Rumyantsev, Suvorov, Potemkin provided a great advantage in ensuring renewal in the Russian army. The dismissal of commanders acting with old methods, and the transfer of authority to elderly commanders such as Knez Golitsin may be considered as a pointed decision of Catherine the Great. It is observed that the plans and the efforts made on how to achieve success against the power of Turkish army increased the mobility of the Russian Army. In addition, it is also seen that this balance of power gradually turned in favor of Russia, and it significantly eliminated its deficiency in terms of the number of soldiers during the Russo - Turkish War of 1787-1791.

During the reign of Catherine the Great, the most important contribution of the Russo - Turkish Wars is the dominant position that Russia got in the Black Sea. The Black Sea fleet, which was intended to be established by Peter the Great, was formed at Sevastopol, the southwest of Crimea, about three quarter centuries later in 1783. The port was called as «*Kadi Liman*» during the Khanate period. The port was chosen as command center for the fleet after its annexation by Russia. Since its establishment, the fleet focused on dominating the Black Sea. With the establishment of Odesa Port in 1794, Russia became a prominent power at the Black Sea (Köremezli, 2017).

### **3. The Nineteenth Century Russo – Turkish Wars**

During the nineteenth century the effect of the Russo - Turkish Wars, (there were four wars and they lasted about fifteen years) on the reform movement continued. Russia had to fight against significant powers such as the Ottoman Empire, France and Iran from the beginning of the nineteenth century. The triumph against Napoleon was a great source of self-confidence for Russia. In addition, the nineteenth century was a period when Russia was at war with the Turks. Naturally it had repercussions in many ways.

The Russian Army was much better than the Turkish Army regarding the use of experiences gained during the wars. The Russian commanders had opportunity to learn the Ottoman geography. The prepared fortress plans and maps were used in the following wars. Mihail Kutuzov and Protr Bagration, who were among the leading commanders of the Russo - Turkish War of 1806-1812, had previously fought against the Turks alongside Suvorov during the Russo - Turkish War of 1787-1792 (Köremezli, 2017). Moreover, Kutuzov was at Istanbul as the ambassador of Russia between 1793-1794, and during his service he carried

out intelligence activities in accordance with the instructions of Catherine the Great, and had gathered much information about the Turkish Army, fortresses and road plans, and transmitted the data to Catherine the Great and to the leading commanders with annotations (M. I. Kutuzov, Dokumenti, 1950). It can be understood that all these provided many contributions during the war.

When the Russo - Turkish War of 1828-1829 began, the Russian Army was aware that this was their first major and crucial war after Napoleon. In addition, the triumphs obtained under the leadership of commanders such as Suvorov and Rumyantsev in the wars against the Turks by the end of the eighteenth century increased the belief that similar results could be achieved. This belief began to lose its strength due to the ineffectiveness of the Russian military operation of 1828. Military historian Nikolay Epançin wrote in his book named “*Oçerk Pohoda 1829 g. v Yevropeyskoy Turtsii* (Expeditionary Report of Year 1829 in the Turkey of Europe)” which was published on 1905 that the Russians couldn’t gain a result despite their great effort. Epançin explained this situation by referring to Moltke’s words (Epanchin’, 1905). “*Russians or Turks, it is hard to tell who won and who lost.*”

The Russo - Turkish War of 1828–1829 showed its results in military reforms in a short time. The method of recruitment was changed by a decision made in 1831. The Russian Empire was handled as two parts; East and West, and the army started to recruit from one region every year. The capital city was St.Petersburg, and there was Kiev and Novgorod in the West, and Moscow, Kazan and Voronezh and Caucasia were in the East (Tanrıverdi, 2019).

Russia’s structure of military entered a new process with the beginning of the Crimean War. Even though there were attempts to eliminate some of the past failures of the Russian Army through some decisions made during the war, they could not bring victory. After the fall of Sevastopol, in the autumn of 1855, “The Commission for the Improvement of Military Troops” was formed and it was headed by General Graf Ridiger. General Ridiger, the first man of Nicholas I of Russia who was experienced because of his age, quickly evaluated the situation, and emphasized the harms of centralization in the military system. He made some recommendations that would minimize this damage. Accordingly, he underlined the importance of increasing the responsibilities and authorities of commanders of army corps and divisions, and he also highlighted the importance of their capacity of decision making. However in 1856 Ridiger died soon after and these suggestions could not be implemented (Kersnovskiy,1993).



The Crimean War, which ended with the Treaty of Paris on March 16, 1856, prevented Russia from having a fleet at the Black Sea. In addition, the lands conquered at South Bessarabia and Caucasia were returned to Turkey. Russia had to share its role with European states as the protector of Christians in Turkey. This defeat initiated a new process in Russia's governance. Military historian who studied the Crimean War, A. A. Kersnovskiy's words are noteworthy in terms of highlighting the importance of the Black Sea and Turkey in the history of Russia. "*The Russian flag fell for the first time and unfortunately not for the last time at the place it rose*" (Kersnovskiy, 1993).

Towards the end of the war, in January 1856, the Russian land force consisted of about 37,000 commissioned officers, and 2,266,000 soldiers. Among them, 32,500 commissioned officers and 1,742,000 soldiers were members of regular army troops. During the war, it was planned to recruit 866,000 soldiers from 1853 to 1855. 215,000 soldiers, who had previously disbanded for an indefinite period, were called to the army. In addition to 31 desert infantry batteries, 11 reserve infantry division and 2 army corps were established. (Kersnovskiy, 1993).

Following the defeat of the Crimean War, a period of great reform started for Russia. After the accession of Alexander II of Russia, he published a manifesto in 1856, and postponed the recruitment for 3 years and he decreased the duration of military duty from 19 years to 15 years. In this context, 69,000 soldiers were disbanded, and another 421,000 ones were disbanded for an indefinite period of time. 4 out of the 11 reserve divisions were dispelled, and the remaining 7 were included in the regular troops. Additionally, a significant part of the voluntary military forces and Cossack troops, who were seen as unsuccessful during the Crimean War, were dispelled. Apart from their lack of usefulness, the main reason for the elimination of voluntary troops was when 300,000 people who were engaged in agriculture were recruited for war, the production decreased. This situation placed a great burden on the army and the government (Kersnovskiy, 1993).

After the war, the number of soldiers continued to decrease. By a new decision in 1859, recruitments were postponed for another three years and also the duration of military service was decreased from 15 years to 12 years. After all these steps, in 1862 the number of the soldiers in the army was decreased to 800,000 during the time of peace. In other words, the number of soldiers decreased threefold compared to 1856. As recruitment was not carried out for about six years, the average age of the army was about 35. There was no one under the age of 27 (Kersnovskiy, 1993).

The defeat in the Crimean War also necessitated a renewal in terms of equipment for the army. In 1856, hunter companies were formed in each infantry battalion. The companies of safeguard and gunfighter companies were eliminated. Each hunter company had its own number. A hunter brigade was formed in each division. Hunter battalions of the divisions and hunter companies of the battalions carried rifles (Kersnovskiy, 1993).

Between 1857 and 1859, rifles were distributed to each infantry and cavalry. And, artillery units started to use rifles. In 1861, with the appointment of Professor General Dmitriy Alekseyevich Milutin, a faculty member of the Military Academy, as the Minister of War. Milutin was the architect of the great reform period in terms of his ideas about military. The reforms of that era came to the forefront of the political, economic and martial fields. And the most sustainable and effective ones were the martial reforms.

Milutin had gained war experience during the Caucasian War. He had served as chief of the Caucasian Army with Caucasian Regent Baryatinskiy and his success in bureaucracy and academy had directed the innovations he made. It was observed that the reforms of Milutin, which could not be implemented before, were carried out with a broader and deeper perspective than the ideas of Ridiger. In this sense, it is understood that Milutin prepared himself well by reading Ridiger who had realized that the army had to change during the Crimean War.

Milutin had submitted his detailed report to Alexander II on January 15 1862, and then took the office of the ministry of war two months later. He said the military system of Russia had to have a radical change. According to Milutin, the most important problem was the extraordinary effect of centralization in the management of the army (Kersnovskiy, 1993). Ridiger had also thought that the centralization during the Crimean War was harmful (Kersnovskiy, 1993).

In the report of Milutin, it was specified that a centralist structure was the most significant obstacle in taking initiative when needed during war. For this reason, he suggested the elimination of the officers, who were at the center, in the management of war. According to him, the incidences that occurred during the war in between 1853-1856, and the experiences obtained from the previous wars indicated that the old system did not work anymore. Therefore, firstly Milutin decreased the authority of the ministry where he was serving and intended to minimize its central effect for his planned reforms. According to this, the ministry of war would transfer the authority to the local military administrators at the war zone, and this would provide a general administration and control. In this sense, the local military

administration would be the key point in establishing a connection between the center and the military troops (Kersnovskiy, 1993).

The most remarkable reform of Milutin was the general military obligation regulation which was issued on January 1, 1874. According to this regulation, the liability of soldiering was bound to new provisions. Pursuant to the first article, every citizen of Russia was responsible for the protection of throne and defense of the country. The second article was relevant to the fact that the military service could not be fulfilled against remuneration. According to the same regulation, the duration of military service was 15 years; 6 years were active and 9 years were reserve (Sobranie Postanovleniy o Voynskoy Povinnosti, 1874).

The reform made in the Russian Army before the Russo - Turkish War of 1877-1878 was extensive, long and costly. Milutin, despite all the reforms that he made as the minister of war for 15 years, was thinking that Russia was not sufficiently ready and in a case of war the empire would be defeated. Before the war,, he admitted the situation with this note written in his diary on July 27, 1876 (Ayrapetov, 2015): *“Our troops and equipment are ready, but the commanders of general corps and army corps are not completely ready.”*

While the Russians were planning to pass Danube with the probability of war, the inability to show a sufficient improvement at commanding was making it impossible. Moreover, the deficiency was not just at the commanding level as specified by Milutin, weapons were also insufficient. On April 8, 1877, just before the beginning of the war, Colonel D. A. Skalon emphasized the deficiency of military equipment by the words of *“We have many deficiencies, and the most important one among these is poor armament”*. And then Colonel E. İ. Martinov also said that *“Considering the preparedness of the troops for the war, the infantry had “Krnka” rifles which were not good. Hunter batteries, along with having the “Berdan” rifle, they did not have the most recent technology.”*

As the result of all these discussions, it was understood that the improvements in the Turkish Army concerning weapons by the effect of Germany and Britain were surpassing the improvements completed by the Russian Army in 1867. To this respect, in 1877, a new armament was pursued promptly considering the developments in the field of steel as required by the time. However, a significant progress could not be made in terms of ammunition in such a short time. The most prominent reflection of this can be seen during the Siege of Plevna. Soil bastions were unable to be demolished, and it was observed that the destruction was able to be repaired or reconstructed by the Turks even during the siege. It caused a major disappointment in the Russian troops. During the siege which started on August 25 and

continued until November 28, more than 110,000 bullets were spent at Plevna, but they could not be successful against the defense of the Turks (Ayrapetov, 2015).

The Russo - Turkish War of 1877-1878 was the last war of the nineteenth century in between Russia and Turkey and it was ended by the triumph of Russia. There are ones who claimed that this war was the beginning of the end of it. The war affected the economy in a bad manner. Valeriy Stepanov, in his article of "*Tsena Pobedy: Russko-Turetskaya Voyna 1877-1878 gg. i Ekonomika Rossii (Price of Triumph: 1877-1878 Russo - Turkish War, and Economy of Russia)*", explains in detail how the war damaged the Russian economy. In addition, Stepanov speaks of the fact that M. H. Reytern –the minister of finance of Russia– had explained to Emperor Alexander II and to the warlike ministers and bureaucrats how the war would harm Russia and had tried to convince them for not to fight (Stepanov, 2015).

Consequently, after the Russo - Turkish War of 1877-1878, Russia again gave importance to military reforms. Alexander III of Russia, who acceded to the throne on March 1, 1881, managed the last military reforms of the century. The assassination of his father Alexander II of Russia, and social and political developments arising in the country had directed Alexander III to follow-up an inward-oriented policy. In this context, Russia entered into a period in which a new war was not desired. In addition, this period would be very difficult in economic aspects. Due to the expenses of reforms in the years between 1860-70, and due to the effects of the Russo - Turkish War of 1877-1878, the economy of the country was in a bad situation. Agriculture was in a bad situation and the villagers were always expressing their dissatisfaction by showing their poverty, so violence increased in the society. On the other hand, government officers were assassinated (Shul'ga, 2007).

Alexander III had served with the rank of colonel during the Russo - Turkish War of 1877-1878, and he started his military reforms with the experiences he gained in this war. Firstly, he discharged the minister of war D. A. Milutin, and appointed General P. S. Vanovskiy on May 22, 1881. The priority of Alexander III in the military field was the development of a defense strategy. For this, a big-budget was needed and despite the objections of the ones managing the economy, it was decided at the Government Council to make additional payments for the army. Between the years of 1880-1886, about 210-220 million ruble was spent on military requirements annually (Shul'ga, 2007).

Thanks to the military reforms of Alexander III, it was understood that the fleet had an important place in the army. Accordingly, in 1883 a short while after the emergence of timber, the construction of three identical armored ships started at Mykolaiv and Sevastopol.

These ships were named *Catherine the Great*, *Çeşme* and *Sinop*. They were the first large scaled warships to be built at the Black Sea after the Treaty of Paris. In addition to these three warships, the building of *Georgiy* –having the same features- started in 1891. The most significant feature of these armored ships was their long-ranged artillery. *Catherine the Great* joined the fleet in 1888, *Sinop* and *Çeşme* in 1889, and *Georgiy* in 1893 (Shirokorod, 2007).

Following the building of these armored ships, the operations in order to strengthen the Fleet of the Black Sea also continued until the end of the nineteenth century. In 1889, the building of the *Twelve Apostles* –having a different structure than the aforementioned armored ships- started, and it joined the fleet in 1892. From 1890 to 1900, armored ships named *Three Saints* (1895), *Rostislav* (1899), *Potemkin* (1905), *Ioann Zlatoust* (1911), *Evstafiy* (1911) joined the Fleet of the Black Sea. In addition, small-scale warships, cruisers and torpedos took part in the fleet (Ширококорд, 2007, стр. 14-17). Considering the names of the armored ships, it was understood that they had religious characters, and they were reminiscent of the triumphs against the Turks. In this regard, it can be said that the effects of symbolic acts such as Catherine the Great’s triumphs against the Turks processed on medals as the triumph of cross against the crescent had also continued in the nineteenth century.

The teaching of military arrangements to members of the army was only possible through education. For this reason, attempts were made in this field. The importance of effective defense and camouflage during the war were underlined. A special committee was established for relaying information and for the teaching of the subject to army troops. In addition, a document was prepared to use in education. “*Ustav Polevoy Slujbi*” (*Statute Regarding Field Service*) was published in 1879, “*Nastavleniye dlya Obuçeniya Sapernih Komand v Pehote*” (*Regulation for Teaching the Engineer Commanders in Infantry*) had been published in 1881, and in addition to these regulations, several documents were published in 1883, 1887, 1889, 1890 and 1891. New statute studies were also made for the regular cavalry troops. According to this, military order of cavalry, and internal service statute of cavalry were addressed in the statutes of 1890 and 1891 (Dzilina, 1982).

As the Russian infantry was poor in the Russo - Turkish War of 1877-1878, a reconstruction of it was required. In the meanwhile, there was a conservative section opposing the progress. Decisiveness became effective, and thanks to a good analysis of the war made with the Turks, attempts were made to eliminate the deficiency of the army in many aspects (Shul’ga, 2007).

The importance given to the defense strategy by Alexander III also affected the administrative structure at the borders. “*Oblast*” administrations were established in Kars

and in Batum which were left to Russia with the Treaty of Berlin after the Russo - Turkish War of 1877-1878. Oblasts were different from “gubernia” because they were managed by military administration. and military administrator was assigned as the administrator of oblasts (Tanrıverdi, 2019).

## Conclusion

As a conclusion, it is observed that Russo - Turkish Wars, the wars from the period of Peter the Great, had played a significant role in the military reforms of Russia. The assessments made prior to and after the war had been evaluated for the reforms by taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of the Turkish Army. The process of transition to a regular army in land force, and the information learned from the struggle with infantry of the Turks indicated the deficiencies of the Russian Army. The administrators of Russia read this situation well and focused on such deficiencies in their reforms. The Russian Army, that had obtained its most important experience in the wars of 1769-1774 and 1787-1791, increased its confidence and effective position against the Turkish Army in the nineteenth century. In addition, Russia having faced the Turkish army on the battlefield for four times in the nineteenth century once again showed that the Russian Army did not have the military system required for the century and this situation was the basis of the reforms.

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