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TURKEY-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN 2001-2020: DEEPENING PARTNERSHIP AND
HEIGHTENING COMPETITION AMID REGIONAL RESTRUCTURING

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DEDICATION

To the loving memory of my mother Saliha Koçak

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

TURKEY-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN 2001-2020: DEEPENING PARTNERSHIP AND
HEIGHTENING COMPETITION AMID REGIONAL RESTRUCTURING

by

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This dissertation explains the evolution of Turkey-Russia relations between 2001 and 2020. Turkey and Russia are two of the most significant powerhouses in Central Eurasia. In the past, the Russian Empire played a significant role in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and during the Cold War Turkey took part in containing the USSR. The period between 2001 and 2020 was an epoch, however, when Turkey and Russia invested in bilateral trade and established partnerships in the defense and energy sectors. The two countries also worked together to resolve several regional conflicts, including the Syrian Crisis. Despite the regional and global significance of such trend, the literature suffers from an inadequacy of extensive research on Turkey-Russia relations. Thus, an insightful explanation of their bilateral relations will contribute to understanding the most recent dynamics in the Turkey-Russia nexus and the political dynamics in multiple regions.

This research addresses the following question: How did Turkey and Russia's cooperation prevail over the competition between them in the period between 2001 and 2020? To address this question, I consider the Turkey-Russia nexus as a formation created by two 'composite' states. I consider that these two 'composite' states interact with one

another in strategic, normative, and economic dimensions in the context of turbulent regional and global political dynamics. I argue that the Western influence in the region was a defining phenomenon of the way that Turkey-Russia relations took their form. In 2001-2020, the weakening of the US-led Western hegemonic power in Central Eurasia, and the assertive foreign policy strategies of the two countries caused the Turkey-Russia nexus to develop outside of the Western hegemonic influence.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

A2/AD	Anti-Access/Area-Denial
AK PARTY	Justice and Development Party
Akkuyu NPP	Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant Project
BLACKSEAFOR	The Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group
BOTAŞ	Turkish Petroleum Pipeline Corporation
BP	British Petroleum
BS	Baku-Supsa Pipeline Project
BSEC	Black Sea Economic Cooperation
BTC	Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline Project
BTE	Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Pipeline Project
CAATSA	Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act
CHP	Republican People’s Party
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNN	Cable News Network
Comintern	Communist International
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
ER	United Russia Party
EU	European Union
FSA	Free Syrian Army
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNA	Government of National Accord of Libya

ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Sham
KY	Kirkuk-Yumurtalık Pipeline Project
LNA	Libyan National Army
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
Narkomindel	Commissariat of Foreign Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Nazi	German National Socialist Party
NEP	New Economic Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPR	National Public Radio
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
PYD	Democratic Union Party
RSDLP	Russian Social Democratic Labor Party
SCG	Southern Gas Corridor
SCO	Shanghai Co-operation Organization
SNC	Syrian National Council
TANAP	Trans Anatolian Pipeline
TIKA	Turkish Cooperation Coordination Agency
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
TRT	Turkish Radio Television
TGRT	Turkish Gazette Radio Television
Turkic Council	Cooperation Council of Turkish Speaking Countries
TURKSOY	International Organization of Turkic Culture

UACV	Unmanned Aerial Combat Vehicle
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
YPG	People's Protection Units

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Significance and Contribution of This Work

Turkey and Russia are close neighbors, each with a strong influence on multiple regions, including the Middle East, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus. Two countries' increasing strategic presence in Syria, Libya, the Caucasus, and several other hot spots are cases in point. Moreover, both countries' revisionist language towards the current global political system, which is embodied in Turkey's pleas for a change in the UN system and Russia's calls for a multipolar order, makes Turkey-Russia relations even more critical. However, there remains a lacuna in the literature on the relations between the two countries. Aside from occasional articles, books, and book chapters that examine various aspects of these relations, the literature has yet to have an exhaustive account analyzing the Turkey-Russia nexus, together with relevant global, regional, and domestic dynamics.

This work's primary contribution will be a comprehensive analysis, utilizing a simple model to explain and interpret the transformation of Turkey-Russia relations within their regional and global contexts. It will also examine the transformations of their domestic and foreign policies. Lastly, this work analyzes relevant primary and secondary sources in multiple languages using a working model and an eclectic framework. The cohesive explanation of Turkey-Russia relations provided here examines factors that operate at different levels (domestic, regional, and global) and varying dimensions (strategic, normative, and economic).

Aside from its contribution to the literature on Turkey-Russia relations, this work can also advance knowledge in several other research areas. First, the discussions on the emerging international structure generally focus on China's rise, changes in US foreign

policy, and the EU's future role in the global political system.¹ However, current literature often overlooks Central Eurasia, even though the interactions between Turkey and Russia are creating far-reaching global consequences.² By pointing out the results of the peaks and troughs in Turkey-Russia relations, this work contributes to the studies on the emerging world order. Second, Turkey and Russia's activism in 2001-2020 and the changes in the Turkey-Russia nexus influence regional dynamics in multiple regions, including the Middle East, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus.³ Studies that focus on these regions will be able to use the insights provided in this work on how the Turkey-Russia nexus interacts with other regional dynamics. Third, this dissertation uses an original model loosely based on Type-3 Neoclassical Realism.⁴ It also benefits from Mohiaddin Mesbahi's framework

¹ The literature on the contours of the emerging world order is very popular, with contributions from preeminent scholars who agree on the decline of the US but have varied opinions on the dynamics of today's international system. See Richard Haas, "The Age of Nonpolarity," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 87, Iss. 1 (May 2008): 44-56; Charles A. Kupchan, *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008); Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), and Barry Buzan, "The inaugural Kenneth N. Waltz Annual Lecture: a world order without superpowers: decentred globalism," *International Relations* Vol. 25, Iss. 1 (2011): 3-25.

² Şener Aktürk, "Turkish–Russian Relations after the Cold War (1992–2002)," *Turkish Studies* Vol. 7, No. 3 (2006): 338.

³ See "Russia and Turkey in the Black Sea and the South Caucasus," *Crisis Group* (June 28, 2018); Mohiaddin Mesbahi, "Eurasia Between Turkey, Iran and Russia," in *Key Players and Regional Dynamics in Eurasia: The Return of the 'Great Game,'* ed. Marie Raquel Friere and Roger E. Kanet (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): 164-192, and William Hale, "Turkey, the U.S., Russia, and the Syrian Civil War," *Insight Turkey* Vol. 21, No. 4 (Fall, 2019): 25-40.

⁴ Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

on the multidimensional nature of state power.⁵ With the help of my model, I look at how the changes in state power in normative and economic dimensions create international outcomes. This original theoretical framework can be useful for other studies that examine bilateral relations between other countries.

1.2.The Argument of This Research

This dissertation attempts explains the conditions under which Turkey-Russia relations transformed in the period between 2001 and 2020. More specifically, I attempt to explain the conditions that made it possible for Turkey and Russia to develop their relations outside of the control of the West. I argue that the diminishing Western influence in Central Eurasia, the consolidation of the domestic powers of Putin and Erdoğan, and the rising bilateral trade volume strengthened cooperation in Turkey-Russia relations. With such assessment, this research goes beyond the explanations based only on leaders' attitudes, mutual benefits of bilateral trade, or changes in the balance of power. Instead, in this research, I acknowledge that the Turkey-Russia nexus, which is composed of two countries with 'composite' structures, operates within different regional and global political structures. I also acknowledge that these regional and global structures incorporate political, economic, and normative dynamics.

⁵ This dissertation benefits from the theoretical framework developed by Mesbahi over the years for his research on state power in general and US-Iran Relations in particular. See Mohiaddin Mesbahi, "Free and Confined: Iran and the International System," *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs* Vol. 2, No. 5 (Spring 2011): 9-34, and Mohiaddin Mesbahi, "Central Eurasia in Global Politics: Conflict, Security, and Development by Mehdi Parvizi Amineh and Henk Houweling," *Slavic Review* Vol. 65, No. 1 (Spring 2006): 179-180.

I explain the bilateral relations by focusing on major events that made the biggest impact on the bilateral relations in a particular period. Having detected three major events that made more impact on the bilateral relations than others, I divided the period of the years between 2001 and 2020 into three and focus on these three periods as separate episodes. Utilizing an eclectic framework, I show how the two countries digested and responded to the changes in the dynamics caused by a major event in each of these episodes. Then, I analyze how the way they responded to these major events reflected in the bilateral relations between Turkey and Russia.

Emerging strategic cooperation between Turkey and Russia in multiple regions, the increasing volume of bilateral trade, deepening cooperation in energy sector and the strengthening of bilateral and regional platforms of regional order demonstrates that the Turkey-Russia nexus went outside the Western hegemonic influence between the years 2001 and 2020. My analysis demonstrates that the balance of power between Turkey and Russia in Central Eurasia was primarily influential in bringing about this condition. In other words, the capacity of Turkey to counter Russia in multiple regions with the help of the West were the major factor that influenced Turkey-Russia relations. Such conclusion appeared throughout the period of 2001-2020 as Turkey's decreasing reliance upon the West to counter Russia brought deeper cooperation between Turkey and Russia.

1.3.Literature Review

1.3.1. Trade vs. Geopolitical Competition

In this first subsection of the literature review part, I look at the works that analyze the Turkey-Russia nexus by examining how cooperation in trade and geopolitical competition shape their bilateral relations.

The scholarly focus on relations between Turkey and Russia has increased since the end of the Cold War.⁶ Turkey-Russia relations significantly developed after the Cold War, which brought about economic cooperation and competition for influence in the post-Soviet space and other regions. These developments encouraged many scholars to evaluate the Turkey-Russia nexus by considering the increase in bilateral trade volume and clashes of interest over regional issues. This research tradition, which emerged in the late 1990s, still constitutes the bulk of the literature. In this subsection, I analyze how this portion of the literature has developed over the years between the late 1990s until the late 2010s.

Between the late 1990s and early 2000s, the researchers hesitated to consider expanding trade relations between Turkey and Russia as an indication for substantial

⁶ During the Cold War, the literature on Turkey-Russia relations was weak. Turkey's relations with Russia/the Soviet Union, and vice versa, could be assessed with the help of studies on Turkey's foreign policy during WWII and onward. Examples of such works include the following: Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second World War: An 'Active' Neutrality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Türkkaya Ataöv, *Türk Dış Politikası, 1939-1945* [Turkish Foreign Policy, 1939-1945] (Ankara: SBF, 1964); Petr Pavlovich Moiseyev and Yuriy Nikolayevich Rozaliyev, *K istorii sovetsko-turetskikh otnosheniy* [Towards a history of Soviet-Turkey relations] (Moscow: Politzdats, 1958), and Manvel Arsenovich Gasratan and Petr Pavlovich Moiseev, *SSSR i Turtsiya 1917 – 1979* [USSR and Turkey 1917-1919] (Moskva: Nauka, 1981). There were also sporadic essays and books on the relations between the Ottoman and Russian Empires produced during the Cold War: Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya* [Turkey and Russia] (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1990); Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi: Başlangıçtan 1917'ye kadar kadar* [Russian History: From the Beginning until 1917] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1987); Halil İnalçık, *Osmanlı – Rus Rekabetinin Menşei ve Don Volga Kanalı Teşebbüsü* [The Source of the Ottoman-Russian Competition and the Don Volga Canal Venture] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1948), and Halil İnalçık, *'Osmanlı-Rus İlişkileri 1492-1700* [Ottoman-Russian Relations 1492-1700]. (Ankara: Kırım Türkleri Yardımlaşma Derneği, 2003). After the Cold War, this literature was enriched by a number of contributions, a fact which may be assessed from the rise in the volume of books published in Turkey on Russia. See Ayten Çelebi, "Türkiye'de Rusya'ya Dair Çıkan Kitaplar (1991-2016)" [The Books Published in Turkey on Russia (1991-2006)], *Marmara Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* Cilt 3, Sayı 2 (Sonbahar 2016): 251-280.

improvement in bilateral relations due to the continuing conflict of interest between the two countries over multiple regions. Among the scholars describing the relations in this period, Suat Bilge uses the term “cold peace,”⁷ Bazoğlu-Sezer uses the term “virtual rapprochement,”⁸ and Trenin uses the word “schizophrenic.”⁹ Meyer points out historical rivalries and the lack of bilateral platforms to ensure the continuation of a positive trend in bilateral relations.¹⁰ Akgün and Aydın point out the challenges stemming from the differences of opinion on political issues.¹¹

Between the early 2000s and the early 2010s, Turkey-Russia relations continued to develop with no serious regional confrontation while trade relations continued to improve. Behind this development was the alignment in both countries’ attitudes towards the US invasion of Iraq and the leadership of Putin in Russia and Erdoğan in Turkey. This progress was reflected in non-theoretical scholarly assessments, which became less cautious in pointing out Turkey-Russia relations’ progress. In his 2002 article, Trenin argues that the

⁷ Suat Bilge, “An Analysis of Turkey-Russia Relations,” *Perceptions* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1997): 66.

⁸ Duygu Bazoğlu-Sezer, “Turkish-Russian relations: The challenges of reconciling geopolitical competition with economic partnership,” *Turkish Studies* Vol. 1, No. 1 (2000): 62.

⁹ Dmitri Trenin, “Russia and Turkey: A Cure for Schizophrenia,” *Perceptions* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1997): 57-65.

¹⁰ Mikhail Meyer, “Rossiya i Turtsiya na iskhode XX v.” [Russian and Turkey in 20th Century], in *Rossiya i Turtsiya na poroge XXI veka: Na puti v Evropu ili v Evraziyu* [Russia and Turkey at the doorstep of the 21st Century: Towards Europe or Eurasia], ed. by Irina Korbinski and Sherman Garnett, (Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1997), 21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19-28.

“schizophrenia” was cured, and Russia and Turkey had “buried the hatchet” as the competition over various regional fault lines cooled off.¹² Warhola and Mitchell,¹³ Yanık,¹⁴ Erşen,¹⁵ and Selçuk¹⁶ also produced works in agreement with such assessment.

From the beginning of the 2010s until the late 2010s, the deterioration in bilateral relations, which began with the so-called Arab Spring, escalated with the Syrian Crisis and culminated in the Jet Crisis, brought back a cautious approach to the non-theoretical analyses. In their 2014 article, Saidovich and Salomina suggest that some segments of the Russian elite’s holding a negative image of Turkey, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project (BTC), and the import-export imbalance are creating problems in bilateral relations.¹⁷ Đidić and Kösebalaban emphasize that a long-term alliance between Turkey and Russia is contingent upon the resolution of entrenched disagreements between Russia

¹² Dmitri Trenin, “Really burying the hatchet: Russia and Turkey find themselves on the same side,” *Insight Turkey* Vol. 4, No. 2 (April-June 2002): 25-32.

¹³ James A. Warhola and William A. Mitchell, “The Warming of Turkish-Russian Relations: Motives and Implications,” *Demokratizatsiya* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Winter 2006): 127.

¹⁴ Lerna Yanık, “Allies or Partners? An Appraisal of Turkey’s Ties to Russia, 1991-2007,” *East European Quarterly* Vol. 41, No.3 (Fall 2007): 363.

¹⁵ Emre Erşen, “Turkey and Russia: An Emerging ‘Strategic Axis’ in Eurasia?” *EurOrient*, No. 35-36, (2011): 263-282.

¹⁶ Hasan Tahsin Selçuk, *Türkiye-Rusya Ekonomik İlişkileri* [Turkey-Russian Economic Relations] (İstanbul: Tasam Yayınları, 2007).

¹⁷ Yagya Saidovic and Darya Solomina, “Otnosheniya Rossii i Turtsii v XXI Veke: Tendentsii i Trudnosti” [The Relations Between Turkey and Russia in 21st Century: Tendencies and Hardships], *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta* 6, vyp. 1 (2011): 127-137.

and Turkey over several regional issues.¹⁸ Kelkitli, who explains Turkey-Russia relations using complex-interdependence theory in her book, argues that although these relations have significantly improved since the end of the Cold War, this development has not brought about political integration.¹⁹ Öniş and Yılmaz argue that global economic dynamics strengthen the dynamics of economic cooperation in Turkey-Russia relations.²⁰ Çelikpala,²¹ Erşen,²² Çancı²³ and Ibrahimov,²⁴ Yanık,²⁵ and Köstem²⁶ also pointed out the fact that the foundations of the bilateral relations do not built upon solid foundations.

¹⁸ Ajdin Đidić and Hasan Kösebalaban, “Turkey’s Rapprochement with Russia: Assertive Bandwagoning,” *The International Spectator* Vol. 54, Issue 3 (2019): 123-138.

¹⁹ Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, *Turkish–Russian relations Competition and Cooperation in Eurasia* (London: Routledge, 2017), 136.

²⁰ Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, “Turkey and Russia in a shifting global order: Cooperation, conflict and asymmetric interdependence in a turbulent region,” *Third World Quarterly* Vol 37, Iss. 1 (2016): 71-95.

²¹ Mithat Çelikpala, “*Rekabet ve İş Birliği İkileminde Yönünü Arayan Türkiye-Rusya İlişkileri*” [Turkey-Russia Relations Looking for its Direction in the Dilemma of Competition and Cooperation], *Bilig* Vol. 72, (Winter 2015): 139.

²² Emre Erşen, “Evaluating the Fighter Jet Crisis in Turkish-Russian Relations,” *Insight Turkey* Vol. 19, No. 4 (2017): 85.

²³ Haldun Çancı, “Economic Pull Factors versus Political Push Factors: A Descriptive Analysis of Multidimensional Relations between Russia and Turkey,” *European Review* Vol. 25, No. 3 (2017): 463.

²⁴ Alimusa Gulmusa Ibrahimov, “Turtsiya i Rossiya: Vozmozhno li Strategicheskoye Partnerstvo?” [Turkey and Russia: Is Strategic Partnership Possible?], *Postsovetskoe Isledovanie* T.1, No. 3 (2018): 305.

²⁵ Lerna Yanık, “Keep(ing) calm and carry(ing) on business? Turkey-Russia relations, as seen from Turkey,” *Turkish Review* Vol. 5, No. 5 (Sep/Oct 2015): 375.

²⁶ Seçkin Köstem, “Russian-Turkish cooperation in Syria: geopolitical alignment with limits,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (February 3, 2020).

As described in this sub-section, the literature often treats the dichotomy between economic cooperation and regional competition as the central dynamic in Turkey-Russia relations. This dichotomy is indeed very significant on the bilateral level in the post-Cold War era. However, relying on this dichotomy often creates a risk of missing the bigger picture. In other words, without adopting a framework that explains the relevance of structural, regional, and domestic dynamics altogether, it is hard to discover the factors that shape Turkey-Russia relations. This work provides an in-depth examination of the trade relations and competition for regional influence within the framework of regional and global developments. I also use an eclectic framework that systematically analyzes how the Turkey-Russia nexus interacts with other dynamics on different levels and dimensions.

1.3.2. Explaining the Turkey-Russia Nexus with a Framework

The literature on Turkey-Russia relations also contains other valuable contributions that choose to approach the topic using a broader theoretical framework. These assessments do not ignore the dichotomy between the positive impact of trade relations and the negative impact of geopolitical competition on bilateral relations. They seek to explain how Turkey-Russia relations interact with regional and global dynamics in various dimensions. In this second subsection of the literature review section, I discuss the various frameworks used to explain Turkey-Russia relations to demonstrate the contribution of the model and framework used in this research.

One of the most prevalent explanations for the positive trends in Turkey-Russia relations is a Western-Liberal one, which focuses on the alleged affinity between the leaders of both countries based on their resentment, cynicism and opposition to the so-called Western political norms. These accounts often link the improvements in

Turkey-Russia relations to these countries' moving away from the West under 'illiberal leadership.' One of the oft-cited examples in this vein is Taşpınar and Hill's 2006 article, which considers the developments in Turkey-Russia relations as a tactical partnership, established out of a shared frustration caused by the aggressive US foreign policy strategy under the Bush Administration.²⁷ In his turn, Kirişçi considers Turkey's rapprochement with Russia as a result of Turkey's drifting away from the international liberal order.²⁸ In his 2018 book, Soner Çağaptay also emphasizes Erdoğan's agency in normalizing Turkey's relations with Russia instead of mending Turkey's ties with the West.²⁹

The way Turkey and Russia consider the West does have an indirect impact on their bilateral relations. For instance, as explained in this research, the regional and global changes caused by the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 positively impacted Turkey-Russia relations. However, these changes could be considered to be related to the changing regional and global balance of power and conflict of interest than the leadership styles or the non-Western characteristics of the two leaders. Therefore, I argue that the scholarly works that employ Western-Liberal perspective to explain Turkey-Russia relations tend to miss several vital dynamics that fundamentally impact Turkey-Russia relations. Moreover, their perspective often promotes and fosters a West-centric bias at the risk of overlooking other dynamics that impact Turkey-Russia relations.

²⁷ Fiona Hill and Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey and Russia: Axis of the excluded?" *Survival* Vol. 48, Iss. 1 (2006): 81.

²⁸ Kemal Kirişçi, *Turkey and the West: Fault Lines in a Troubled Alliance* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2018), 176.

²⁹ Soner Çağaptay, *Erdoğan's Empire: Turkey and the Politics of the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), 265.

Another framework used in literature to explain how Turkey-Russia relations improved after the Cold War is a Realist one. Scholars who prefer to approach the topic from this angle, draw attention to the impact on bilateral relations of the balance of power and the diminution of threats. Şener Aktürk produced three articles in which he argues that the ups and downs in Turkey-Russia relations can be best explained with the help of a Realist framework.³⁰ Topuzoğlu and Okur in their 2016 article,³¹ and Oğuzlu in his 2020 article³² also pointed out the relevance of the Realist premises in explaining the changes in the bilateral relations between Turkey and Russia.

The collapse of the Soviet Union precipitated significant changes on global, regional, and bilateral levels. The scholarly works that use a theoretical framework to explain Turkey-Russia relations help reveal the impact of Turkey and Russia's responses to the changes in regional and global structural dynamics on the Turkey-Russia nexus. This research also shows the positive and negative aspects of a bipolar international system's transition to a more complex one for Turkey-Russia relations. Nevertheless, focusing solely on power dynamics through a Realist framework, these scholarly works rarely capture the relevance of changes in the normative and economic structure or issues related to climate

³⁰ Aktürk, "Turkish-Russian Relations," Şener Aktürk, "Toward a Turkish-Russian Axis? Conflicts in Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine, and cooperation over nuclear energy," *Insight Turkey* Vol. 6, No. 15 (2014): 13-22, and Şener Aktürk, "Relations between Russia and Turkey Before, During, and After the Failed Coup of 2016," *Insight Turkey* Vol. 21, No. 4 (2019): 97-113.

³¹ Burak Topuzoğlu and Mehmet Akif Okur, "Türkiye-Rusya İlişkilerinde Değişimin Dinamikleri: 2011-2016" [Dynamics of Change in Turkey-Russia Relations], *Yıldız Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* Cilt 3, Sayı 1 (2019): 10.

³² Tarık Oğuzlu, "Turkish Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order," *All Azimuth* Vol. 9, No. 1 (2020): 127-139.

or public health. Moreover, depending on the type of Realist perspective they employ, this line of scholarship usually does not deal with the way individual states digest and respond to structural changes through their domestic decision-making mechanisms.

Third, a relatively less common approach utilized in the literature to explain the Turkey-Russia nexus is the critical geopolitical perspective. Scholarly contributions that use this approach often focus on how the way that Turkey and Russia imagine their surroundings impact their foreign policies. The scholarly works that use this framework often focus on the foreign policies of Turkey or Russia. In their work, using such a framework, Aras and Fidan assess how the new political rhetoric under the AK Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) government fueled Turkey's activism towards Eurasia in general and toward Russia in particular.³³ Gerard Toal's 2017 book, which examines Russia's foreign policy towards a post-Soviet space, touches upon how Russia's consideration of its "Near Abroad" promotes competition with Turkey.³⁴ Mesbahi argues that Turkey's active foreign policy strategy under Davutoğlu caused the Turkey-Russia partnership to depart from the US's control, although this partnership remains limited by Turkey's NATO membership and Russia's suspicions.³⁵ Mehdi Parvizi Amineh and Henk

³³ Bülent Aras and Hakan Fidan, "Turkey and Eurasia: Frontiers of a new geographic imagination," *New Perspectives on Turkey* Vol. 40, (2009): 193.

³⁴ Gerard Toal, *Near Abroad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 300.

³⁵ Mesbahi, "Eurasia between Turkey," 175.

Houweling's edited book includes multiple pieces that focus on regions where Turkey and Russia compete or cooperate.³⁶

The contributions of these works are undeniable despite the fact that they mostly focus on the individual foreign policies of Turkey and Russia. This research also benefits from critical geopolitics' insights to comprehend the way elites in both countries identify themselves and their surroundings. For example, I discuss the changes in which Russia imagines the post-Soviet region or the changes in which decision-makers in Turkey relate with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. However, I argue that an eclectic framework is better suited to discuss these dynamics within a wider framework through which regional and systemic dynamics can also be considered.

1.4. Epistemological Approach and Methodology

1.4.1. Soft Positivism

In this research, I analyze how various structural and agential factors affect Turkey-Russia relations. Producing a narrative of a social phenomenon that is verifiable and falsifiable can be challenging because social phenomena cannot be replicated, and there are endless amounts of dynamics involved in their creation. Also, the causal effects of ideas on political actions are often contingent, non-nomic, and indeterminate.³⁷ This is the case especially when the impact of normative dynamics on political actions are

³⁶ For example, Mehdi Parvizi Amineh and Henk Houweling, ed., *Central Eurasia In Global Politics: Conflict, Security, And Development* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), and Toal, *Near Abroad*.

³⁷ Albert S. Yee, "The Causal Effect of ideas on policies," *International Organization* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Winter 1997): 70.

considered. These factors compel the researcher to adopt a rather flexible epistemological stance. In soft-positivism, the researcher makes a distinction between facts and values and follows empirical research in his/her inquiry.³⁸ Therefore, such epistemological stance enables the incorporation of ideational factors through intervening variables in the model used in this research. Accordingly, this research adopts a soft positivist epistemological approach.

1.4.2. Process Tracing

Process tracing is one of the fundamental agents of qualitative research used to examine a historical phenomenon. It is an analytical tool to draw descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic shreds of evidence.³⁹ In process tracing, *critical junctures* and *path dependency* are used as two important agents that shape historical processes. *Critical junctures* give way to the birth of institutions, and these institutions create *path-dependent processes*. Such mechanism takes place in a historical sequence where different factors contribute to an outcome.⁴⁰ These processes then help maintain the structure of institutions with positive feedback. These events are treated as interrelated components of a combination of factors that sufficed to make the impact.⁴¹ John Mackie defines these kinds

³⁸Huw Macartney, "Variegated Neo-Liberalism: Transnationally Oriented Fractions of Capital in EU Financial Market Integration," *Review of International Studies* Vol. 35, No. 2 (April 2009): 457.

³⁹ David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *Political Science and Politics* 44, No. 4 (2011): 824.

⁴⁰ James Mahoney, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation," *Security Studies* 24, No. 2 (2015): 200-218,

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 203.

of factors as INUS conditions that are *insufficient* but a *necessary* part of a condition that is *unnecessary* but *sufficient* for the result.⁴² This kind of approach enables analyzing the impact of a critical juncture within the framework of other relevant factors.

In my work, I utilize process tracing by explaining how Turkey-Russia relations were transformed due to causal chains that began with major events, followed by both the two countries' responses to these events, and finally, shaping the bilateral relations. In line with the approach mentioned in the previous paragraph, I treat the various processes as conditions that are neither necessary nor sufficient for the result. I analyze the chronological evolution of bilateral relations by focusing on critical junctures, making substantial changes to the relations. I first identify the factors (constant and variable) that influence Turkey-Russia relations and then examine the impact of these factors on the relations using a complex framework and model, benefiting from various primary and secondary sources.

1.5.Theoretical Framework

1.5.1. Eclecticism

This dissertation attempts to explain the main factors behind the foreign policymaking processes in both countries and how these factors create changes in their bilateral relations. Therefore, this research is concerned with questions like what drives foreign policy and how international outcomes occur. There are various theoretical frameworks in the International Relations discipline that can be used for such a purpose.

⁴² John L. Mackie, "Causes and Conditions," *American Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 2, No. 4 (October 1965): 246.

For instance, Kenneth Waltz's Structural Realism assumes that a systemic change is a principal stimulus for a change in foreign policy strategy.⁴³ On the other hand, Liberal approaches tend to give less weight to structural forces and promote domestic factors as the main drivers of how changes in international affairs occur.⁴⁴ Constructivist approaches consider the international structure as socially constructed by various actors and point out the importance of rules, norms, and ideas.⁴⁵ In Foreign Policy Analysis literature, there have been attempts to build a middle-range theory that also explains domestic decision-making processes.⁴⁶ By drawing attention to how states imagine and act upon regional and global political dynamics, critical geopolitics is also employed to provide original accounts.⁴⁷ Despite their capability of addressing some of the relevant mechanisms that play a role in shaping Turkey-Russia relations, these frameworks are not well suited to produce an analysis that adequately covers the most critical dynamics of those relations.

As indicated above, this work examines the impact of factors that go beyond dimensions and levels. An eclectic framework can help overcome the challenges of

⁴³ Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

⁴⁴ Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (1997): 518.

⁴⁵ For more information, see Nicholas Onuf, "Constructivism, A User's Manual," in *International Relations in a Constructed World*, ed. Vendulka Kubalkova, Nicholas Onuf and Paul Kowert (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1998): 58-78.

⁴⁶ For more information, see Benjamin S. Day and Valerie M. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).

⁴⁷ For more information, see Gearóid Ó Tuathail, "Understanding critical geopolitics: Geopolitics and risk society," *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 22, Issue 2-3 (1999): 107-124.

fulfilling the task of this research. The approach that I employ in this work could be considered in the spirit of analytic eclecticism described by Sil and Katzenstein. In their 2010 book, the authors suggest that sets of complex and heterogeneous interactions should be addressed with an expansive and flexible view of causality, enabling going beyond single paradigms.⁴⁸ They demonstrate that it is possible to overcome the limitations of paradigm-bound research with an eclectic approach that selectively integrates different analytical frameworks or mechanisms.⁴⁹ Thus, an eclectic approach helps capture the bilateral dynamics in Turkey-Russia relations without overlooking their complexity and the dynamics within which they occur. This dissertation aims to explain the causal relations behind the transformations in Turkey-Russia relations. The causes behind these transformations may stem from structural changes, leadership, domestic decision-making processes, or other major international or domestic events. Unlike most other frameworks that consider one or two of these issues, an eclectic framework potentially enables triangulating multiple of these issues and to produce a coherent and consistent narrative.

1.5.2. Type-3 Neoclassical Realism with an Eclectic Spin

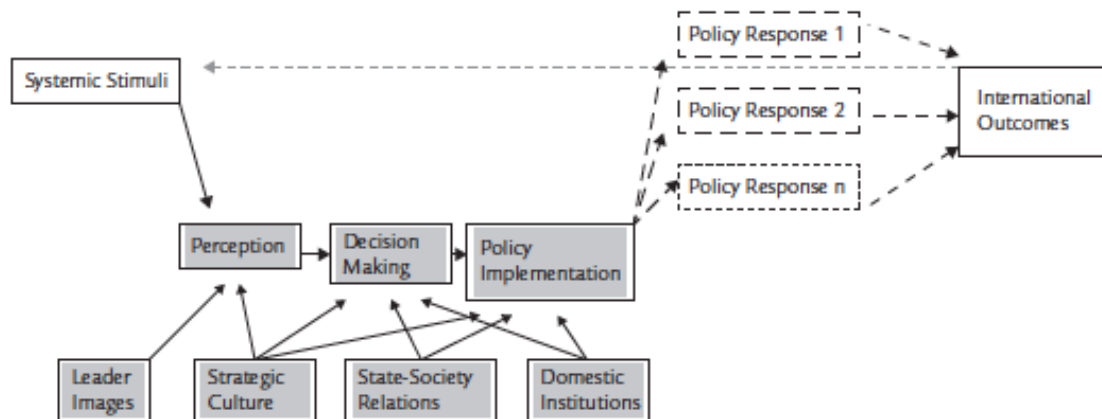
The eclectic framework I formulated is based on Type-3 Neoclassical Realist Theory.⁵⁰ In this subsection, I introduce the original model developed by Ripsman,

⁴⁸ Rudra Sil and Peter J. Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁰ The works that are considered as Neoclassical Realist demonstrate how a systemic stimulus turns into a foreign policy strategy having passed through the dynamics of a domestic foreign policy decision-making process. Therefore, they reject Constructivism and Liberalism for downplaying the impact of the relative distribution of power in the system on state behavior. Yet they part ways with Structural Realism by including state-

Taliaferro, and Lobell. In their book, *Neoclassical Realist Theory in International Relations*, the authors provide a sophisticated toolbox for analyzing a wide range of political phenomena from the decision-making processes during crisis moments to shifts in regional or global political structures. Borrowing insights from the literature of Foreign Policy Analysis, Classical Realism and Strategy, Type-3 Neoclassical Realism⁵¹ helps to analyze how *systemic stimuli* are translated into foreign policy action after being filtered through domestic decision-making mechanisms and how these foreign policy actions create systemic consequences (See Figure 1.1). I employ this model in my research while investigating how Turkey and Russia interpreted and reacted to different *stimuli* and how their reactions shaped the Turkey-Russia nexus in 2001-2020.



level factors in their explanations. Neoclassical Realism points out that various factors (misperception, lack of clarity of systemic signals, failure to mobilize state resources, irrationality, etc.) may condition the way states react to systemic signals. For more information about Neoclassical Realism, see Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” *World Politics* Vol. 51, No. 1 (October 1998): 144-172.

⁵¹ Ripsman *et al.* consider the first generation that attempts to explain anomalous foreign policy decisions as Type-1 and the emerging literature that focuses on why a foreign policy decision is taken as Type-2. See Ripsman *et al.*

Figure 1.1. Ripsman et al.'s original model for Type-3 Neoclassical Realism.
Source: Ripsman et al., 34.

Type-3 Neoclassical Realism considers that the *systemic stimuli* are filtered through a domestic transmission belt, which acts as the *intervening* variable. It examines the complex process triggered by the *systemic stimuli* in the state decision-making structure. The intervening variable is a three-segmented process. The *perception* phase is the first phase, where foreign policy executives react to a *systemic stimulus*. The *decision-making* phase is the second segment, where appropriate reactions toward a particular development are discussed and determined by the domestic decision-making mechanism. The *policy implementation* phase is the final phase in this chain.

In the perception phase, the *leader image*, in the form of core beliefs, images, ideologies, personalities, and *strategic culture*, may inform how *systemic stimuli* are perceived in the *perception* phase.⁵² Apart from the *strategic culture*, both *state-society relations* and *domestic institutions* may also impact the decision-making. This process unfolds in the *decision-making* phase. *Strategic culture* potentially informs the *policy implementation* phase, especially if the state implements a policy in opposition to the dominant *strategic culture*. Depending on the regime type and societal dynamics, the *state-society relations* and *domestic institutions* may also play a significant role in implementing the degree of economic and moral support by the society and the degree of compliance by *domestic institutions*.

⁵² Ripsman et al., 62.

Last, Type-3 Neoclassical Realism problematizes the *system* as well. In their consideration of the system, Ripsman *et al.* generally accept the Neorealist view, suggesting that states' foreign policies fit the international environment.⁵³ Yet, they also underline the circular structure in the international system by indicating how major powers' grand strategic choices can also play a role in creating international outcomes.⁵⁴ Therefore, Ripsman *et al.* agree with Waltz on the international system's anarchic nature and how the system conditions state behavior.⁵⁵ However, they utilize Jervis' explanation⁵⁶ for how the system is formed as the aggregate outcome of several units' strategies into one another.⁵⁷ In other words, their consideration of the system results from the accumulation of the policy responses and grand strategic adjustments of individual states.⁵⁸ This element of Type-3 Neoclassical Realism can help analyze how the Turkey-Russia nexus was remade by two composite states' actions in the period between 2001 and 2020.

1.5.3. Pierson's View of Temporality

Another component of the methodological framework used in this research attempts to cover the bases of the temporal dimension of the causes behind the

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 32

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁵⁵ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Menlo Park: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979), 106.

⁵⁶ Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁵⁷ Ripsman *et al.*, 38.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

developments in Turkey-Russia relations. As implied above, this study analyzes the impact of multiple phenomena on Turkey-Russia relations. Some of those causes occur briefly, but their effects are observed over the long run. For example, the 9/11 attacks took only hours, but their impact is still with us. Some other causes need more time to be completed, but their impact unfolds rather quickly. For example, the ossification of the Soviet system, which took decades, played an essential role in the sudden demise of the USSR. Analysis of the temporal dimension of the causal processes promotes better operationalization.

In order to address this, I use Paul Pierson's analogy regarding the temporal dimension of social events. In his book, he classifies causes and impacts in accordance with how much time it takes them to unfold. Pierson names these types with reference to natural disasters: tornado (short term cause/short term outcome), earthquake (short term cause/long term outcome), meteorite (long term cause/short term outcome), and global warming (long term cause/long term outcome).⁵⁹ Pierson's method facilitates the classifying of different factors according to their duration and the endurance of the relevance of their impact.⁶⁰ In an attempt to better capture the nature of every *stimuli* and their impact on Turkey-Russia relations, I utilize Pierson's framework. Accordingly, at the beginning of each body chapter, I describe the temporal dimension of the *stimulus* according to Pierson's framework. For example, in the fourth chapter, the *stimulus* is the

⁵⁹ Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 81.

⁶⁰ For an analysis of how Pierson's work may be useful in process tracing, see Şener Aktürk, "Temporal Horizons in the Study of Turkish Politics: Prevalence of Non-Causal Description and Seemingly Global Warming Type of Causality," *All Azimuth* Vol. 8, No. 2 (2019): 117-133.

Syrian Civil War, which unfolded through the years and continued to affect the Turkey-Russia relations for years. Thus, that *stimulus* was described as a ‘global warming’ type.

1.6. Model of This Research and Its Operationalization

My model interprets the developments in Turkey-Russia relations between 2001 and 2020 in a three-segmented process. These three segments include the emergence of a significant event (*stimulus*), the responses of Turkey and Russia to these events in their domestic decision-making mechanisms (decision-making), and their responses to the bilateral relations (feedback). These three can be abbreviated as stimuli, policy-response, and feedback (See Figure 1.2.).

In the first segment of Type-3 Neoclassical Realism, a significant event occurs that can make a substantial impact on bilateral relations (See Figure 1.2.). In this segment’s conceptualization, I use the original conceptualization of *stimulus* in Type-3 Neoclassical Realism with two important modifications. First, Type-3 Neoclassical Realism considers the changes in the distribution of power as the most important dynamic in international politics that triggers a change in the way states formulate their foreign policies.⁶¹ This view is in line with Neoclassical Realism, which considers economic power as an element of power and does not discuss normative power. Yet, as Mesbahi demonstrates, states operate within normative and economic structures as well.⁶² Therefore, states also respond to *stimuli* of an economic and normative nature as well. In agreement with this, I argue that a *stimulus* does not have to be about power distribution in the strategic dimension, but it can

⁶¹ Ripsman *et al.*, 43.

⁶² Mesbahi, “Free and Confined,” 3.

refer to major events related to changes in normative or economic structures. For example, I consider how the COVID-19 outbreak made an impact on the bilateral trade relations. Second, in Type-3 Neoclassical Realism, Ripsman *et al.* suggest *systemic stimuli* occur at a system or regional sub-system level.⁶³ However, in my model, the *stimuli* do not always appear at a system or sub-system level. The significant events I consider as *stimuli* in this work are the Iraq War (2003), Arab Spring (2011), and the failed coup attempt in Turkey (2016). These events originated on different levels, but all three influenced the Turkey-Russia nexus.

In the policy-response segment, I explain how each country generates a policy response to these events after they digest the stimuli in their respective decision-making mechanisms (See Figure 1.2.). By acknowledging the normative and economic structures in this research, I also examine how states interact with these structures. While Type-3 Neoclassical Realism does not explicitly recognize the normative and economic structures, these dynamics can be reflected in the model's intervening variable within the framework of a soft-positivist approach employed in this research. I do not specifically apply the original intervening variable of Type-3 Neoclassical Realism to my research in my model. Instead, I simplify this part in one box, labeled 'domestic audience,' where I show how policy is produced in each country's case.

In the third segment, I explain how these policy responses influence and reshape the Turkey-Russia nexus. I specifically look at the impact of policy responses of the two countries on the Turkey-Russia nexus (See Figure 1.2.). This is the most extensive part of

⁶³ Ripsman *et al.*, 40.

my model and this research. It demonstrates how the developments in the first and second segments affect several aspects of Turkey-Russia relations. Since each country has a crucial place in the other's regional and global foreign policy strategy, the *foreign policy response* produced in the second segment influences Turkey's policy towards Russia and vice versa. This influence is felt in various dimensions (trade, conflict, energy, etc.) of bilateral relations. These three segments form the skeleton of the body chapters of this work.

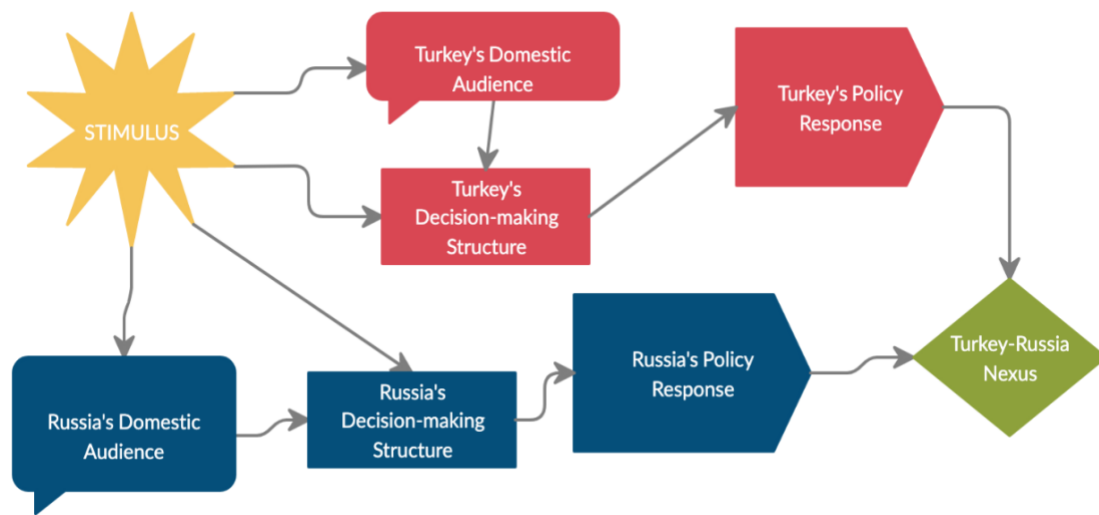


Figure 1.2. The model used in this research

1.6. Organization of this work

This dissertation is composed of six chapters, the first one being this introduction. The second chapter provides a historical background of the relations between Turkey and Russia. The following three chapters can be considered as body chapters where I analyze how Turkey-Russia relations developed in the period between 2001 and 2020. In the concluding chapter, I discuss the contribution of this work to the literature, examine its limitations, and provide suggestions for further research.

1.6.1. Historical Background Chapter

In Chapter 2, I provide a historical background of the bilateral relations. This chapter begins with the first encounters between the nations in the 16th century and examines their bilateral relations until the contemporary era. Turkey and Russia are the successors of two mighty empires of Central Eurasia. The Ottoman and Russian Empires once dominated an area from Eastern Europe to the Pacific, from the Arctic to Arabia. Thus, several important dynamics observed in the Turkey-Russia nexus today have deep historical roots. Examples of these crucial dynamics include the West's role in helping Turkey balance Russia in the Black Sea region, Russia's export of vast raw materials, and the securitization dynamics between the nations stemming from successive wars between them. This chapter is composed of two parts. In the first, I focus on relations between the Ottoman and Russian Empires. In the second part, I focus on the relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union/Russia during the 20th century.

1.6.2. Body Chapters

In Chapter 3, Chapter 4, and Chapter 5, I examine how Turkey-Russia relations developed between 2001 and 2020. I start each of these chapters by explaining how Turkey and Russia developed foreign policies concerning the major developments of the period and how their responses remade Turkey-Russia relations. First, I analyze how the two countries interpreted and responded to the vital events (*stimuli*) of each period. Then, I discuss how their responses impact the areas of competition (mostly regional crisis hotspots) and the areas of cooperation (bilateral trade and energy relations) in Turkey-Russia nexus.

The *stimuli* in Chapter 3 is the invasion of Iraq. This chapter examines the period between 2001 and 2009. While the war ended in five weeks, it had a lasting influence on the balance of power in the Middle East by eliminating Iraq. The war also affected the global balance of power by tarnishing the global prestige of the US. Both changes had important reverberations for Turkey-Russia relations. But especially the diminishing power of the US global role created the conditions for the two countries to adopt more assertive foreign policies. Since the Iraq War developed within the framework of the foreign policymaking of the George W. Bush Administration, this chapter's analysis starts in the year 2001 and ends in 2009. This period coincided with the beginning and consolidation of the rules of Erdoğan in Turkey and Putin in Russia. These assertive leaders found a chance to restructure their foreign policy agenda in an environment where there was a global backlash against US unilateralism. This pursuit of independence promoted cooperation between Turkey and Russia, not only on the bilateral level but also on the regional and global levels, with the alignment in how they considered the US's role in global affairs. While the invasion of Iraq is the focal point of this chapter, I also discuss the impact of other events that indirectly influenced the relations between the two countries, such as the Color Revolutions.

The major event of Chapter 4 is the Syrian Crisis. This chapter examines the period between 2009 and mid-2016. This chapter deals with the bilateral relations between 2009 and 2016. Though their reactions to the first phase of the Arab Spring were similar, there developed a marked divergence between Turkey and Russia over Syria's future. With Turkey and Russia's involvement on opposite sides in the Syrian Civil War, the tensions between the two significantly deteriorated in parallel. Moreover, the adoption of a hands-

off approach by Obama towards the Middle East in this period weakened Turkey's leverage in the region. This dynamic's significance is evident in the process that followed the Jet Crisis, which substantially harmed all segments of their bilateral relations.

In Chapter 5, I look at the period when the Turkey-Russia partnership reached unprecedented levels of engagement after the coup attempt in Turkey in 2016. This chapter examines the period between mid-2016 and 2020. In contrast to the previous two periods, when regional events, which occurred beyond the Turkey-Russia nexus impacted bilateral relations, the most crucial development in this era occurred inside Turkey. The failed coup attempt on June 15, 2016, played a significant role in widening the rift between the US and Turkey and encouraged Turkey to adopt an assertive foreign policy strategy. This change paved the way for deeper engagement between Turkey and Russia to resolve regional issues and brought about broader partnerships in the defense and energy sectors.

1.6.3. Conclusion

In the concluding chapter, I examine the triangulation of the Turkey-Russia nexus with the emerging world order, survey the results of this research and discuss the contributions of my work to the ongoing scholarship on Turkish Foreign Policy, Russian Foreign Policy, Turkey-Russia relations, the regional powers, and the emerging global geopolitics. I also provide suggestions for further research.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a historical background of Turkey-Russia relations. The dynamics of the context in which the Turkey-Russia nexus operate are historically rooted. As two of the most eminent powerhouses in Central Eurasia, Turkey and Russia have competed for influence over the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and the Balkans for centuries. By analyzing the historical background of Turkey-Russia relations, this chapter serves three major purposes. First, the narrative of this chapter supports the main argument by demonstrating how the two countries' reactions to changes in the political context have shaped the bilateral relations throughout history. More specifically, this chapter also shows the relevance of the West in bilateral relations by putting the Turkey-Russia relations within the context of the Western hegemonic influence in the region. Second, this chapter provides necessary background knowledge about various issues in bilateral relations that became relevant in 2001-2020. Third, despite the prevailing dynamics of competition, Turkey and Russia also had short intervals of cooperation. These intervals provide contextual background for explaining the dynamics that promote collaboration in bilateral relations in 2001-2020.

This chapter is composed of two chronological parts. In the first part, I look at the interactions between the Ottoman Empire and the Muscovite Principality/Russian Empire. This part begins with a brief account of the formation of the two nations. Then, I provide an analysis of the relations between the Ottoman and Russian Empires in two subsections. I examine the construction of bilateral ties and then the competition between two empires over multiple regions. In the second part, I look at the 20th century, when Turkey and the

Soviet Union remade Turkey-Russia relations between two post-imperial states. The second part starts with a short analysis of Turkey and the USSR's phase of establishment and their dominant strategic cultures. Finally, I analyze how the relations between Turkey and the USSR/Russian Federation developed throughout the 20th century under the influence of a continuing geopolitical clash of interests.

2.1. Establishment of Bilateral Relations Between the Turks and Russians

2.1.1. Origins of the Ottoman Turks and the Russians

2.1.1.1. The Ottoman Turks

The Ottoman Turks originated from the Altaic nomads located to the north of China. They neighbored other nomadic tribes and the Chinese. Starting from the 2nd century BC, changing political, economic, and climatic conditions in this region brought about westward waves of migration of nomadic peoples. Some of the Turkic people who migrated in this period later adopted Islam and founded several significant political entities, including the Karahanids (840 – 1212) in Central Asia and the Seljuks (1037 – 1194) in the Middle East.⁶⁴ By the late 13th century, hundreds of thousands of Turkic people who escaped from Mongol invasions settled in Asia Minor. The majority of them became part of the Mongol Empire, which rapidly dominated almost everywhere East of the Adriatic Sea, before partitioning into four succeeding states.⁶⁵ The decline of the Ilkhanates, one of

⁶⁴ For an accessible account of the history of the Turks see Carter Findley, *Turks in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) and Norman Stone, *Turkey: A Short History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2017).

⁶⁵ For more information about the history of the Mongols and their successor states see Timothy May, *The Mongol Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

the successors to the Mongol Empire located in the Middle East, led to the strengthening of Turkic tribes⁶⁶ throughout Asia Minor.⁶⁷ One of these tribes, which had settled in Northwestern Anatolia and was led by Osman Bey,⁶⁸ was well-positioned to manipulate its advantageous location to expand against the declining Byzantines and Mongols.⁶⁹ The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottomans⁷⁰ destroyed the Byzantium Empire, removing a significant impediment to the Turkic domination of the Balkans. The idea of *ghaza*⁷¹ and the toleration of different faiths in newly acquired territories enabled Ottoman expansion towards the West through the Balkans. The subjugation of other Turkic tribes in Asia Minor through battles or voluntary accessions in Anatolia opened the doors of Eastern Anatolia and then the Middle East to the Ottomans. Under Selim, in the early 16th century, the conquest of Egypt, Syria, and the Hejaz made the Ottoman Empire the preeminent authority within the Islamic world.

⁶⁶ Such tribes were called *Uç beylikleri* (frontier principalities), political entities emerging across Anatolia in the late 13th century and strengthened as Ilkhanates declined.

⁶⁷ For more about the Mongols' relations with the Turks in Asia Minor see Sara Nur Yıldız, "Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-Century Seljuk Anatolia: The Politics of Conquest and History Writing, 1243-1282" PhD Dissertation (University of Chicago, 2006).

⁶⁸ For more information about the early phase of the Ottomans, see Halil İncik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600* (New Haven, Phoenix Press, 2001).

⁶⁹ Halil İncik, *Studies in Ottoman Social and Economic History* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), 78-79.

⁷⁰ The name Ottoman comes from a false transliteration of Arabic *Uthman*.

⁷¹ *Ghaza*, the practice of fighting infidels in order to spread Islam, played a significant role in early Ottoman expansion. See Halil İncik and Donald Quatert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Vol. 1 1300 – 1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11.

2.1.1.2. The Russians

Today's Russian-speaking Slavic nation in today's Russia originate from a Proto-Slavic people located to the north of the Carpathian Mountains around the 7th century CE. The ancestors of today's Russians neighbored the Finnic and Lithuanian people to their north and Turkic peoples located in today's Ukraine.⁷² In the 9th century, a Viking (Varangian) tribe named Rus' entered the Baltic, subjugated the local proto-Slavic population, and formed a political entity around Novgorod. As the tribe of Rus' quickly assimilated into local Slavic culture, the center of its political entity moved to Kyiv in the south. The Russians then adopted Byzantine Christianity as their state religion in 980. In the 13th century, the Mongol Empire destroyed Kievan Rus and established political domination over the *knyajestvos* (Slavic principalities) and *khanates* (Turkic political entities) to the north of the Black Sea. The Mongols, later called Tatars by the Russians,⁷³ established their political center in the Upper Volga Region. The leaders and ruling class of the Golden Horde⁷⁴ in the region embraced Islam. From the mid-15th century on, the Muscovite principality began to gain power due to Moscow's favorable geoeconomics, its able leaders, and the restoration of an independent church structure in Moscow. Building upon these, the Muscovites' expansion gained impetus under Ivan IV (reign: 1533-1584), crowned in the Cathedral of Dominion in 1547 as the 'Tsar of All Russias,' indicating

⁷² For the political and social institutions of Tsarist Russia, see Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974).

⁷³ Tatar was the name of one of the many tribes that comprised the Mongol Empire.

⁷⁴ Following the disintegration of the Mongol Empire, the political entity that ruled what is today Russia began to be known as the Golden Horde.

authority over all the Slavic principalities in the region. By the late 16th century, the Muscovites entered on a path to becoming the most formidable force in the area.

2.2. The Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire

2.2.1. Early Ottoman – Russia Relations (1495-1783)

The first official contact between the Ottomans and the Russians took place in 1495 when a Muscovite envoy visited the Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul to demand economic capitulation to purchase silk and sell fur.⁷⁵ At that time, the Ottoman Empire targeted to expand towards the Balkans to preserve the balance of power north of the Black Sea by providing support to the weaker entities against the most powerful ones in that region. Within the framework of this policy, the Ottomans would ally on different occasions with the Poles, Crimeans, and Muscovites.⁷⁶ While the Muscovites gained strength by taking the surrounding Turkic Khanates and Slavic Principalities under their domain, the Ottoman Empire did not take a decisive step towards eliminating or curtailing the Russian threat until the 17th century.⁷⁷ At this point, the Muscovite Principality was not a strong entity

⁷⁵ During this first visit, the Russian envoy's disrespectful attitude in the palace resulted in his deposition. Only after a second visit were bilateral relations established. Since the Ottoman Sultans did not see Muscovite *knyazes* as equals, the Ottoman vassal the Crimean Tatar Khanate was chosen to act as mediator between the Ottoman palace and the Muscovites. For more information, see Halil İnalçık, *Osmanlı-Rus İlişkileri* [Ottoman-Russia Relations].

⁷⁶ When the Golden Horde collapsed, the balance of power tilted in favor of the Crimean Khanate. Until late 16th century, the Ottomans supported the Muscovites considering it a natural ally against Poland. When the Muscovites began to match the Crimeans' power the Ottoman Empire began to back the Crimeans against the Russians.

⁷⁷ The only plan the Ottoman Empire made in order to increase their control in the region is the Don – Volga canal project, which would connect the two rivers. Yet, the developments in central Europe and Crimean opposition to the project prevented the plan from coming to fruition. For more information, please see Halil İnalçık, *Osmanlı – Rus*

whose rise or expansion could worry the Ottomans, who were the hegemonic power in the Black Sea region. Only from the late 17th century did the Ottomans begin to provide the Crimeans with active support to balance the Muscovites.⁷⁸

During the 18th century, under able rulers, Russia conducted massive administrative reforms and modernized its military. In 1695, Peter I (reign: 1696 – 1725), whose fondness for shipbuilding helped establish the first Russian navy, would surprise the Ottomans with his attempt to take the Azov Fortress on the shores of the Black Sea. With the Russian military beginning to overpower the Ottomans, the change in the balance of power significantly impacted bilateral relations. Even though Peter's efforts did not immediately lead to Russian supremacy over the Black Sea, his successors continued to push the boundaries of the Empire further. In the second half of the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire's stagnation encouraged Catherine II (reign: 1762 – 1796) to consider extending Russia's influence not only in the Black Sea but also in the Mediterranean region.⁷⁹ With its victory in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768 – 1774, Russia dominated the Black Sea and increased its influence in the Balkans. After the war, Russia gained the protection of the Christian nations in the Balkans and ensured the Crimean Khanate's independence before annexing it in 1783.

Rekabetinin Menşei ve Don Volga Kanalı Teşebbüsü [The Source of the Ottoman-Russian Competition and the Don-Volga Canal Venture] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1948).

⁷⁸ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and the Modern Turkey: Volume I, Empire of Gazis – The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280-1808*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 177.

⁷⁹ For more information, see Hugh Ragsdale, "Evaluating the Traditions of Russian Aggression: Catherine II and the Greek Project," *The Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 66, No. 1 (1988): 91-117.

2.2.2. The Great Powers and the Ottoman Recession

During the period between the French Revolution and World War I (WWI), the changes in the balance of power in the region gradually reflected in the bilateral relations between Turkey and Russia. Against the backdrop of the Ottomans' decline, the Russian influence expanded in the Balkans through Russia's utilizing secessionist movements among the non-Muslim Balkan subjects of the Ottoman Empire. At this point, the Ottoman Empire began to look to the West as an ally against Russia. The Ottoman Straits, the shortest route to Britain's colonies in southern and eastern Asia, was crucial for Russian access to the Mediterranean. However, in the 1830s, Britain ignored the Ottomans' demand for support in dealing with Egypt's rebellious governor, and France sided with Egypt. The Sultan desperately turned to Russia, which sent its navy to Istanbul ostensibly to protect the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁰ In the year 1833, the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire signed the Hünkâr İskelesi Agreement, which included international law provisions.⁸¹ The European Great Powers, especially Britain, took the treaty seriously and began to support the Ottoman Empire against Russia.⁸² In the year 1841, the London Straits Convention met at Britain's request and closed the Straits to all warships. The tensions led to the Crimean

⁸⁰ Mehmet Ali Pasha was the commander of the Albanian troops in Egypt. Following the end of French rule there (1798 – 1801), Mehmet Ali secured the position of Governor of Egypt, accumulated power for himself and formed a new army with the help of the instructors he had imported from France.

⁸¹ Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of The Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume II, Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 34.

⁸² For more information, see Frederick Stanley Rodkey, "Lord Palmerston and the Rejuvenation of Turkey, 1830-41," *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 1, No. 4 (December, 1929): 570-593.

War (1853-1856), when the combined forces of the Ottoman Empire, Britain, and France defeated the Russian Empire. This process laid the groundwork for the alliance between Turkey and the West against Russia in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

Another important dynamic of this era was the increasing European economic and social influence over the two Empires. With the advancements in military techniques, the European forces began to outperform the Ottoman and Russian armies in a process that started with the Industrial Revolution. Also, Europe's vibrant political and ideological atmosphere deeply impacted the Ottoman and Russian political elites. In the Russian Empire, the growing working class, emerging bourgeoisie, and segments from the bureaucracy and the military had created many political movements that aimed to end the Tsarist autocracy.⁸³ In 1905, these movements formed the *Duma* (Russian parliamentary assembly with a consultative role) when the Tsar Nicholas II (reign: 1894-1917) could not resist political participation demands through strikes and protests that formed the Russian Revolution of 1905.

The Ottoman Empire also experienced a reformation process during the 19th century.⁸⁴ When Ottoman reformers grew dissatisfied with the pace of reforms, they

⁸³ These movements differed in the means they used to achieve their objective and the systems they wanted to use to replace the Tsarist autocracy. Upon his defeat in the Crimean War, Tsar Alexander II (reign: 1855-1881) emancipated millions of serfs in Russia but could not satisfy the revolutionaries who wanted more radical changes. Alexander III (reign: 1881-1894) succeeded his father, who was assassinated by revolutionaries. The son conducted massive economic reforms in an attempt to attract international investments to Russia and connect Russia's periphery to the center.

⁸⁴ Western-oriented Ottoman reforms began in the early 19th century under Selim III (reign: 1789 – 1808), who attempted to form a European-type army. Selim's successor, Mahmut II (reign: 1808 – 39), introduced European-style reforms not only to the military but also to the legal and administrative structures of the Ottoman Empire. The *Tanzimat* [reforms]

dethroned Abdulmecid I (reign: 1823-1861), replacing him with Abdulhamid II (reign: 1876 – 1908), who promised a constitutional monarchy. Yet, Abdulhamid II closed the Parliament two years after its opening and embarked on a crackdown of the reformers. The reformers went underground and abroad, where they formed the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in 1895. They rapidly gained popularity among the officer corps. In the year 1908, the Ottoman reformist soldiers restored the Parliament after a coup.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, the involvement of military officers in politics led to the defeat of the Ottomans in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and the Ottoman Empire's ill-fated decision to participate in WWI on the side of Germany.

The Russian Empire played a significant role in the ultimate collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The consecutive wars fought with Russia devastated the Ottoman economy and undermined modernization attempts. Russia helped secure all Balkan nations' independence and invaded the Ottoman territories on the Northern Black Sea coastline. The Soviet Union would follow a similar expansionist policy against Turkey, which would eventually aimed to seek the support of the West.

that were declared by Abdulmecid (reign: 1839-61) in 1839, furthered Mahmut II's administrative and military reforms. More importantly, *Tanzimat* resulted in the emergence of a westernized elite that was dedicated to changing the way the Empire functioned.

⁸⁵ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 83-87.

2.3. The Relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union in the 20th century

2.3.1. Foundation of Turkey and the Soviet Union

2.3.1.1. War of Independence and Modern Turkey

The modern Turkish Republic, which adopted anti-imperialism, nationalism, and Westernism to rebuild the country and its foreign policy strategy, succeeded the Ottoman Empire. Following the coup d'état in 1908, the CUP had consolidated their authority over the Ottoman institutions and developed an extensive grassroots network across Anatolia and the Balkans. While the CUP leadership resigned and fled after the defeat in WWI, their network persisted across Asia Minor.⁸⁶ With the Moudros Armistice Agreement in October 1918, the Ottoman Empire surrendered all its territories outside Asia Minor to the Allies. In response to the occupation, resistance forces were formed across Anatolia.⁸⁷ In May 1919, Mustafa Kemal,⁸⁸ an Ottoman general who was sent to Anatolia by the Ottoman Government in Istanbul to alleviate the inter-communal violence there, utilized his authority to supervise the existing resistance and then resigned from his duties. In April 1920, the Ottoman Parliament was reformed in Ankara under Kemal's leadership. The Parliament approved the *Misak-ı Milli* (National Pact), committing to save Asia Minor and Thrace from occupation.

In August 1920, the Ottoman Government in Istanbul signed the Sevres Agreement, which partitioned the Ottoman Empire's territories among the Allied powers. Under the

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁸⁷ Shaw and Shaw, *History of the*, 340.

⁸⁸ Founder of the modern Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) was an army commander in the Ottoman Army and fought in Çanakkale and Palestine during WWI.

command of the Turkish Parliament in Ankara, the newly formed Turkish Army fought the occupying forces and saved most of Asia Minor and Thrace from foreign occupation in 1922. In the Lausanne Agreement, signed in July 1923 by Mustafa Kemal's delegation, Turkey achieved independence under the new Parliament, put an end to the economic capitulations, and, with some exceptions, realized the territorial aim outlined in *Misak-ı Milli*. Instead of maintaining and furthering the Ottoman Empire's imperial character and continuing its grievances towards the West, Mustafa Kemal aimed to create a homogeneous, secular Turkish nation with a Westernized lifestyle through top-down reforms.⁸⁹ Atatürk's CHP (Republican People's Party – *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) remained in power for twenty-seven years before the emergence of DP (Democrat Party – *Demokrat Parti*).

Regarding Turkey's foreign policy strategy, it should be noted that Turkey was founded upon a nationalist, anti-imperialist war in Anatolia. The diplomatic and military struggle to earn independence and sovereignty left a lasting anti-imperialist strand in Turkish strategic culture. On the other hand, Turkey's new Republican elites also saw the West as the center of civilization and aimed to make Turkey a respected member of Western international society. This dilemma allowed certain tactical flexibilities, examples of which may be seen in Turkey's cooperation with the Soviet Union while rebuilding

⁸⁹ To achieve this end, Turkey adopted a *jacobinite* state secularism and conducted major reforms, including imposition of a new dress code, the Latinization of the alphabet, introduction of a secular education system, and the abolition of the *khalifate* reforms as well as a population exchange between Greece and Turkey.

relations with Britain and Greece.⁹⁰ In these years, at the heart of Turkey's foreign policy strategy laid the principle of 'Peace at Home, Peace in the World' through which the Republican elite declared that Turkey hold no imperial or irredentist aims.

2.3.1.2. The Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union

Contrary to its revolutionary aspiration, the Soviet leadership ended up embracing the fundamental aspects of the Tsarist era political practices. Before WWI, the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) was a small fringe element on the Russian political spectrum. The Bolsheviks relied on the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, who emphasized the workers' need for the leadership of full-time revolutionaries and wanted to transform the RSDLP into a strictly centralized underground organization.⁹¹ As a dedicated, close-knit organization, in October 1917, the Bolsheviks orchestrated a successful coup against the Provisional Government, which was formed after the Tsar's abdication in March 1917.⁹² After the coup, the Bolsheviks seized power on behalf of the *soviets* [unstructured workers' assemblies]. To keep the power, they promised land to peasants, peace to soldiers, and self-determination to the non-Russian nationalities. With the Brest-Litovsk agreement in March 1918, the Bolsheviks hastily quitted the war, ceding Germany a substantial amount of land in the European part of Russia. Having fought to

⁹⁰ Malik Mufti, *Daring and Caution in Turkish Strategic Culture: Republic at Sea* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 18.

⁹¹ Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1960), 62.

⁹² For a detailed yet accessible account of the process leading to the Russian Revolution, see Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of The Russian Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

consolidate domestic authority with a newly formed Red Army, they seized the entire nation's means of production on behalf of the workers. When the centralization of economic means caused significant shortages of basic materials, Lenin declared a New Economic Policy (NEP), which enabled limited private initiative and foreign investment. Following Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin abandoned the NEP and emphasized the domestic modernization of the Soviet Union within the framework of his principle of 'Socialism in One Country.'

In the early years of the Soviet Union, Lenin considered a world revolution to be superior to the national interest of the Soviet Union since the survival of the regime depended on a global victory over capitalism.⁹³ In those years, the Communist International (*Kommunisticheskiy International – Comintern*), founded in 1919 to supervise foreign communist parties and conduct propaganda abroad, was the central foreign policy apparatus. This internationalism gave way to a more adaptive approach by the NEP, which enabled the opening of small businesses and allowed foreign trade.⁹⁴ With the foundation of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (*Narodnii Kommissariat Inostrannykh Del - Narkomindel*), the Soviet Union came to adopt a dual-track foreign policy. Simultaneously, Comintern aimed to subvert the Western international order and Narkomindel pursued Soviet interests through normal diplomatic channels. Under Stalin, the USSR re-adopted several features of the Tsarist strategic culture, recentralizing political and economic

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 286.

⁹⁴ Robert H. Donaldson, Joseph L. Noguee and Vidya Nadkarni, *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 51.

power. In effect, fear and suspicion of the outside world and the constant drive for expansion to achieve status and security made a strong comeback.⁹⁵ These changes would also have a significant impact on Turkey-Soviet relations, with the Soviet suspicion of the Turkish political elite and the reemergence of the Turkish Straits as a strategic point for the defense of the Soviet motherland.

2.3.2. Relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union

2.3.2.1. The Interwar Years

Both established as post-imperial nations, Turkey and the Soviet Union inherited reduced territories and the imperial influence of the Ottoman and the Russian Empires that went beyond these territories. In the initial phase of their foundation, during the Turkish War of Independence and the Russian Civil War, their shared opposition toward the West brought the Treaty of Friendship and Brotherhood in 1921 between them. They resolved border disputes within this framework, and the Soviet Union promised military and financial aid to Mustafa Kemal's Army.⁹⁶ In 1925 two countries signed the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality. Both sides promised not to enter into alliances against each other. Trade relations also developed. The Soviet Union aimed to influence Turkey politically through trade; Turkish officials visited the Soviet Union to learn about the Soviet

⁹⁵ Fritz W. Ermarth, "Russia's Strategic Culture: Past, Present, And... In Transition?" Chapter 12 in *Comparative Strategic Cultures Curriculum Project*, ed. Jeffrey A. Larsen (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2006).

⁹⁶ Despite this, the leadership cadre of the Turkish Communist Party (TCP), which adopted a Leninist program, was exiled to the Soviet Union and murdered off the coast. For more information, see Bülent Gökay, *Soviet Eastern Policy and Turkey, 1920 – 1991: Soviet Foreign Policy, Turkey and Communism* (London: Routledge, 2006).

economic model.⁹⁷ In 1932, the Soviet Union provided Turkey with a loan of 8 million dollars for 20 years. The credit was for military equipment and textile mills in Nazilli and Kayseri.⁹⁸ As a result, Turkey became the first foreign state that voluntarily adopted a Soviet-advised development plan.⁹⁹ As Turkey built bridges of partnership with the Soviet Union, it also mended ties with the West by abolishing the *Khalifate* and giving concessions to Britain in Mosul.¹⁰⁰

From the early 1930s on, however, Turkey's desire to be a part of the Western international order and the two states' responses to the turbulent atmosphere in Europe in the 1930s prevented further rapprochement between Turkey and the Soviet Union. In response to Italian aggression in the Mediterranean that developed from the early 1930s on, Turkey aimed to maintain its territorial integrity through building alliances and amending the status of disputed territories. However, Turkey's strategy drew an adverse reaction from the Soviet Union. For example, Turkey's diplomatic maneuvers between Britain and the Soviets during the Montreux conference in 1936, when Turkey regained

⁹⁷ In those years, within the framework of "Soviet Eastern Policy" the Soviet Union supported bourgeoisie-nationalist states like Turkish nationalists or the Chinese Guomintang to weaken British imperialism.

⁹⁸David Gyurgenovich Bdoyan, "Transformatsiya rossiysko-turetskikh otnosheniy v usloviyakh bor'by za regional'noye liderstvo (2002-2017 gg.)" [Transformation of Turkish-Russian Relations Within the Framework of the Fight Over Regional Leadership (2002-2017)] (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, MGIMO, 2017), 40.

⁹⁹ Onur İşçi and Samuel Hirst, "Smokestacks and Pipelines: Russian-Turkish Relations and the Persistence of Economic Development," *Diplomatic History* Vol. 44, Iss. 5 (November 2020): 835.

¹⁰⁰ Ali Balcı, *Türkiye Dış Politikası İlkeler, Aktörler Ve Uygulamalar Uygulamalar* [Turkey Foreign Policy: Principles, Actors and Practices], (İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2017), 39-40.

control of the Straits, frustrated Moscow.¹⁰¹ To maintain the solidarity of its neighbors within the framework of the German and especially Italian revisionism, Turkey also led the foundation of two regional security orders: the Saadabad Pact (composed of Turkey, Iran, and Iraq) and the Balkan Pact (composed of Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and Romania). These steps further antagonized Moscow, which considered the formation of these pacts as moves to contain Soviet influence.¹⁰²

The bitterness in relations continued during WWII. Before the beginning of the war, in 1939, Turkey signed a defense treaty with Britain and then a Trilateral Agreement with France and Britain, while the Soviet Union signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Nazi Germany. Following the beginning of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, the tensions between Turkey and the Soviet Union increased due to the revelations of Nazi plans to attack Soviet military targets from Turkish soil.¹⁰³ Subsequently, Turkey's wartime neutrality antagonized the Soviet Union as Turkey maintained trade relations with Nazi Germany until 1944. Meanwhile, after recapturing invaded territories, the Soviet leadership accused all the Muslim populations across the Black Sea of treason, and in 1944 ordered their deportation *en masse* to Siberia and Central Asia. Even though this act did not directly impact bilateral relations, it demonstrated Soviet antagonism and suspicion

¹⁰¹ Onur İşçi, *Turkey and Soviet Union During World War II* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2019), 25-27.

¹⁰² A.F. Miller, *Ocherki noveishei istorii turtsii* [Essays on the recent history of Turkey] (Moscow: Akademiya Nauk SSSR, 1948), 184-185.

¹⁰³ İşçi, *Turkey and Soviet*, 78-79.

toward Turkic peoples. It also influenced the balance of power in the Black Sea region by curtailing Turkey's potential soft power through the Turkic peoples there.

2.3.2.2. Cold War

During the Cold War, tensions between Turkey and Russia continued. The impact of the global balance of power on Turkey-Soviet Union relations increased as Turkey began to play a vital role in containing the Soviet Union as a member of NATO. A significant turning point in bilateral relations occurred as early as 1945, when the Soviet Foreign Minister conveyed Stalin's demand to the Turkish Ambassador to have Soviet bases on the Straits and redraw their shared border.¹⁰⁴ After diplomatic initiatives from Turkey, the US Congress approved a plan to provide financial and military support to Turkey and Greece to prevent Russian control over the Near East.¹⁰⁵ According to this strategy, Turkey was supposed to slow down a potential Soviet offensive toward the Mediterranean.¹⁰⁶ The region was crucial for US foreign policy as a conduit for the Middle Eastern oil.¹⁰⁷ This strategy, known as the Truman Doctrine,¹⁰⁸ propelled a significant breakthrough in

¹⁰⁴ The authenticity of these talks is verified in Molotov's memoirs, where he stated that he was ordered by Stalin, but it was the wrong thing to do. See Albert Resis, ed. *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993), 96.

¹⁰⁵ Harry S. Truman, *The Memoirs of Harry S. Truman, Volume II: Years of Trial and Hope 1945–1953*, (Suffolk: Hodder and Stoughton, 1956), 102.

¹⁰⁶ Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 551.

¹⁰⁷ Irene Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon 1945-1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 28.

¹⁰⁸ For his speech before the Congress related to this issue, see Harry S. Truman, "President Harry S. Truman's Address Before a Joint Session of Congress, March 12, 1947," *Avalon*

Turkey's domestic and foreign policy in decades to come. In 1952, Turkey was accepted into NATO after sending troops to the Korean War. NATO membership was in line with one of Turkey's strategic culture's core elements: the Westernization of Turkey.¹⁰⁹ It is important to note that the US and European countries initially resisted Turkey's membership because Turkey would not fit into the 'civilizational' aspects of the NATO Alliance.¹¹⁰ Turkey's NATO membership increased the US military's presence on Turkish soil, which had begun as early as WWII.¹¹¹ Turkey's signaling to the US that it might end its military partnership and return to neutrality also played a role in Turkey's joining the alliance.¹¹² US military equipment and Turkish officers' training by the US cast a vast influence of the US military on the Turkish Armed Forces.¹¹³ In short, as a result of the consolidation of Cold War dynamics, and the Westernization of Turkey's Republican elite and Stalin's policies, Turkey's role in the anti-Soviet camp solidified as early as the

Project at Yale Law School, accessed at November 23, 2020, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp.

¹⁰⁹ Yılmaz Eylem and Pinar Bilgin, "Constructing Turkey's 'Western' Identity during the Cold War: Discourses of the/Intellectuals of Statecraft," *International Journal* 61, No. 1 (2005): 41.

¹¹⁰ Dianne Kirby, "Divinely sanctioned: the Anglo- American Cold War alliance and the defence of Western civilization and Christianity, 1945–48," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, Issue 3 (July 2000): 385–412.

¹¹¹ Amy Austin Holmes, *Social Unrest and American Military Bases in Turkey and Germany since 1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 47-49.

¹¹² Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy 1950–1975* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977), 32.

¹¹³ Ömer Aslan, *The United States and Military Coups in Turkey and Pakistan: Between Conspiracy and Reality* (Cham: Palgrave, 2018), 119-121.

beginning of the 1950s. In effect, the US took over the role Britain played in the region from the mid-19th century until the early 20th.

Following Stalin's death in 1953, the *Détente*¹¹⁴ and the deterioration of US-Turkey relations positively impacted Turkey-Soviet relations. The new Soviet leadership sent a note to Turkey demanding good-neighborly relations and stating that it harbored no territorial claims.¹¹⁵ However, Turkey disregarded this notice and participated in two anti-Soviet regional pacts: the Balkan Pact (with Yugoslavia and Greece) in 1953 and the Baghdad Pact (with Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and the UK) in 1955.¹¹⁶ In the late 1950s, however, Turkey faced an economic crisis after the US stopped funding its ambitious development with credits and put pressure on Turkey to stop opium cultivation. US President Johnson's strongly worded letter in 1964¹¹⁷ to discourage Turkey from undertaking a military intervention into Cyprus rekindled Turkey's suspicion of the 'imperialist' West, which was a dormant dynamic in Turkey's strategic culture. Meanwhile, starting in the late 1960s, the easing of Cold War tensions between the US and the Soviet Union also harmed US-Turkey relations. Furthermore, Turkey faced a US embargo following its intervention in Cyprus.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ A period of relaxation of tensions in US-Soviet relations following the Cuban Missile Crisis and lasting until the late 1970s.

¹¹⁵ Pınar Bilgin and Kıvanç Coş, "Stalin's Demands: Constructions of the Soviet Other in Turkey's Foreign Policy, 1919-1945," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 6 (2009): 45.

¹¹⁶ At this point, the Democrat Party of Turkey had come into power after the Republican elites enabled the transition to a multi-party regime. The DP paid special attention to US-Turkey relations and enabled Turkey's joining NATO.

¹¹⁷ Lyndon Johnson, "Correspondence between President Johnson and Prime Minister Inonu," *Middle East Journal* 20, No. 3 (1966): 386-93.

¹¹⁸ Since Turkey's 1974 military operation, which took place as a result of a Greek-led coup d'état in the island, Cyprus remained divided between the Turks and the Greeks. The

In response, Turkey attempted to balance US influence by developing relations with the Soviet Union, which, in turn, provided support to Turkey through developmental assistance.¹¹⁹ The improvements in bilateral relations were crowned with the Principles of Good-Neighborly Relations in 1978 when the Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit declared that Turkey no longer saw the Soviet Union as a threat.¹²⁰

From the early 1980s, the globalization of the world economy brought about a structural change to the world political system. This change had a positive impact on the bilateral relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union, through unleashing the economic potential in their bilateral trade relations. After the 1980 coup in Turkey, the political stability enabled Turkey's new Prime Minister Turgut Özal to realize Turkey's transition to a market economy. In the Soviet Union, the new leader Gorbachev, who came to power in 1985, attempted to rescue the Soviet Union from its highly bureaucratized and stagnant economy through economic and administrative reforms. These changes in both countries paved the way for an increased bilateral trade volume and a gas agreement. During the 1980s, Turkey's exports to the USSR increased by 260%, and USSR's exports to Turkey

Greek side is officially recognized as the political representative of the whole island, while Turkey also recognizes the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus as a separate authority.

¹¹⁹ The Iskenderun Iron and Steel Plant, Seydişehir Aluminum Factory, Aliğa Petroleum Refinery, Bandırma Acid Sulfur Plant and Artvin Sheet Factory, which were constructed in Turkey with Soviet aid, made Turkey the country that received the highest amount of Soviet developmental assistance in the 1970s. Gu Guan-fu, "Soviet Aid to the Third World: An Analysis of its Strategy," *Soviet Studies* 15, No. 1 (January 1983): 71-76.

¹²⁰ Atay Akdevelioğlu ve Ömer Korkçooğlu, "SSCB ile İlişkiler" [Relations with the USSR], in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler; Yorumlar Cilt I: 1919-1980* [Turkish Foreign Policy: From the War of Independence until Today, Facts, Documents, Comments Vol I: 1919-1980], ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), 781.

increased by 506%.¹²¹ Turkey paid Soviet natural gas with export material. The increase in the volume of bilateral trade relations brought regional cooperation. Throughout the 1980s, the two governments signed treaties arranging their shared border, cultural exchange, and the Black Sea flight information zone.¹²² The steps taken in this period laid the ground for a broader and more intense rapprochement in the 1990s.

2.3.2.3. The 1990s: First Decade after the Dissolution of the USSR

The demise of the USSR enabled an improvement in Turkey-Russia bilateral relations with the disappearance of the Cold War era securitization dynamics but paved the way for regional competition. Gorbachev's reforms, which were supposed to strengthen the Soviet system, instead brought it to its end. In less than ten years, Soviet satellite republics in Eastern Europe cut their ties with Moscow, and the foundation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) ended the USSR in 1991. In the absence of the Soviet threat, Turkey attempted to regain its strategic significance in the eyes of the Western Alliance and take advantage of the decrease in Moscow's influence over the Central Asia and Caucasus regions in order to develop relations with Russia.

The mutual effort to increase bilateral trade between the Soviet Union and Turkey began as early as the mid-1980s and continued during the 1990s between Turkey and the Russian Federation, the Soviet Union's successor. During Turkish President Süleyman

¹²¹ Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 620.

¹²² Erel Tellal, "SSCB ile İlişkiler" [Relations with the USSR], in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler; Yorumlar Cilt II: 1980-2001* [Turkish Foreign Policy: From the War of Independence until Today, Facts, Documents, Comments Vol II: 1980-2001], ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), 165.

Demirel's visit to Moscow in 1992, the two countries signed the Principles of Relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation.¹²³ In 1994, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) was established as an umbrella institution to enhance multilateral political and economic cooperation in the Black Sea area with other states' participation in the region. The most significant achievement was in trade relations. Until 1998, when both countries went into economic recession, bilateral trade increased several-fold, reaching \$8-10 billion annually.¹²⁴ A significant portion of this commerce took place as shuttle trade in the absence of relevant institutional framework. In the same period, Turkey also bought armored vehicles, machine guns, and helicopters from Russia, making it the first NATO country to purchase Russian arms.¹²⁵ In 1997, Turkey and Russia signed the Blue Stream agreement that enabled the transportation of natural gas by Russia to Turkey through a direct pipeline under the Black Sea.

Meanwhile, after the USSR's dissolution, the decrease in Moscow's hegemonic influence over its periphery enabled Turkey and the West to compete with Russia for influence in the post-Soviet region. At this point, the new Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, and his Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, nearly isolated Moscow from the post-Soviet region and followed a Western-friendly foreign policy to attract financial and political support from the US. Taking the opportunity, Turkey attempted to exert economic and

¹²³ "Turkey's Political Relations with the Russian Federation," *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, accessed at November 15, 2020, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-political-relations-with-russian-federation.en.mfa.

¹²⁴ Bazoğlu-Sezer, "Turkish-Russian relations," 73.

¹²⁵ Tellal, "SSCB ile İlişkiler," 544.

strategic influence on Central Asia and the Caucasus, emphasizing their shared Turkic and Muslim identity. TIKA (Turkish Cooperation Coordination Agency) was founded in 1992 to coordinate the Turkish developmental assistance in the region. With the active encouragement of Özal, the first Summit of the Heads of Turkic Speaking States was convened in Ankara in 1992.¹²⁶ In 1993, the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSÖY) was founded to foster their common Turkic culture. Turkey also supported the Chechen resistance and the pro-Turkey Azerbaijani President Elchibey. In the same period, Turkey's trade volume with the post-Soviet region substantially increased.

From the mid-1990s, however, the restoration of the Russian strategic culture, Turkey's inability to assert itself in the post-Soviet region, and the inadequacy of Western support for Turkey brought back Moscow's hegemonic influence in the post-Soviet region. In Russia, due to resistance to Kozyrev from the security establishment, the foreign minister was replaced by Yevgeny Primakov, who emphasized Russia's great power role in the post-Soviet space and proposed that Russia should foster global multipolarity. In 1997, these two aims became essential parts of Russia's official strategic, and foreign policy doctrines.¹²⁷ The enlargement of NATO and Russia's failure to amalgamate with US-led Western international system played a significant role in this turnaround. In Turkey, the death of Özal in 1993 paved the way for the heightening of PKK terror,¹²⁸ weak

¹²⁶ This initiative would sow the seeds of the Turkic Council, which was founded in 2009 after several summits.

¹²⁷ Boris Yeltsin, "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 17 dekabrya 1997 goda № 1300," *Prezident Rossii*, December 17, 1997, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/11782>.

¹²⁸ *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* (Kurdistan Workers Party) was founded in 1978 by a group of leftist university students led by Abdullah Öcalan. Since its foundation, the PKK

coalition governments, and economic crises. As a result of these factors, Russia maintained its hegemonic influence in the post-Soviet space while Turkey and the West could enjoy only limited economic influence in the region.

The competition between Turkey and Russia for influence in multiple regions manifested itself during the crises in those regions. In the course of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,¹²⁹ Russia supported Armenia with mercenaries and weaponry.¹³⁰ Turkey's attempts to intervene were met with the threat of a "third world war" from the Commander in Chief of the CIS.¹³¹ The toppling of pro-Turkey Azerbaijani President Elchibey further limited Turkey's influence over Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus region. Meanwhile, following Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijani lands beyond the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Turkey suspended its relations with Armenia. In contrast, Russia's influence in the region — as a power broker, protector of Armenia, and mediator of the conflict through the

has conducted terrorist attacks in Southeastern Turkey, killing tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians. PKK is designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the USA and the EU. Öcalan was captured in Kenya in 1998 by the Turkish Intelligence Agency. He has since been imprisoned in Turkey, but the PKK remains operative.

¹²⁹ Nagorno-Karabakh, a place over which Armenia claims possession, is located inside Azerbaijan. In 1988 the decline of the USSR caused the local Soviet to pass a resolution to unify with Armenia. In late 1992, the conflict in the region turned into a full-fledged war between the independent Azerbaijan and Armenia.

¹³⁰ Thomas Goltz, "Letter from Eurasia: The Hidden Russian Hand," *Foreign Policy*, No. 92 (1993): 99-102.

¹³¹ Gareth Winrow, "Turkey and the Newly Independent States of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* Vol. 1, No. 2 (July 1997).

Minsk Group— grew.¹³² Turkey’s support for the Chechens’ bid for independence¹³³ also diminished after Russia threatened Turkey with supporting PKK¹³⁴ and the hijacking and bombing activities of Chechen guerillas in Turkey. In such an environment, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project (BTC), which was projected to transport Azerbaijani oil to the Mediterranean coast through Georgia and Turkey, threatened Russia’s monopoly in the region’s energy geopolitics. Russia considered BTC to be against its interests but did not take serious measures to prevent the agreement due to a deep US commitment to BTC and the existing Blue Stream agreement.¹³⁵

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter investigated the history of Turkey-Russia relations prior to the 21st century. Throughout history, Turkey and Russia have engaged in intense competition in the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and the Balkans while also developing and maintaining

¹³² Under the leadership of Russia, the US and France, the Minsk Group was established in 1994 to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkey often criticizes the Minsk Group’s protection of the advantageous position that Armenia established through the war.

¹³³ In the process of the disintegration of the USSR, the unofficial opposition in Chechnya assumed power and declared independence under the leadership of Soviet Air Force General Dzhokhar Dudayev. Failed in their attempts to bring about a functioning government, Chechnya was faced with internal dissent. In late 1994, Russia launched a military campaign in Chechnya, during which thousands of civilians were killed and hundreds of thousands displaced.

¹³⁴ For more information, see Robert Olson, “The Kurdish Question and Chechnya: Turkish and Russian Foreign Policies since the Gulf War,” *Middle East Policy* Vol. 4, No. 3 (March 1996), 106–18.

¹³⁵ Zeyno Baran, “The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Implications for Turkey,” in *The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Oil Window to the West*, ed. S. Frederick Starr and Svante E. Cornell (Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2005), 115.

economic and social relations. This dynamic is typically found in bilateral relations between two neighbors. In the case of Turkey and Russia, their imperial heritage, Great Power politics in the region and peculiar securitization dynamics have also played crucial roles. In particular, the changes in the regional and global balances of power, through regime changes, major events and policy changes, played the primary role in shaping the bilateral relations.

It is possible to suggest that the position of the West *vis-à-vis* Turkey and Russia has been the most important dynamic that has set the trend in their bilateral relations since the mid-19th century through amending the regional balance of power. In an attempt to prevent Russia from dominating the Ottoman Empire and expanding to the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the European Empires became involved in the region. From the early 19th century, Western interests in the Mediterranean region (pursued first by Britain and France, then predominantly by the US-led NATO alliance) have played a significant role in shaping Turkey-Russia relations. In effect, the ups and downs in the Western strategic investment in the region have become an essential factor in the relations between these two countries. During the 1830s, the 1920s, and the *Détente*, for instance, Turkey-Russia relations improved, as Turkey did not confront Russia in the absence of proper backing. Similarly, when Turkish and Western interests were aligned —as in the second half of the 19th century and the early Cold War period — Turkey was better positioned to confront Russia's expansionist agenda. The 1990s may be considered a unique period when — due to the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union —Russia also surrendered to the West normatively, and Turkey-Russia relations progressed under the mentorship of the West.

However, it is hard to argue that changes in the West's interest in the region, have determined the course of relations. As with my investigation of Turkey-Russia relations, these systemic changes have been filtered through domestic determinants of both countries before reflecting on their bilateral relations. For instance, Lenin, Stalin, and Khrushchev had differences in their interpretation of the Cold War dynamics and had different goals for Turkey in their foreign policy vision.

Last, in line with how this research analyzes bilateral relations, critical junctures have often played pivotal roles in the way the political elites perceive and act upon the systemic dynamics and changes in the system. For example, following the Cuban Missile Crisis, both the US and the Soviet Union calculated that if they did not decrease tensions, the end of humanity could result. This juncture brought about the process of *Détente* during the 1960s. The relieving of tensions between the US and the Soviet Union paved the way for improving relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union, especially in trade.

3. TURKEY-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN 2001-2009

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine Turkey-Russia relations in the period between 2001 and 2009. In my analysis of this period, I consider the Iraq Invasion as the *stimulus* that had the most significant influence on relations between the two countries. To consider the impact of the invasion of Iraq with its underlying dynamics, I also look at the beginning of the Bush Administration, the 9/11 attacks, and the emergence of the leadership of Erdoğan in Turkey and Putin in Russia.

I argue that, in this period, the convergence of the policy responses of Turkey and Russia towards the invasion of Iraq played the most significant role in shaping their bilateral relations. Utilizing my theoretical framework, I reach this conclusion by examining how composite decision-making mechanisms of Turkey and Russia responded to the invasion of Iraq and how their responses remade the Turkey-Russia nexus. As a result of their converging negative reactions to the US unilateralism, exhibited through the invasion of Iraq and the formation of assertive leadership in both countries, Turkey and Russia came to adopt independent foreign policy strategies. This trend enabled the Turkey-Russia nexus to escape the US's control and helped Ankara and Moscow to strengthen bilateral and regional platforms and break records in bilateral trade throughout the 2000s. Throughout this chapter, I demonstrate how the evolution of the official foreign policy strategies of both countries, import-export data of the bilateral trade between Turkey and Russia and the actions of two countries *vis-à-vis* one another support my argument.

This chapter starts with an appraisal of the period, summarizing the formation of the AK Party government in Turkey under Tayyip Erdoğan and the emergence of Putin's

leadership in Russia, as well as their reactions to the US unilateralism. Then, I analyze how the changes in Russia and Turkey's foreign policy strategies influenced their bilateral trade relations, energy relations, and the dynamics of cooperation/competition between the two countries in the Middle East, the Black Sea, and the post-Soviet regions.

3.2.Appraisal of the Era

3.2.1. Regional and Global Context

During the 2000s, the US unilateralism played an indirect yet significant role in strengthening the dynamics of cooperation in the Turkey-Russia nexus. Following the 9/11 attacks, in 2001 the US invaded Taliban-led Afghanistan, which refused to extradite Bin Laden. When the idea of invading Iraq was considered, however, the Bush Administration could not find support from most of its allies and regional actors.¹³⁶ Moreover, despite the minimal impact of the invasion on the functioning of NATO, and WTO, how the US conducted the intervention created a rift between the US and its European allies.¹³⁷

Within the framework of the international backlash to the invasion of Iraq, Turkey and Russia also revised their foreign policy strategies, becoming more open to safeguarding their interests in the region through actions unsupervised by the US. The assertive leadership of both countries amplified this process. Under the AK Party, Turkey refused to

¹³⁶ The US based the legitimacy of the invasion on the Saddam Hussein regime's harboring of international terrorists and having weapons of mass destruction. The Bush Administration securitized the Saddam regime as the Axis of Evil, together with North Korea and Iran. The international community neither accepted such legitimacy nor securitized the Saddam regime in this manner.

¹³⁷ See Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Pealez, "'International community' after Iraq," *International Affairs* Vol. 81, No. 1 (2005): 41-3.

join the invasion of Iraq and began to promote relations with regional actors and the EU. Under Putin, the Russian foreign policy strategy gave more emphasis on promoting multipolarity in the global order and increasing Russia's hegemonic influence over the post-Soviet space compared to previous administrations. As a result, Turkey and Russia not only developed mutual relations in trade and energy but also deepened their partnerships in multiple regions. The continuation of the US unilateralism through the Color Revolutions, which threatened Russia's self-designated sphere of influence, and the US decision to plant missiles in Eastern Europe further provoked Russia. Turkey, in its turn, developed its economic and political relations with Iran, Syria, and Russia, while also preserving ties with the NATO alliance and making progress in the EU accession process.

The emergence of Turkey and Russia as two independent actors in Central Eurasia paved the way for bilateral and regional cooperation outside of the mentorship of the US.¹³⁸ Such a trend was observed in bilateral visits, regional agreements, and trade relations between Turkey and Russia in this period. One of the first countries Erdoğan visited in 2002 after his election victory was Russia, where the two leaders agreed to develop bilateral cooperation and deepen economic relations.¹³⁹ In 2004, Turkey's Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül brought 150 Turkish businessmen with him to Moscow and took part in a

¹³⁸ Mesbahi, "Eurasia between Turkey," 173.

¹³⁹ "Vladimir Putin provel vstrechu s liderom partii spravedlivosti i razvitiya Turtsii Redzhepom Tayipom Erdoganom, pribyvshim nakanune v Moskvu s dvukhdnevnyim rabochim vizitom" [Vladimir Putin met with the leader of the justice and development party of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who arrived in Moscow on a two-day working visit], *Prezident Rossii*, December 24, 2002, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/27890>.

business forum of Turkish and Russian entrepreneurs.¹⁴⁰ During Putin’s visit to Turkey in December 2004, the two leaders signed the ‘Joint Declaration Between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation on Deepening Friendship and Multi-Dimensional Partnership.’¹⁴¹ During this visit, Putin underscored that the two countries had similar attitudes towards many regional issues, including post-War Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁴² In 2005, during the opening ceremony of the Blue Stream Pipeline Project in Samsun, Putin noted the significance of the city where Mustafa Kemal arrived to initiate the War of Independence in 1919, a time when the Soviet Union provided substantial military and economic support to Turkey.¹⁴³ These efforts brought about a steady increase in the volume of bilateral trade between them until the 2008 global financial crisis (see Graph 3.1.) and ensured the continuation of the positive trend in the bilateral relations.

¹⁴⁰ Mohamad Arafat and Luqman O. Mahmood Alnuaimy, “Turkish-Russian Relations in the Era Of AKP,” *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi, İİBF Dergisi* Vol. 3, No. 1 (2011): 111.

¹⁴¹ This agreement was renewed in 2009 under Medvedev’s Presidency. See Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İle Rusya Federasyonu Arasındaki İlişkilerin Yeni Bir Aşamaya Doğru İlerlemesi Ve Dostluğun Ve Çok Boyutlu Ortaklığın Daha da Derinleştirilmesine İlişkin Ortak Deklarasyon, Moskova, 13 Şubat 2009” [Joint Declaration Between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation on Progress Towards a New Stage in Relations and Further Deepening of Friendship and Multidimensional Partnership], *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs* February 13, 2009, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/joint-declaration-between-the-republic-of-turkey-and-the-russian-federation-on-progress-towards-a-new-stage-in-relations-and-further-deepening-of-friendship-and-multidimensional-partnership_-moscow_-13-february-2009.en.mfa.

¹⁴² Çelikpala, “Rusya ile İlişkiler,” 538.

¹⁴³ A. A. Guriyev, “Partiya spravedlivosti i razvitiya Turtsii: tri goda u vlasti” [Justice and Development Party of Turkey: Three Years in Rule], *Institut Blizhnevo Vostoka* November 30, 2005, <http://www.iimes.ru/?p=3972>.

3.2.2. Domestic Context and the Foreign Policy Strategy of Turkey

3.2.2.1. Conservative Democrats'

A new chapter opened in Turkey's political history with the AK Party's election victory in 2002. This party was founded in November 2001 by a dissident group from the members of Necmettin Erbakan's¹⁴⁴ Islamist Felicity Party and gathered enough votes to form a one-party-government in the 2002 general elections. This was a major development because throughout the 1990s Turkey's politics was dominated by weak coalition governments and the *laicist* pressure of the judiciary and army on Turkey's conservative Muslims.¹⁴⁵ Turkey's successive coalition governments' inability to deal with the country's economic crises, political instability and the PKK terror throughout the 1990s also contributed to the AK Party's election victory. Erdoğan's¹⁴⁶ charisma and his success during his tenure as the mayor of Istanbul was also a major factor in the AK Party's electoral success.

During its first term (2002-2007), the AK Party aimed to establish itself as a legitimate political actor at home and abroad by seeking to increase the power of its elected

¹⁴⁴ Necmettin Erbakan founded the *Milli Görüş* (National Vision) movement in the late 1960s. His movement called for the inclusion of pious Muslims in Turkey's politics and an Islamic domestic and foreign policy. Milli Görüş formed five parties, but four of them were shut down.

¹⁴⁵ In an attempt to cleanse the public sphere of religion, Turkish state elites had prevented pious Muslims from promotion to top bureaucratic positions, especially in critical institutions such as the military, judiciary and foreign service. For decades these elites formed a cadre of the guardians of Turkey's secular regime.

¹⁴⁶ When the AK Party was founded, Erdoğan was under a political ban due to a poem he recited at a public rally in 1997. He was also briefly imprisoned in 1999, which boosted his popularity. He could become Prime Minister in 2003 after the lifting of the ban and after being elected in a snap election in Siirt Province.

government *vis-à-vis* the army and the judiciary, through EU reforms. Party officials also carefully framed themselves as ‘conservative democrats’ instead of adopting an Islamist political identity.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Turkey’s bureaucratic elites in the judiciary and military continued to problematize the political background of leading AK Party members.¹⁴⁸ Its EU-friendly policies, positive image, and economic success enabled the AK Party to maintain and expand its voter base in the subsequent elections. The party’s self-identification and positive foreign policy approach contributed to its international image. As the AK Party gained more power, it took multiple steps to neutralize the opposition of the regime’s guardians. In 2007, with the election of Abdullah Gül as the President, the former President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who acted as the balancer on behalf of Turkey’s secular establishment by vetoing hundreds of bills between 2002 and 2007, was sidelined.¹⁴⁹ Between 2007 and 2010, several military officers, intellectuals, and lawmakers were indicted on charges of attempting to overthrow the elected government through undemocratic means. By and large, these trials removed the guardians of the Turkish state from critical positions in the Turkish bureaucracy. However, the role of the

¹⁴⁷ Yalçın Akdoğan, *Muhafazakar Demokrasi* [Conservative Democracy] (Ankara: AK Parti, 2003), 79.

¹⁴⁸ The AK Party did face a closure case in 2008, when 10 out of 11 members of the Constitutional Court ruled that the party had become the center of anti-laicist activities. The vote count in the Constitutional Court was only one vote short of closing the AK Party.

¹⁴⁹ In response to the rumors about Gül’s candidacy, the Turkish General Staff (TGF), as the powerhouse of Turkey’s secular elite, released a memorandum on its website to take a stance against a non-secular candidate. The main opposition party CHP joined the TGF and alleged that the election of the new President required the presence of 2/3 of the MPs, a proportion the AK Party could not reach. When the Supreme Court confirmed this, the AK Party called for early elections, which brought it another victory. Abdullah Gül was elected President in the newly formed Parliament.

Gülen Movement.¹⁵⁰ in these prosecutions would create a massive problem for the AK Party and Turkey in the following decade.

3.2.2.2. Multidimensional Foreign Policy

Within the framework of Ahmet Davutoğlu's roadmap,¹⁵¹ the AK Party ushered in a significant change in Turkey's foreign policy strategy. Adopting the 'zero problems with neighbors' initiative, the AK Party government aimed to actively resolve bilateral issues and developed economic and political relations with its neighbors. AK Party's foreign policy was a drastic shift from Turkey's original strategic culture, which chose to avoid exerting influence in the Middle East and the Balkans adopting pro-Western and strong anti-adventurist nature. This change in foreign policy was partially a consequence of the inclusion of the AK Party's pious base in the decision-making process, reflecting the fact that the Party's immediate voter base was sensitive towards the Muslim countries in the

¹⁵⁰ The Gülen Movement is a cult-like religious/political organization. Fetullah Gülen, who is the head of the organization, was a preacher in İzmir province in the 1970s, when he opened several student houses, dormitories and eventually boarding schools across Turkey and then abroad. He advised his followers to infiltrate the Turkish bureaucracy and military over the decades. Since it was not possible for practicing Muslims to hold high offices in the military or judiciary, he advised his followers to practice *taqiyyeh* (hiding one's religious beliefs). His movement found in the AK Party an ally in its quest to increase its power within Turkey's state machinery. The members of the Gülen Movement in the police and judiciary played a significant role in persecuting the non-Gülenist bureaucrats, businessmen and activists in late 2000s.

¹⁵¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu is an International Relations Professor. He became the chief advisor to the Prime Minister in 2002, Foreign Minister in 2009 and Prime Minister in 2014. In his book, where he outlines his vision for Turkish Foreign Policy, he argues that there is a lack of strategic vision and coordination between foreign policy institutions and Turkey should make more use of its historical ties with the peoples of Balkans and the Middle East. Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik* [Strategic Depth] (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001), 49 – 53.

Balkans and the Middle East.¹⁵² The fact that Turkey's previously oppressed conservative Muslims who had opened themselves to the world, through education and business under Özal also played a significant role in the shift in Turkey's strategic culture.¹⁵³ The trade ties established by this class made up of an important part of Turkey's opening to the Global South under AK Party. Meanwhile, under the AK Party, Turkey preserved its Western orientation by attempting to join the EU and secure the US's support in its new endeavors. These diverse elements of the AK Party's multidimensional foreign policy could find supporters across a broad range of the political spectrum. For instance, a portion of Turkey's secular establishment, which continued to be suspicious of the West, supported Turkey's new independent foreign policy aspirations, even suggesting that Turkey should leave NATO and seek closer relations with Russia instead.¹⁵⁴ Conversely, CHP, the only opposition party in the Parliament until 2007, supported the AK Party's EU policy due to the Westernizing impact of the EU accession process.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Zeynep Taydaş and Özgür Özdamar, "A Divided Government, an Ideological Parliament, and an Insecure Leader: Turkey's Indecision about Joining the Iraq War," *Social Science Quarterly* Vol. 94, No. 1 (2012): 229.

¹⁵³ Hasan Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam Nationalism and Globalization* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 156 – 157.

¹⁵⁴ It should be noted that there is a left-Kemalist/nationalist/secularist intellectual-political community in Turkey called *Ulusalcılar* [Nationalists] who promote stronger relations between Turkey and Russia in Eurasia against the West. They maintain close relations with the Russian Eurasianists. For more information, see Şener Aktürk, "The Fourth Style of Politics: Eurasianism as a Pro-Russian Rethinking of Turkey's Geopolitical Identity," *Turkish Studies* Vol. 16, No. 1 (2015): 54-79.

¹⁵⁵ "Hükümete AB desteği" [Support for EU to the Government], *Hürriyet*, May 21, 2020, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/hukumete-ab-destegi-148000>.

Under the AK Party, Turkey generated flexible responses towards its regional problems and improved its relations with the non-Western world. It strengthened its ties with the EU and developed its relations with Russia and its neighbors. According to the observations of Abdullah Gül,¹⁵⁶ thanks to Turkey's stance towards the invasion of Iraq, the international actors started to consider Turkey as an independent country capable of making decisions based on its own security needs.¹⁵⁷ After a series of reforms, the AK Party government started the accession talks with the EU in 2005. Turkey supported the UN-sponsored resolution in Cyprus known as the Annan Plan, which proposed to unite Cyprus as a federal state. Despite Turkey's ambitious reform attempts and bold steps in Cyprus, its prospects to be a part of the union were hindered as some EU member countries categorically opposed its membership.¹⁵⁸ The EU also accepted Cyprus as a member state despite the refusal of the Annan Plan by the Greek Cypriot Administration. This feedback that Turkey received from the EU accession process curbed Turkey's enthusiasm for the EU while also feeding its suspicions of the double standards of the West. In the Middle East, Turkey signed trade agreements with Syria and Israel and developed relations with Iran. Despite the deterioration of US-Turkey relations the AK Party government continued to work with the US within the framework of the AK Party's multidimensional foreign

¹⁵⁶ Gül was one of the founders of the AK Party. He served as the Prime Minister following the party's election victory due to Erdoğan's political ban, which was lifted in 2003. Gül became Foreign Minister in 2003, and the President in 2007.

¹⁵⁷ Abdullah Gül, "New Horizons in Turkish Foreign Policy," May 22, 2004, Boğaziçili Yöneticiler Vakfı, İstanbul, Dedeman Hotel.

¹⁵⁸ Vincent Boland and Daniel Dombey, "Turkey's EU hopes fade with Sarkozy," May 7, 2007, <https://www.ft.com/content/55374310-fc82-11db-9971-000b5df10621>.

policy. For instance, Turkey considered the US-led Greater Middle East Project¹⁵⁹ as an opportunity to amplify its own status and influence in the Middle East.¹⁶⁰ Turkey also contributed to Iraq's reconstruction and became one of the most important trade partners for post-Saddam Iraq.¹⁶¹ In trade and energy, the AK Party aimed to bolster Turkey's trade ties with its neighbors and to make it a regional hub.

The shift in Turkey's foreign policy had a positive impact on Turkey-Russia relations for multiple reasons. First, The AK Party government's attempts to establish mutually beneficial trade relations with Turkey's neighbors and its 'zero problems with neighbors' motto helped intensify economic ties with Russia. Within the framework of its foreign policy, the AK Party Government attempted to defuse tensions with Russia in the South Caucasus and the Black Sea regions. Finally, Turkey's refusal to participate in the invasion of Iraq, which was in convergence with Russia's stance, promoted Turkey's image as an independent actor in the eyes of Moscow.

3.2.3. Domestic Context and the Foreign Policy Strategy of Russia

3.2.3.1. The Recentralization of Power

Unable to cope with the Chechen Insurgency, the economic crisis, and his falling approval rates, Yeltsin appointed Vladimir Putin, a former KGB officer who entered

¹⁵⁹ The project was put forward by the Bush Administration in 2004. It aimed to transform the region called 'the Greater Middle East' in cooperation with regional actors through extension of US military and economic influence.

¹⁶⁰ Baskin Oran, ed., *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1919-2006*, trans. by Mustafa Akşin (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), 921.

¹⁶¹ Meltem Müftüleri-Baç, "Turkey and the United States," *International Journal* Vol. 61, Issue 1 (Mar 2006): 77.

politics after the dissolution of the USSR, as his Prime Minister in August 1999 before the Russian legislative and the subsequent presidential elections. In December 2000, days after Yeltsin's favored political party *Yedinstvo* (Unity)¹⁶² came in behind the Communist Party in the Russian legislative elections, Yeltsin resigned and left his seat to Putin. Thanks to the backing of Yeltsin as well as the support of the media, Putin won the 2000 Presidential elections in a landslide victory without even running a campaign.¹⁶³

As a former KGB (*Komitte Gosudaragent*), Putin's primary aim concerning domestic politics was to restore the state authority. He committed to a Russian concept of 'sovereign democracy' in an attempt to prevent external pressure on Russia's domestic politics. To realize this aim, Putin aimed to establish a 'power vertical' as a representation of Russia's historical tendency to adopt centralization as a solution for administering vast lands.¹⁶⁴ Under Putin, the Russian Federation was divided into seven administrative divisions, headed by governors directly appointed by the Kremlin.¹⁶⁵ He summoned the new Russian oligarchs to the Kremlin and declared that he would tolerate their unjustly

¹⁶² Unity was founded by a group of bureaucrats and politicians against *Otechestvo – Vsyaya Rossiya* [Fatherland-All Russia] before the 1999 legislative elections. One of the most distinctive differences between these two groups was their stance towards the centralization of power in Russia.

¹⁶³ Robert Service, *A History of Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 545-547.

¹⁶⁴ Donald Kelley, *Russian Politics and Presidential Power: Transformational Leadership from Gorbachev to Putin* (Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2016), 131.

¹⁶⁵ Vladimir Putin, "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 13.05.2000 g. № 849" [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 849 of 13.05.2000], *Prezident Rossii*, May 13, 2000, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/15492>.

accumulated wealth as long as they did not meddle in politics.¹⁶⁶ Putin also replaced several Yeltsin-era bureaucrats with his former co-workers in the Saint Petersburg Municipality and the KGB. He created *Edinaya Rossiya* [ER, United Russia] by merging the competing *Yedinstvo* (Unity) and *Oteshestvo-Vsya Rossiya* [Fatherland-All Russia] alliances to ensure a complying legislature.¹⁶⁷ With a strong emphasis on economic recovery, political stability, and security, Putin could secure the support of the majority in Russia.

Russia's economic recovery under Putin, which occurred thanks to political stability and rising gas prices, brought easy victories to the ER in the 2003 legislative elections and Putin in the 2004 presidential elections. These victories were followed by further steps in the same direction. In 2004, Putin reorganized the Presidential Administration, making the institution more effective and dependent on the President.¹⁶⁸ The electoral threshold was increased to 7%, and regional parties were banned from

¹⁶⁶ Oligarchs who refused to play by the new rules of the game and continued to criticize the government through their media institutions found themselves in exile or in jail. Examples include Michael Khodorkovsky, who was imprisoned and then ended up in exile, and Boris Berezovsky, who was eventually found dead in his London apartment in 2013. For the details of the meeting, see Vladimir Putin, “*Vladimir Putin vstretilsya s rukovoditelyami ryada kompaniy i kommercheskikh bankov Rossii*” [Vladimir Putin met with the heads of a number of Russia's largest companies and commercial banks], *Prezident Rossii*, July 28, 2000, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/38471>.

¹⁶⁷ Kelley, *Russian Politics and*, 126.

¹⁶⁸ Vladimir Putin, “*Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 25 marta 2004 g. № 400*” [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 640 of 30.11.2016], *Prezident Rossii*, March 25, 2004, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/20694>.

running in general elections.¹⁶⁹ The procedure of the election of governors was changed so that candidates were nominated by the President and then confirmed by the legislature.¹⁷⁰

3.2.3.2. The Return of the Original Strategic Culture

In foreign policy, Putin gave impetus to the trend of change in Russian foreign policy strategy. He took multiple steps that enabled a return to Russia's original strategic culture, which dictated that Russia could not achieve its security objectives in cooperation with the West.¹⁷¹ Accordingly, in Putin's first year as the President, Russia officially identified NATO's enlargement and domination of the West as the primary threats to the national security of Russia.¹⁷² Under his leadership, Russia also aimed to increase its hegemonic influence in the post-Soviet region as well as in the global sphere.¹⁷³ These steps strengthened the trend of moving away from the Kozyrev-era Westernization of the early 1990s, while Primakov's aim of balancing the US remained an essential goal. Yet Putin differentiated himself from Primakov by designating Russia as a European state and

¹⁶⁹ Stephen White, *Russia's Authoritarian Elections* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 116.

¹⁷⁰ Kelley, *Russian Politics and*, 145-146.

¹⁷¹ Roger Kanet, "Russian: strategic culture, domestic politics and Cold War 2.0," *European Politics and Society* Vol. 20, Issue 2 (2019): 193.

¹⁷² These goals were identified explicitly in the Russian National Security Document, which was one of the first legal documents signed by Putin as the acting President. See Vladimir Putin, "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 17.12.1997 g. № 1300" [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 1300 of 17.12.1997], *Prezident Rossii*, January 17, 2000, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/11782>.

¹⁷³ These points are explicitly made in the Foreign Policy Concept of Russia, which was promulgated in June 2000. See Vladimir Putin, "Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii" [Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation], *Tekhpert*, June 28, 2000, <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901764263>.

aimed at ‘pragmatic’ cooperation with the US.¹⁷⁴ Putin’s increasing control over the country’s economic resources, particularly through increasing state control over the energy firms, enabled Putin to effectively operationalize its foreign policy strategy.

Such change manifested itself in Russia’s relations with the West and Russia’s foreign policy towards multiple regions. Before the invasion of Iraq, Putin attempted to establish Russia’s hegemonic influence in the post-Soviet space, as well as to increase its global influence. Despite its support for the US War on Terror after the 9/11 attack,¹⁷⁵ Russia considered the Iraq invasion an assertion of a US-led unipolar world¹⁷⁶ and adopted an independent stance. In the following years, Moscow considered the Color Revolutions, a wave of popular protests aimed at regime change in post-Soviet space, as an expansion of the Western sphere of influence through Western-funded NGOs.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, Russia considered a possible NATO enlargement that would include Ukraine and Georgia, and the US plans to install missile shields in Poland and the Czech Republic as threats to Russia’s

¹⁷⁴ Andrey Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 20.

¹⁷⁵ Russia was eager to appear in solidarity with the US that the Russian Foreign Policy Council advised Putin to drop the emphasis on multipolarity. Susan Turner, “Russia, China and a Multipolar World Order: The Danger in The Undefined,” *Asian Perspective* Vol. 33, Issue 1 (2009), 165.

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Ambrosio, “The Russo-American dispute over the invasion of Iraq: international status and the role of positional goods,” *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 57, No.8 (2005): 1200.

¹⁷⁷ Evgeny Finkel and Yitzhak M. Brudny, “Russia and the colour revolutions,” *Democratization* Vol. 19, No. 1 (2012): 15-36.

security.¹⁷⁸ As a result, Russia's ruling elite under Putin decided that the West was ignoring Russia's security interests and that it should protect those interests by reasserting its influence and challenging the US attempt at global dominance.¹⁷⁹ These points can be seen in *The Foreign Policy Concept of Russia*, which came into effect in 2008.¹⁸⁰

Russia placed special emphasis on its relations with Turkey, which could not be ignored in Moscow's attempts to regain its regional and global influence. From Russia's perspective, Turkey was a significant market for Russian gas and one of the multiple emerging powers with whom Russia sought 'extraordinary' ties, through which it aimed to counter US hegemonic influence and foster a multipolar world order.¹⁸¹ In return, Russia expected Turkey to respect its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space and hoped to create a rift between Turkey and the West. Thus, as emphasized by Putin during his visit to Turkey in 2004, Turkey's independent foreign policy approach and the rejection of participation in the Iraq War were positive developments for Russia.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Julianne Smith, *The NATO-Russia Relationship: Defining Moment or Déjà Vu?* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2008), 1.

¹⁷⁹ Roger Kanet, "From the 'New World Order' to 'Resetting Relations': Two Decades of US–Russian Relations," in *Russian Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, ed. Roger E. Kanet (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 205-206.

¹⁸⁰ Dmitry Medvedev, "Kontsepsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii" [Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation], *Prezident Rossii*, July 12, 2008, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/785>.

¹⁸¹ Magda Leichtova, *Misunderstanding Russia: Russian Foreign Policy and the West* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 73.

¹⁸² Cenk Başlamış, "Putin'in Ankara zamanlaması," [Putin's Ankara Timing], *Deutsche Welle Türkiye*, December 7, 2004, <https://www.dw.com/tr/putinin-ankara-zamanlamasi/a-2525673>.

3.3. Turkey – Russia Relations

3.3.1. Regional Cooperation and Competition

3.3.1.1. The Middle East in the Context of the Invasion of Iraq

The most significant development in the Middle East in this period was the invasion of Iraq. Following the quick victory of US forces, the sudden disappearance of the Iraqi state structure created a political instability reaching beyond the borders of Iraq, causing civil strife, sectarian violence, and political instability in the Middle East. The indifference of the US to the sensitivities of regional and global actors before, during and after the military invasion encouraged Turkey and Russia to ensure their security through independent foreign policies.¹⁸³ In that sense, the invasion of Iraq helped Turkey and Russia to discover their shared opposition to the consequences of US foreign policy conduct. This discovery would play a significant role in their foreign policy strategy and consideration towards one another.

When Russia was fighting Chechen rebels, Putin considered the post-9/11 period as a process where human rights violations could be tolerated when fighting ‘radical Islamic terrorism.’ However, Putin considered terrorism a stateless phenomenon and a challenge to the system of states. For that reason, in contrast to the US, Putin decided that eliminating a functioning state would not remedy the fight against international terrorism.¹⁸⁴ As a result of the wave of global anti-Americanism caused by the invasion of

¹⁸³ Yasemin Bilgel, “Regional Power Politics After the Cold War,” (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2014), 3.

¹⁸⁴ Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy* 150.

Iraq, Putin's stance found significant domestic support. Moreover, by opposing the invasion, Putin saw a chance to improve Russia's relations with European partners to foster a counter-bloc to the US unilateralism.¹⁸⁵

Turkey's reaction to the series of the US invasions was similar to Russia's. Turkey actively participated in the Afghan War as part of the NATO mission. However, when the US demanded to use Turkish territory for an incursion into Iraq from the north, it could not secure Turkey's cooperation.¹⁸⁶ The bill that would authorize US troops to use Turkish soil was rejected by a narrow margin in Parliament. It should be noted that Erdoğan was among those who supported Turkey's participation in the war, since that would help Turkey better protect its security and economic interests and gain US support.¹⁸⁷ But he did not force the AK Party members to vote favorably, enabling enough AK Party members to prevent the passing of the bill. The Parliament's decision gave impetus to the process of Turkey's accession to the EU. The invasion of Iraq enabled Turkey to benefit from the anti-American critical discourse in the region.¹⁸⁸ As a result, Turkey quickly embraced the 'no' vote and the multidimensional foreign policy enabled in the process.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Freedman, "Russian Policy Towards the Middle East Under Putin: The Impact of 9/11 and the War in Iraq," *Alternatives* Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer, 2003): 72.

¹⁸⁶ For more information about the process of negotiations, see Deniz Bölükbaşı, *1 Mart Vakası: Tezkere Krizi ve Sonrası* [The Incident on March 1 Bill: The Bill Crisis and Aftermath] (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2003) and Murat Yetkin, *Tezkere* [The Bill] (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2017).

¹⁸⁷ Taydaş and Özdamar, 235.

¹⁸⁸ Mesbahi, "Eurasia between Turkey," 173.

Following the invasion of Iraq, Turkey and Russia began to recognize the fundamental policy differences regarding regional politics between them and the US. In contrast to the US ambition to ‘bring democracy’ to Middle Eastern autocracies, the two countries considered the protection of the territorial integrity and state structures of regional powers to be more important for regional security. This fundamental difference would bring about concrete partnerships between them beyond the region. For instance, one of the reasons Turkey did not fully cooperate with the US in the Black Sea region was that Turkish foreign policy decision-makers began to see US activities there through the prism of the invasion of Iraq.¹⁸⁹

3.3.1.2. The Black Sea Region in the Context of the Georgian War

The period between 2001 and 2009 was a tumultuous era for the Black Sea region, as a result of the heightening of tensions between Russia and the West over Ukraine and Georgia. During the 2000s, the US and the EU carried on the penetration of the West to the Black Sea through institutional ties. In this period, Bulgaria and Romania joined NATO in 2004, and the EU in 2007. The Color Revolutions, the waves of protests and civil resistance activities against the incumbent regimes loyal to Russia in various former Soviet countries, resulted in the overthrow of the regimes in Georgia and Ukraine. These steps significantly antagonized Russia, which considered the Black Sea as its primary sphere of influence.¹⁹⁰ Turkey, in its turn, did not show interest in US designs in the Black Sea region

¹⁸⁹ Hill and Taşpınar, “Turkey and Russia,” 88.

¹⁹⁰ Roger E. Kanet and Rémi Piet, “Shifting Priorities in Russia’s Foreign and Security Policy,” in *Shifting Priorities in Russia’s Foreign and Security Policy*, ed. Roger E. Kanet and Rémi Piet (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 2.

but instead adopted a strategy seeking to further its regional interests through protecting regional organizations like BSEC and continuing to develop bilateral relations with the countries in the region.¹⁹¹

Within the framework of these dynamics, the cooperation in the Black Sea region between Turkey and Russia strengthened. In 1999, when the BSEC Charter was confirmed, almost all countries in the Balkans and the Caucasus had become members of the organization, which aimed to perpetuate cooperation in various areas, including economic development, combatting international terrorism, and environmental protection.¹⁹² BSEC'S focus on soft security areas created an occasion for Turkey to oppose the extension of NATO's Operation Active Endeavor, which was tasked with fighting international crime, to the Black Sea region.¹⁹³ BSEC enabled the adaptation of former Soviet countries to market economies by way of transferring know-how from Turkey and Greece. BSEC also promoted cooperation among members whose interests did not necessarily align on other issues.¹⁹⁴ The Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR), which was established in April 2001, aimed to strengthen good-neighborly relations between

¹⁹¹ Özgür Özdamar, "Security and military balance in the Black Sea region," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol. 10, No. 3 (September 2010): 345.

¹⁹² "Charter of The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation," *BSEC*, May 1, 1999, <http://www.bsec-organization.org/UploadedDocuments/Charter/CHARTERweb080630.pdf>.

¹⁹³ Igor Torbakov, "Turkey Sides with Moscow Against Washington on Black Sea Force," *Jamestown Foundation*, March 3, 2006, <https://jamestown.org/program/turkey-sides-with-moscow-against-washington-on-black-sea-force/>.

¹⁹⁴ Mustafa Aydın, "Contending Agendas for the Black Sea Region: A Regional Alternative," *Demokratizatsiya* Vol. 20, No. 1 (2012): 53.

littoral states and promote confidence among their navies through a multinational on-call Task Force. The responsibilities of the Force included search and rescue operations, humanitarian assistance operations and environmental protection.¹⁹⁵ While these initiatives demonstrated a common will to strengthen the regionalization of the Black Sea, serious political and security issues remained under the control of bilateral mechanisms in this period.¹⁹⁶

The Russia-Georgia War in 2008¹⁹⁷ seriously tested the emerging harmony in the region with Russia's violation of Georgia's territorial integrity. During the conflict, Turkey intended to preserve the relatively peaceful situation there by pursuing active diplomacy and staying in contact with all the parties. In line with Turkey's dedication to solving regional issues with its regional partners, Erdoğan proposed 'The Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform' to resolve the conflict.¹⁹⁸ The platform would be composed of

¹⁹⁵ Özkan Şenol, "Cooperative Security in the Black Sea Region," (Master's Thesis, Bilkent University, 2003), 81.

¹⁹⁶ Mustafa Aydın, "*Kafkasya ve Orta Asya İle İlişkiler*" [Relations with the Caucasus and the Central Asia], *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler; Yorumlar Cilt II: 1980-2001* [Turkish Foreign Policy: From the War of Independence until Today, Facts, Documents, Comments Vol II: 1980-2001] ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013), 524.

¹⁹⁷ Mikhail Saakashvili, who was elected as a result of the popular protests in 2004, aimed to make Georgia a member of NATO and change the status quo in Georgia's de facto independent regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Following an incident that involved armed clashes between South Ossetian and Georgian authorities in August 2008, the Russian military forces initiated an invasion on August 8, 2008, which lasted until the ceasefire on August 12, 2008.

¹⁹⁸ Igor Torbakov, *The Georgia Crisis and Russia-Turkey Relations* (Washington DC: Jamestown Foundation, 2008), 20-21.

Turkey, Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia and would exclude the US.¹⁹⁹ During the conflict, Turkey also barred the entry of two US relief vessels to the Black Sea, citing the Montreux Agreement's tonnage limitations to foreign warships in the Black Sea.²⁰⁰ In line with its neutral stance and good relations with Georgia, Turkey also supplied electricity to Georgia during the war.²⁰¹ Russia appreciated Turkey's neutral stance during the conflict and did not resent Turkey for not fully recognizing two de facto states created within Georgia with Russian support after the war.

3.3.1.3. The Post-Soviet Region

Due to Turkey's recognition of Russia's privileged interests in the post-Soviet region, the two countries avoided a standoff over the differences between their regional projections. In this period, within the framework of its strategy towards the post-Soviet Region, Russia took additional steps towards strengthening its control over the Caucasus and Central Asia. In its turn, Turkey strengthened bilateral relations with the countries of the region and regional organizations.

During this period, one of the most significant regional developments in the South Caucasus related to the Turkey-Russia nexus was Turkey's pursuit of the normalization of relations with Armenia. At the initiative of the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, and

¹⁹⁹ Claire Bigg, "Turkey Revives 'Caucasus Initiative,' But Faces Obstacles," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, September 5, 2008, https://www.rferl.org/a/Turkey_Caucasus_Initiative_Obstacles/1196703.html.

²⁰⁰ John C. K. Daly, "Montreux Convention Hampers Humanitarian Aid to Georgia," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, September 3, 2008, <https://jamestown.org/program/montreux-convention-hampers-humanitarian-aid-to-georgia/>.

"Turkey agrees to supply Georgia electricity: source," *Reuters*, August 8, 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-turkey-electricity-idUSIST00224320080808>.

Turkey's newly elected President, Abdullah Gül, Turkey and Armenia took the first step towards normalization in 2008. In this atmosphere, both countries signed the Zurich Protocols, where Foreign Ministers of both countries agreed on opening the borders and establishing normal diplomatic relations.²⁰² Yet they could not honor the agreement, due to the opposition of nationalist circles in Turkey and Armenia, as well as that of the Azerbaijani government. In order to salvage the normalization process, Erdoğan called on Russia to put pressure on Armenia to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. However, Putin dismissed Erdoğan's appeal, noting the difficulties in reconciling Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.²⁰³ Meanwhile, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue remained frozen as Turkey continued to stay out of the conflict. In short, the generally positive trend in relations between Turkey and Russia prevented these disagreements from becoming a significant problem in bilateral relations.

In the North Caucasus, aside from the impact of the positive trend in bilateral relations, the radicalization of the Chechen insurgency and Russia's restoration of control in Chechnya enabled the defusing of tensions between Turkey and Russia. During the 2000s, the radicalization of the Chechen insurgency, the hostage-taking acts in Turkey, and

²⁰² "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İle Ermenistan Cumhuriyeti Arasında Diplomatik İlişkilerin Kurulmasına Dair Protokol" [Protocol for the Formation of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia], *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, October 10, 2009, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/site_media/html/zurih-protokolleri-tr.pdf.

²⁰³ Richard Weitz, "Russian-Turkish Relations: Steadfast and Changing," *Mediterranean Quarterly* Vol. 21, No. 3 (2010): 77.

the events of 9/11,²⁰⁴ the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (ratified in January 2002), and the Protocol Amending the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism (ratified in January 2005) — all played a role in Turkey’s stance.²⁰⁵ Aside from this, Putin’s promise not to support the PKK in exchange for Turkey’s ceasing its support to the Chechens also discouraged Turkey from supporting Chechen separatism.²⁰⁶ Yet the disagreements between Russia and Turkey over Chechnya persisted. For example, Turkey avoided relations and contact with the Chechen Autonomous Republic, where Turkish construction firms continued to receive lucrative contracts. The Chechen diaspora in Turkey continued to provide funds to families who had fled the conflict and organized protests against the extradition of Chechens to Russia. During Gül’s visit to Russia in 2004, the Russian side expressed its concern over some Turkish non-governmental organizations’ actions.²⁰⁷ However, these differences did not develop into a serious problem in bilateral relations in this period.

In Central Asia, Russia took further steps towards restoring a hegemonic power in the region, and Turkey focused on projecting soft power towards the region and developing

²⁰⁴ Mitat Çelikpala, “From immigrants to diaspora: Influence of the North Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 42, No. 3 (May 2006): 439.

²⁰⁵ Kelkitli, *Turkish–Russian relations*, 81.

²⁰⁶ Murat Yetkin, “Rusya ile sıkı işbirliği” [Intense Partnership with Russia], *Radikal*, July 21, 2005, http://m.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/murat_yetkin/rusya_ile_siki_isbirligi-752569.

²⁰⁷ M.K. Ziganshin, “Rossiysko-Turetskiye otnosheniya na sovremennom etape” [Russian-Turkish Relations in Contemporary Era]. in *Turtsiya v novykh geopoliticheskikh usloviyakh (materialy kruglogo stola mart 2004 g.)* [Turkey in New Geopolitical Conditions (Materials of the Round Table, March 2004)], ed. by N.Y. Ulichenko (Moscow: Institut Vostokovedeniya RAN, 2004), 7.

trade relations with the post-Soviet states without antagonizing Russia. In line with Putin's foreign policy vision, Russia strengthened the regional structures intended to restore Moscow's hierarchical relations with the Central Asian countries. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)²⁰⁸ was founded in 2002, and joined by Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan. While initially, the CSTO was open to cooperating with the US for the security of the region, the organization later began to adopt a rather independent presence in the region with its armed forces. The Eurasian Economic Community was founded in 2000, establishing a common market among its member states. As opposed to the rising Russian influence, the Turkish influence in the region continued to be limited to developmental aid and trade. During the 1990s, the independence of Turkic nations excited Turkey, which dreamed of connecting the Turkic world stretching from the Adriatic to the Wall of China. However, the unwillingness of the Turkic countries to consider Turkey as a big brother and the growing competition for influence in the region limited Turkey's influence in the region.²⁰⁹

3.3.2. Trade Relations

Another significant indication of the independent course in the development of Turkey-Russia relations was the improving volume of trade between the two countries. The bilateral trade volume between Turkey and Russia/Soviet Union had steadily increased since the late 1980s. During the 2000s, this increase accelerated due to the Blue Stream

²⁰⁸ CTSO grew out of the CIS agreement as a military alliance between a number of post-Soviet countries. The treaty became operative in 1994.

²⁰⁹ Bayram Balcı, *Islam in Central Asia and the Caucasus Since the Fall of the Soviet Union*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 38.

agreement, the strengthening of institutional ties, and joint efforts by Putin and Erdoğan (See Graph 3.1.). The mutually beneficial nature of the rising trade levels promoted and complemented cooperation in other segments of their bilateral relations. The only downside of Turkey’s increasing bilateral trade volume was its increasing trade deficit with Russia (See Graph 3.2.). The high volume of natural gas Turkey purchased annually from Russia increased its reliance on the country and enabled Russia to maintain the upper hand in their relations. However, in this period, Russia did not utilize its advantage because there was no need for such a move.



Graph 3.1. Turkey-Russia Trade volume (2001-2008)

Source: “*Dış Ticaret İstatistikleri*” [Foreign Trade Statistics], *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Ticaret Bakanlığı*, accessed at December 10, 2020, <https://ticaret.gov.tr/istatistikler/dis-ticaret-istatistikleri>.

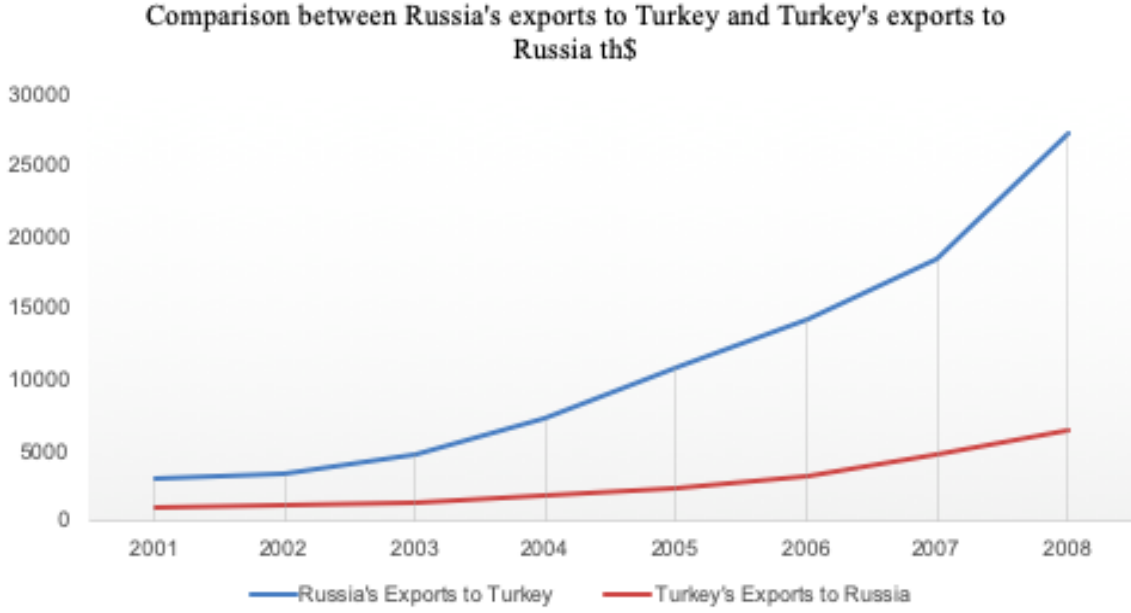
Russia’s gas exports to Turkey constituted the bulk of the bilateral trade volume between the two countries. This trend resulted from Russia’s continuing diplomatic and lobbying efforts to increase the share of Russian gas in Turkey’s energy imports in the 1990s. Russia’s volume of exports to Turkey showed a steady increase from the start of the

2000s until the 2008 global financial crisis (Graph 3.2.). Besides exporting natural resources, in 2009 Turkey also bought anti-tank weapon systems that included 800 missiles and 80 units from Russia, in lieu of buying an Israeli option.²¹⁰

To close the trade deficit with Russia, the AK Party government encouraged Turkish businessmen to export to Russia and encouraged the tourism sector to bring more Russian tourists to Turkey. It is important to note that, while the 1984 agreement allowed Turkey to pay for natural gas through its exports, the Blue Stream agreement did not provide such an opportunity.²¹¹ While natural gas constituted the bulk of Turkey's imports, Russian imports from Turkey were diversified, and Turkish exporters had to compete for the Russian market with several other countries in the automobile, textile, and food sectors. The activities of Turkish businessmen in Russia increased with the proliferation of Turkish factories and the activities of construction firms. Yet, Turkey's trade deficit with Russia showed a steady increase until 2008 (See Graph 3.2.), despite the increasing flow of Russian tourists to Turkey (Graph 3.3.). The rising price of natural gas, and the fact that the volume of Turkey's imports from Russia increased at a pace much higher than the volume of Russia's imports from Turkey, preserved Turkey's trade deficit.

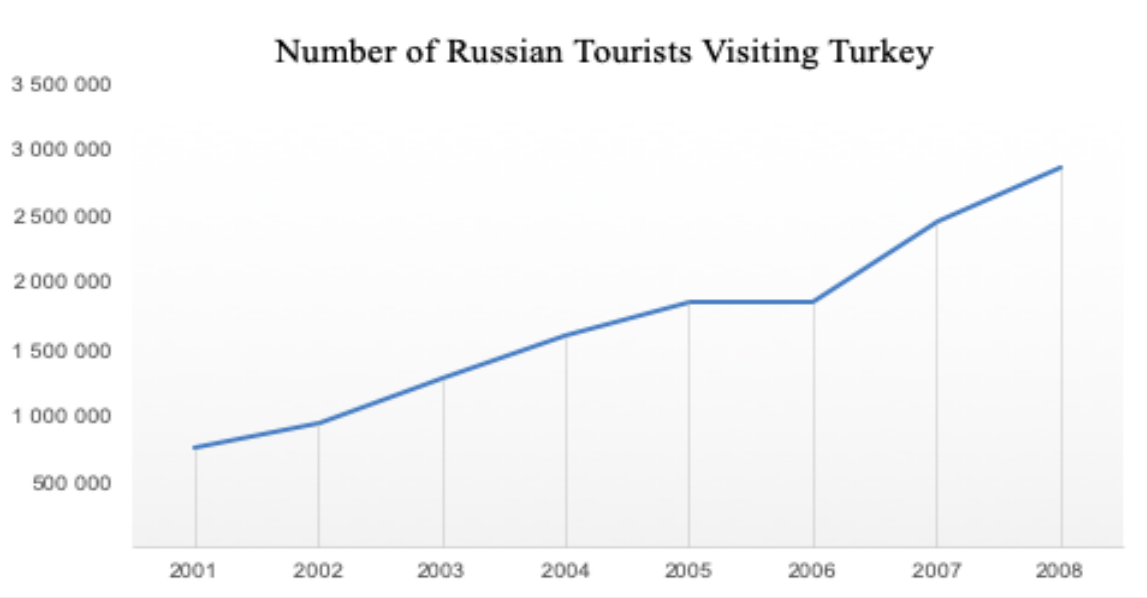
²¹⁰ Özgür Ekşi, "İsrail yerine Ruslardan füze alıyoruz" [We are Purchasing Missiles from Russia Instead of Israel], *Hürriyet*, April 04, 2008, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/israil-yerine-ruslardan-fuze-aliyoruz-8672522>.

²¹¹ Erel Tellal, "SSCB ile İlişkiler," 163.



Graph 3.2. Import-Export Balance in Turkey-Russia bilateral trade (2001-2008)

Source: “*Dış Ticaret İstatistikleri*” [Foreign Trade Statistics], *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Ticaret Bakanlığı*, accessed at December 10, 2020, <https://ticaret.gov.tr/istatistikler/dis-ticaret-istatistikleri>.



Graph 3.3. Number of Russian Tourists visiting Turkey (2001-2008)

Source: “*TC Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Sınır Giriş Çıkış İstatistikleri*,” *TC Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı*, accessed November 22, 2020, <https://yigm.ktb.gov.tr/TR-9854/sinir-giris-cikis-istatistikleri.html>.

3.3.3. Energy Relations

3.3.3.1. Turkey's Energy Demand and Blue Stream

One of the most important elements of Turkey-Russia relations in the post-Cold War period is the Blue Stream pipeline agreement. Turkey's increasing need for energy resources and Russia's pursuit of marketing its oil and natural gas on favorable terms brought about the signing of an intergovernmental natural gas agreement in December 1997. The route of the pipeline would go directly through the Black Sea without passing through any other third country. Thus, Blue Stream would provide cheaper gas and carry less political risk compared to the formerly used Trans-Balkan pipeline, which was costly and often caused shortages of gas in Turkey (See Figure 3.1.). The construction of the pipeline was completed in February 2003 and became operable in 2005.

The arrangement by which the Blue Stream has provided a continuous flow of natural gas at a reasonable price for Turkey has not been without controversy. The Blue Stream Pipeline was established to meet peak demands during winter seasons or in case of a problem in the transportation of Iranian gas to Turkey.²¹² However, in return for this, Turkey guaranteed Russia the continuous purchase of natural gas for 25 years.²¹³ The high price of Russian natural gas determined in the agreement brought about multiple lawsuits in Turkey against the ministers and bureaucrats involved in realizing the deal with

²¹² “*Gluboi Potok*,” *Gazprom*, accessed December 10, 2020, <https://www.gazprom.ru/projects/blue-stream/>.

²¹³ This step was taken at the expense of excluding cheaper Turkmen gas. See “Turkmenistan: Gas Industry Seeks Export Routes,” *Radio Liberty*, October 09, 1999, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1092410.html>.

Russia.²¹⁴ The agreement was labeled “Blue Treason” by Şükrü Elekdağ, an influential former diplomat and politician, who argued that the government ignored the more favorable Turkmen option and increased Turkey’s energy dependency on Russia.²¹⁵ The protests of the US, which aimed to bypass Russia in the transportation of energy resources to the West, also fell on deaf ears.²¹⁶

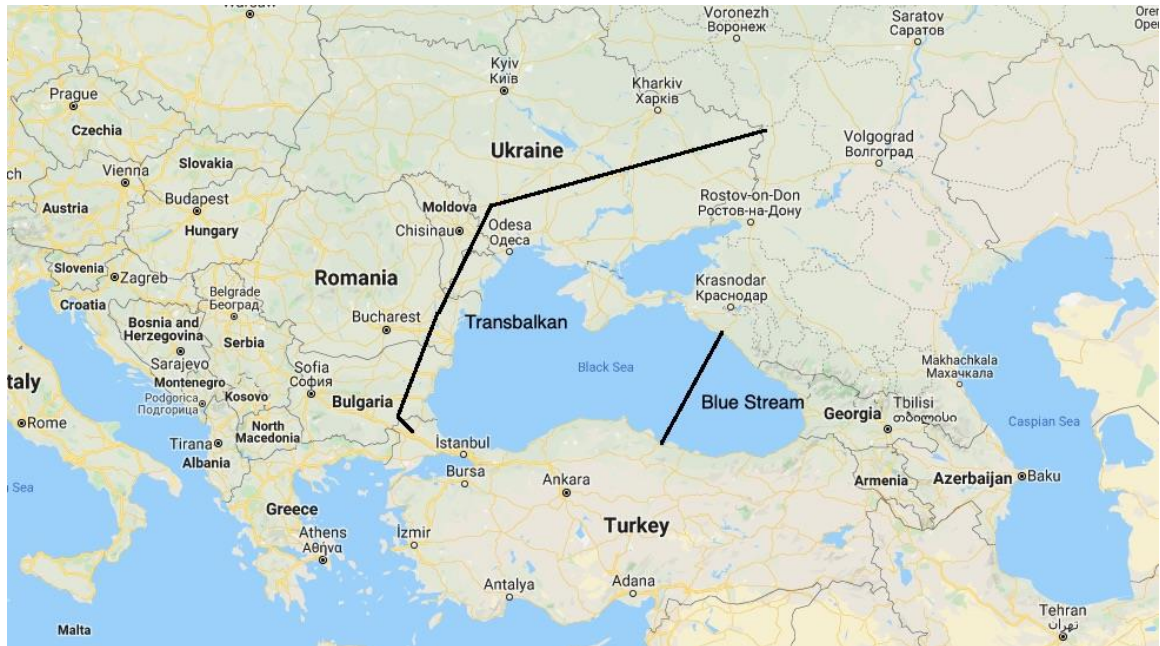


Figure 3.1. Comparison of TransBalkan and the Blue Stream

Source: Google Maps, accessed December 20, 2020, <https://www.google.com/maps/@43.8386209,31.809691,5z>.

²¹⁴ “Beyaz enerji davası açıldı” [White Energy Case Was Opened], *NTV*, April 20, 2001, <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/78189.asp>.

²¹⁵ Şükrü Elekdağ, “Mavi İhanet” [Blue Treason], *Milliyet*, May 13, 2001, <http://gazetearsivi.milliyet.com.tr/Arsiv/2001/05/13>.

²¹⁶ Douglas Frantz, “Russia’s New Reach: Gas Pipeline to Turkey,” *NY Times*, June 8, 2001, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/06/08/world/russia-s-new-reach-gas-pipeline-to-turkey.html>.

For multiple reasons, the Blue Stream has been a lucrative and strategically beneficial deal for Russia. First, by eliminating the Balkan route, Russia could cut costs and minimize the risks in transporting its natural gas to Turkey. Second, Russia secured a substantial share of the Turkish energy market. Third, Russia gained a strategic advantage against Turkey by holding an important share of Turkey's natural gas imports. Despite these advantages, not everything went according to Russia's plan. Following the 2001 economic crisis in Turkey, Ankara approached Moscow to renegotiate the deal. Having already started the project, Russia accepted Turkey's request for the decrease in the amount and the price of gas.²¹⁷ Also, in contrast to the initial calculations, which had presumed 50 years of lifespan for the pipeline, the subsequent reassessments revealed that the project could only operate approximately 25 years.²¹⁸

3.3.3.2. Transportation of Caspian Oil to Europe

In competition with Russia's aims to increase its hegemonic influence over the post-Soviet region through agreements like the Blue Stream, the US and the energy-importing countries of Europe aimed to secure the continuous and cheap flow of Caspian oil, while diminishing Russian and Iranian power and influence in the regional energy geopolitics. Their allies in this quest were the newly independent countries having access to the Caspian energy resources. Azerbaijan (similar to Turkmenistan and

²¹⁷ Fiona Hill, "Beyond Co-Dependency: European Reliance on Russian Energy," *Brookings Institution* (July 1, 2005), 4-5, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/hill20050727.pdf>.

²¹⁸ Alexander Shkuta, *Evropeyskiy Vektor Gazovoy Strategii Rossii* [European Vector of Russian Gas Strategy] (Moscow: Ukam, 2008), 60.

Kazakhstan) aimed to utilize its access to Caspian oil to bolster its economic and political independence from Moscow.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline project resulted from this set of dynamics. Within the framework of the BTC agreement, the oil from Azerbaijan's Azeri-Çirak-Güneşli field would be transported to Ceyhan in Turkey's southeast, opening up to the Mediterranean through Georgian land (See Figure 3.2.). Bypassing the existing Russian-controlled pipeline system (Druzhba), BTC complemented the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), which transports Kazakh oil to the Black Sea through Russia, and Baku-Supsa (BS), which transports Azeri oil from the Sanqaçal field to the Black Sea through Georgia. After signing the agreement in 1999 and a groundbreaking ceremony in 2002, the pipeline came into operation in 2006. By linking Azerbaijan and Georgia to Europe through BTC, Turkey gained a strategic advantage in the region against Russia in the region. Through the increased independence of Georgia and Azerbaijan, and with the commitments of the EU and the US, BTC considerably increased Turkey's maneuvering area in the South Caucasus.

Against the backdrop of the emergence of tensions in Ukraine during the Orange Revolution, Europe's energy security issue gained further significance. The EU aimed to construct the SGC, a project intended to secure sufficient gas supply to Europe through pipeline projects controlled by European firms operating under EU jurisdiction within the framework of the cooperation between the EU and the countries in the region.²¹⁹ A parallel

²¹⁹ Alexandra Jarosiewicz, *The Southern Gas Corridor: How the Azerbaijani-Turkish project becomes part of the game between Russia and the EU* (Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2015), 9.

pipeline from the Azeri Shah Deniz field to Erzurum (Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, BTE) was also completed in 2006. In the short run, the pipeline supplied Turkey and Georgia with Azeri oil. In the long run, in cooperation with Europe, BTE was projected to become the first leg of the SCG.²²⁰ The project would also provide political and strategic benefits through strengthening ties between the EU and Turkey, and between Turkey and the Caucasus, as well as through decreasing the EU's energy dependence on Russia.

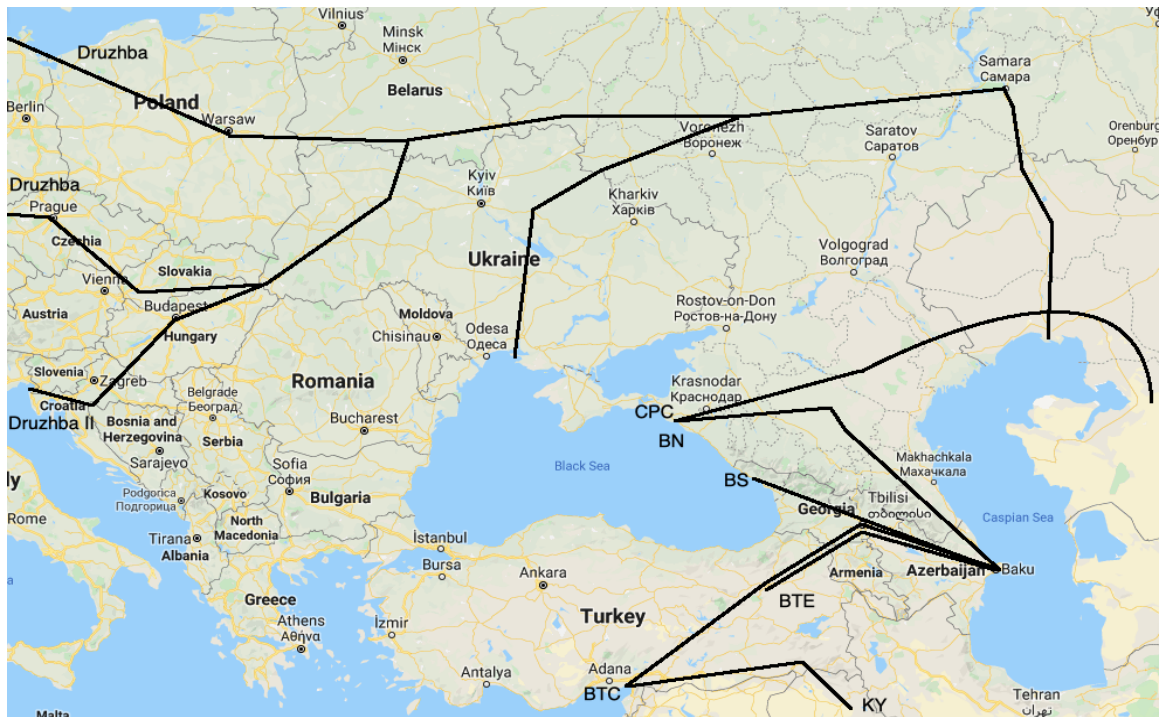


Figure 3.2. The Outflow of Caspian oil to Europe and Turkey

Source: Google Maps, accessed December 20, 2020, <https://www.google.com/maps/@43.8386209,31.809691,5z>.

The NABUCCO project, which was promoted within the framework of SCG, also heightened the dynamics of competition in the energy geopolitics of the region. The

²²⁰ “South Caucasus pipeline,” *BP Azerbaijan*, accessed November 2, 2020, https://www.bp.com/en_az/azerbaijan/home/who-we-are/operationsprojects/pipelines/scp.html.

agreement was to extend BTE to Europe through the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline and deliver gas to the Baumgarten an der March gas hub in Austria through Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary.²²¹ Through another pipeline project that would connect Iranian gas to NABUCCO, Turkey also attempted to include Iran in the project, despite US opposition.²²² Russia counter-proposed South Stream as a rival pipeline route that would deliver gas to Europe through the Adriatic via the Trans Adriatic Pipeline and the Balkans (See Figure 3.3.).²²³

²²¹ Angel Saz-Carranza and Maria Vandendriessche, “Routes to Energy Security: The Geopolitics of Gas Pipelines between Europe and its Neighbors,” *The New Politics of Strategic Resources: Energy and Food Security Challenges in the 21st Century* ed. David Steven (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 129.

²²² Nuri Yeşilyurt, “Orta Doğu İle İlişkiler,” in *Kurtuluş Savaşı’ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler; Yorumlar Cilt III: 2001-2012* [Turkish Foreign Policy: From the War of Independence until Today, Facts, Documents, Comments Vol III: 2001-2012], ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013), 458.

²²³ Rafael Kandiyoti, *Powering Europe: Russia, Ukraine, and the Energy Squeeze* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 69.

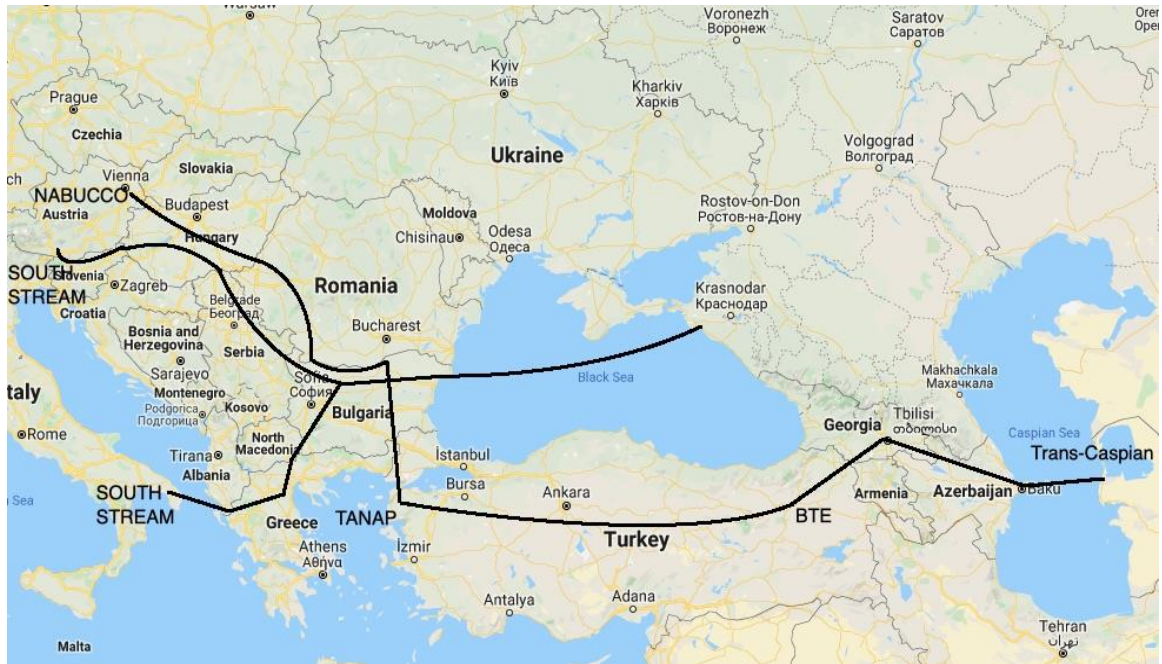


Figure 3.3. NABUCCO and South Stream Pipelines.

Source: Google Maps, accessed December 20, 2020, <https://www.google.com/maps/@43.8386209,31.809691,5z>.

It is noteworthy that Turkey participated in the Russian-sponsored South Stream project as well, since the pipeline was passing through Turkey's exclusive economic zone in the Black Sea. This move was demonstrative of Turkey's emerging independent foreign policy strategy and Turkey's desire to become an energy hub. However, the NABUCCO project could not be realized due to the financial issues stemming from the 2008 crisis, disagreements between Turkey and its European partners, Russia's opposition to the project, and ultimately Azerbaijan's signing an alternative agreement with the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline project.

3.4.Cooperation at Global Level

As discussed throughout this chapter, the impact of the Iraq invasion went beyond the region by provoking a global reaction towards US unilateralism. This process was

complemented with economic trends such as the rise of China, the emergence of the networks between rising powers like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia), and the recession in the US during the 2008 crisis. During this trend, the positive developments in regional affairs between Turkey and Russia as well as their bilateral economic relations strongly reflected on the stances of both countries towards each other in international organizations and multilateral platforms.

During the 2000s, Turkey's multidimensional foreign policy strategy included taking part in mediation efforts and improving Turkey's standing in global and regional platforms. Russia approached Turkey's efforts favorably, but with reservations regarding Turkey's possible stronger alignment with the West. For example, within the framework of fostering multipolarity in the global system, Russia took a discouraging stance towards Turkey's EU membership but encouraged Turkey's efforts to increase its global influence. Thus, Turkey could count on Russia's support in its candidacy for nonpermanent membership in the UN Security Council for the 2009-2010 term. In turn, Turkey placed no reservation on Russia's effort to achieve a more influential status in the international system after the massive multilateral Cold War-era network disappeared with the demise of the USSR.²²⁴ For example, Turkey played a significant role in Russia's membership in

²²⁴ It should also be noted that Putin's speech at the Munich security conference in 2007, where he called for disarmament and adherence to the basic principles of international law against making use of NATO and OSCE for promoting the interests of the West, was immediately put on the website of the Turkish General Chief of Staff. See "*Putin'in Mnh konuması Genelkurmay'in sitesinde*" [Putin's Mnh Speech on the Website of the Chief of Staff], *Hrriyet*, February 15, 2007, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/putinin-munih-konusmasi-genelkurmayin-sitesinde-5956456>

the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2005.²²⁵ Turkey and Russia's support for one another was the consequence of the overlap in their global vision. While they did not see eye to eye on every regional matter, Turkey and Russia were on the same page regarding the idea that a global system could increase their independent influence at the global level.

3.5. Conclusion

In 2000-2009 Turkey-Russia relations visibly improved. As demonstrated in this chapter, their mutual opposition to the intensity and direction of the Western power projection through the invasion of Iraq, along with the changes of leadership in both countries played significant roles in this development. As noted, the invasion of Iraq was an earthquake type of development. Therefore, although Saddam forces were quickly defeated, the impact of this event continued to unfold in the following years. In this chapter, I analyze this impact with the help of the framework I established in Chapter 1. Accordingly, I analyzed how Turkey and Russia responded to the invasion of Iraq and the new regional and global dynamics created by that event. Doing so required examining the composite decision-making mechanisms of both countries. Finally, I examined how Turkey and Russia's new foreign policy strategies interacted with multiple segments of the bilateral relations.

Despite the global and regional sympathy and support for the US following the 9/11 events, the invasion of Iraq drew a negative reaction from several regional and global actors, including Turkey and Russia. In Turkey, Erdoğan came into power in 2002, with a

²²⁵ Emre Erşen, "Turkish-Russian Relations in the New Century," *Turkey in the 21st Century: Quest for a New Foreign Policy*, ed. Özden Zeynep Oktav (New York: Routledge, 2011), 103.

positive agenda aimed at increasing Turkey's influence in its neighborhood through developing economic and strategic cooperation with regional actors. Putin also intended to bolster Russia's economic power and increase its regional and global influence. While Putin considered Turkey an important trade partner and welcomed its relative independence from the West, Turkey under the AK Party focused on developing mutually beneficial relations with Russia.

Multiple regions where Russia and Turkey compete were subjected to increased activism by the West, the reassertion of Russia's influence, and Turkey's pragmatic cooperation attempts. Aside from this, at this point, Turkey had already realized that it could not compete with Russia in the post-Soviet space. The US support for such a project had already dissipated and Turkic-Muslim nations in the post-Soviet space did not consider Turkey a source of inspiration. These dynamics paved the way for the coexistence and even cooperation between Turkey and Russia in multiple regions. The positions of the two countries *vis-à-vis* the Middle East began to converge after the Iraq Invasion. In the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, Turkey's economic influence and Russia's hegemonic influence achieved a *modus vivendi*. This improvement occurred through both countries' compartmentalizing bilateral relations by ignoring differences in problematic areas and focusing on cooperation.

The differing interests of Turkey, Russia, former Soviet countries, European countries, and the US — as well their ability to pursue these interests in a politically less confined regional and global environment — ushered in a transformation in the energy geopolitics of the region in the 2000s through the Blue Stream Agreement and the EU's Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) project. The dynamics of Turkey-Russia cooperation and

competition in the region's energy geopolitics reflected the increasing assertiveness of the West, Russia's attempts to restore its hegemonic influence over the post-Soviet space, and Turkey's attempt to increase its regional influence through a multidimensional foreign policy. Russia aimed to maintain the relevance of the Soviet-era web of pipelines, Turkey aimed to diversify its energy supplies and to become a hub for new pipelines, the EU and the US aimed to decrease Russia's hegemony over the region's energy geopolitics, and the newly independent resource-rich post-Soviet countries aimed to bolster their economic independence. While the BTC increased Turkey's influence in the South Caucasus, the Blue Stream secured natural gas flow to Turkey while increasing Russia's influence over Turkey through energy dependence.

4. TURKEY – RUSSIA RELATIONS IN 2009-2016

4.1.Introduction

In this chapter, I examine Turkey-Russia relations in the years between 2009 and 2016. In my analysis of the bilateral ties in this period, I consider the Syrian Civil War as the *stimulus* that had a primary impact on the dynamics of the Turkey-Russia nexus. Unlike the invasion of Iraq, the Syrian Civil War has taken years, and the conflict's dynamics shaped the bilateral relations in 2009-2016, as well as beyond. Therefore, the Syrian Civil War should be considered a 'global warming' type of event, which took time to unfold and created a long-term impact.

I argue that the conflict of interest between Turkey and Russia over the Syrian Civil War, which began as part of the so-called Arab Spring,²²⁶ played the most significant role in shaping Turkey-Russia relations in this period. With the help of my theoretical framework, I reveal how the conflicting interests of Turkey and Russia within the framework of the Syrian Civil War caused deterioration in the bilateral relations. Throughout this chapter, I show how the conflict between Turkey and Russia over Syria eventually reflected upon the dynamics of cooperation/conflict between two countries in other regions, bilateral trade relations and energy relations, to a less degree.

This chapter starts with an appraisal of the period, where I analyze the regional and global context, the changes of the domestic dynamics in the two countries, and the

²²⁶ Arab Spring began in Tunisia, when grassroots protests brought about the toppling of Tunisia's Zine el-abidine Ben Ali, in January 2011. This event created a domino effect and spread to other Arab nations across North Africa and the Middle East, bringing the end to decades-old dictatorships in Egypt and Libya as well as sparking protests in Syria.

emergence of the Syrian Civil War as an essential dynamic that influenced Turkey-Russia relations. Then, I analyze how their reactions to the regional turbulence influenced the dynamics of cooperation/conflict between Turkey and Russia in different regions, bilateral trade relations, bilateral energy relations and cooperation between them at a multilateral level.

4.2.Appraisal of the Era

4.2.1. Regional and Global Context

Turkey-Russia relations deteriorated within the framework of the escalation of the Syrian Civil War. The change in the US Foreign Policy towards the region played a significant role in shaping the regional dynamics within the framework of the Syrian crisis. Although the Obama Administration's foreign policy strategy included "appealing to people's aspirations for justice" in the Middle East,²²⁷ he also promised to decrease the US military commitments and pivot towards Asia.²²⁸ Thus, Obama, who had also opposed the invasion of Iraq, would not show enthusiasm for a costly military intervention to turn the tides of the civil war in Syria although he sympathized with Syrians' aspirations. In the absence of substantial US involvement, Russia appeared as a deal-breaking actor in Syria. Turkey's failure to convince neither the US nor the EU to realize a political transition in

²²⁷ Barack Obama, "National Security Strategy," *Obama White House*, (May 11, 2010), 25, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf.

²²⁸ Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>.

Syria compromised Turkey's security and economy and deteriorated Turkey's relations with Russia and the West.

In the initial phase of this period, the continuing synergy between Putin and Erdoğan and their habit of overlooking regional competition between the two countries enabled a positive trend in trade and energy relations between Turkey and Russia. The strengthening of the bilateral ties facilitated projects that required deeper long-term trust. In 2011, Turkey and Russia established the High-Level Cooperation Council, which enabled the two countries to better coordinate the bilateral trade relations. In 2014, Russia canceled the South Stream via Ukraine, a pipeline project in favor of the Turkish Stream via Turkey. Russia also began the construction of the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) started in 2015 in Turkey. However, it was also in this period that the two countries tested the limits of their compartmentalization of bilateral relations. The tensions over Syria significantly escalated due to Turkey's shooting down of a Russian fighter jet over the Turkey-Syria border on November 24, 2015. The tensions in the following period, known as the Jet Crisis, temporarily affected other segments of the bilateral relations.

4.2.2. Domestic Context and the Foreign Policy Strategy of Turkey

4.2.2.1. Erdoğan's Consolidation of Power and Domestic Opposition

In this period, the AK Party's continuing electoral successes provided the government with self-confidence and motivation to realize significant reforms. The 2010 referendum, which substantially increased the power of elected officials against the judiciary and military, was a severe blow to the long-running secular tutelage over the Turkish state. In the 2011 parliamentary elections, having realized notable reforms and having tripled Turkey's GDP per capita, the AK Party won a comfortable victory with

almost 50% of the vote. With the confidence gained from this success, the AK Party could initiate the Reconciliation Process to resolve the Kurdish issue.²²⁹

However, having increased his control over Turkey, Erdoğan's mandate began to face severe challenges from other political actors. In the summer of 2013, the tensions between Erdoğan and the secular urban class peaked with the Gezi Park protests.²³⁰ Moreover, the relations between the Gülen movement and the AK Party deteriorated when various organs of the Gülen Movement began to target the AK Party through judicial processes, police operations, leaks, and media manipulations.²³¹ The Reconciliation

²²⁹ From late 2012, AK Party embarked on what is called the 'Reconciliation Process' to end Turkey's decades long problems with the Kurdish minority. The steps included direct negotiations with the PKK's leader Öcalan, launching of Kurdish-language broadcasting in state television and the desecuritization of the Kurdish identity. In return, the PKK was expected to leave Turkish territory. However, the process was damaged with the escalation of violence due to the rising expectations of the PKK, who benefitted from the power vacuum in Kurdish majority areas of Syria. For more information, see Talha Köse, "Rise and Fall of the AK Party's Kurdish Peace Initiatives," *Insight Turkey* Vol. 19, No. 2 (2017): 139-165.

²³⁰ The peaceful protests to prevent an urban development project in *Gezi Park*, which is in the central Taksim district of İstanbul, spread to several major cities in Turkey and took an anti-AK Party/Erdoğan form, contesting various issues ranging from the restrictions on alcohol selling after 10 PM to police brutality. The protests, which reflect the deep-seated resentment of Turkey's secular middle class, made a lasting negative impact to the AK Party's image in Turkey and abroad. For more information, see Tarık Oğuzlu, "The Gezi Park Protests and Their Impact on Turkey's Soft Power Abroad," *Orsam*, June 18, 2013, <https://www.orsam.org.tr/en/the-gezi-park-protests-and-their-impact-on-turkey-s-soft-power-abroad/>.

²³¹ In February 2012, a Gülenist prosecutor prepared an indictment against Hakan Fidan, the head of Turkey's intelligence agency, accusing him of assisting the PKK. Gülenist prosecutors prepared a trumped-up indictment that associated Fidan, Erdoğan and several AK Party figures with an Iran-based terrorist organization (!). In December 2013, Gülenist police officers, in collaboration with Gülenist prosecutors arrested several AK Party figures on corruption charges. Simultaneously, secretly taped phone conversations of AK Party officials, including one between Erdoğan and his son, were leaked and promoted in the Gülenist media. With these steps, the Gülenists aimed to discredit AK Party in the eyes of

Process also ended after terrorist activities on civilian targets resumed in 2014.²³² Yet, these challenges did not obstruct the AK Party's electoral success and they gained another victory in the 2014 local elections, which had become a vote of confidence for them, against the backdrop of the Gülenist anti-governmental campaign. In 2014, Erdoğan ran for President as a first step to establishing a Presidential system, leaving party leadership and the office of Prime Minister to Davutoğlu.²³³ Although the AK Party failed to achieve a majority in the Parliament in June 2015 to form a one-party-government, the failure to bring about a coalition in the upcoming process brought about another election in November of the same year where the AK Party once more received nearly 50% of the vote. By 2016, Turkish society was polarized between Erdoğan's supporters and several opposing groups, who were yet to unite their forces against Erdoğan.

Turkish nationalists through revealing peace talks with the PKK, in the eyes of the US through fabricating links with Iran and in the eyes of the voter through corruption allegations. For more information about Gülen Movement's fixation with Iran, see Ali Balcı, "When Foreign Policy Matters: The Gülen Movement's Fight with the AK Party over Iran," *Insight Turkey* Vol. 17, No. 1 (2015): 9-18. For an authoritative account of the Gülen Movement, see Bayram Balcı and Hakan Yavuz, *Turkey's July 15th Coup What Happened and Why* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018).

²³² In October 2014, PKK sympathizers murdered 45 civilians during the protests against Turkey's Syria policy. The tensions resumed with the murder of two police officers in their homes by the PKK in July 2015. In effect, the conflicts between the Turkish army and the PKK resumed in urban areas in the proceeding period. See Kumru F. Toktamış, "A peace that wasn't: friends, foes, and contentious re-entrenchment of Kurdish politics in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* Vol. 19, Iss: 5 (2008): 697-722.

²³³ Erdoğan left his seat of Prime Minister and Party Leader to the Foreign Minister Davutoğlu in 2014. In the upcoming months, however, tensions began to emerge between the two over the new presidential system. Unsatisfied with Davutoğlu's cooperation after the November elections, Erdoğan forced Davutoğlu to resign and replaced him with Binali Yıldırım, former Minister of Transportation in 2016.

4.2.2.2. The Implementation of the AK Party's Foreign Policy Vision

In this period, the change in Turkey's strategic culture gained momentum. Having consolidated power over the state institutions, Turkey aimed to play a leadership role in the Middle East, which was undergoing a political and economic transformation. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who became Foreign Minister in 2009 and Prime Minister in 2014, played a central role in forming Turkey's foreign policymaking in this period. The initial US encouragement was also an essential factor. Obama chose Turkey for his first trip abroad and during his visit, Obama praised Turkey as a model nation, providing substantial encouragement to Turkey's bid for regional leadership.²³⁴

Turkey's involvement in the Middle East caused a situation where the success of Turkey's bid for regional leadership depended on the course of the regional turbulence. When Turkey's foreign policy strategy succeeded, it enjoyed splendid economic and political relations, not only with post-Revolution regimes but also with Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).²³⁵ Turkey's foreign policy towards Iran²³⁶ and Israel²³⁷ also

²³⁴ "Obama says U.S., Turkey can be model for world," *CNN*, April 6, 2009, <https://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/04/06/obama.turkey/>.

²³⁵ Led by the Barzani family, the Kurdistan Regional Government was established in 2005 as an autonomous region within Iraq. While Turkey was initially very anxious about this development, within the framework of the securitization of the political and cultural aspiration of Kurds, Turkey under the AK Party enjoyed very good relations with the KRG, making Iraq one of its most important trading partners.

²³⁶ In 2010, Brazil and Turkey brokered a nuclear swap deal with Iran. Yet, the US responded to this deal with new sanctions on Iran through UNSC.

²³⁷ The relations with Israel significantly deteriorated as a result of Erdogan's scolding of the Israeli President Peres with accusations about Israeli disregard for Palestinian lives at the Davos meeting in 2009 and after an Israeli raid on a civilian aid ship organized by Turkish civil society organizations.

contributed to Turkey's popularity in the Arab streets. It was also well-positioned to develop relations with the post-Revolution regimes established after the Arab Spring in the Middle East.²³⁸ However, the direction of the political developments in the Middle East upset Turkey's bid for regional leadership. The conflict in Syria turned into a civil war in 2012, Egypt's elected pro-Turkey government was toppled by a coup in 2013, and Turkey's Resolution Process began to crumble in 2014.

In this period, Turkey continued to consider Russia as an essential partner in trade and energy. Turkey welcomed Russia's initiative of the Turkish Stream and cooperated with Russia in building a nuclear reactor. Turkey continued to avoid confrontation with Russia in the post-Soviet space, even during the Ukrainian Crisis. However, the conflict of interests over Syria negatively impacted other segments of the bilateral relations, testing the limits of compartmentalization.

4.2.3. Domestic Context and the Foreign Policy Strategy of Russia

4.2.3.1. Further Centralization of Power Under Putin

Between 2008 and 2012, Putin left his seat to a little-known law professor Dmitry Medvedev, in compliance with the Russian Constitution that did not allow him to run for three consecutive terms. Medvedev prioritized economic reform against the backdrop of the negative impact of the 2008 crisis on the Russian economy.²³⁹ The centralization trend

²³⁸ After the regime changes, Erdoğan visited Tunisia and Egypt to show support. It was curious that on his visit Erdoğan offered Turkish *laicite* as a working model for Muslim democracies. “*Erdoğan'dan Mısır'a laiklik çağrısı*,” *Dünya Bülteni*, September 13, 2011, <https://www.dunyabulteni.net/afrika/erdogandan-misira-laiklik-cagrisi-h174406.html>.

²³⁹ Medvedev's priorities were reflected in the ‘National Security Strategy of Russia until 2020,’ which he signed as President. In the document, economic issues were given emphasis and it was indicated that Russia will focus on ‘multi-vector diplomacy’ instead

in Russia's domestic politics continued under Medvedev, who extended the length of the term for Presidency to six years.²⁴⁰

After the end of Medvedev's term, Putin returned to the Presidency. He achieved a landslide victory in the 2012 Presidential elections, despite ER's losing its constitution-changing majority in the 2011 Duma elections. Under his third term, Putin took several more steps towards strengthening Russia's 'power vertical' and 'sovereign democracy.' Control over public gatherings was tightened through higher fines for participation in unauthorized protests. A new law required NGOs that receive funding from abroad to register as foreign agents. Manipulation of nomination processes, changes in the electoral procedures, and restrictions on emerging parties enabled the ER to preserve its dominance over Russia's party politics.²⁴¹ The annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the economic sanctions helped Putin further consolidate his power by relying upon an anti-Western nationalist narrative.²⁴²

4.2.3.2. Increasing Assertiveness in Russian Foreign Policy

During this period, promoting multi-polarity at the global level and restoring Moscow's influence over the post-Soviet space remained Russia's essential strategic goals,

of bloc confrontation. See Dmitry Medvedev, "Strategiya natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii do 2020 goda" [National security strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020], *Prezident Rossii*, May 12, 2009, <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/424>.

²⁴⁰ "Gosduma Prinyala Zakon o Popravkakh k Konstitutsii RF" [Duma Accepted a Law on Amendment to the Constitution], *Kommersant*, November 14, 2008, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1061738>.

²⁴¹ Kelley, *Russian Politics and*, 238.

²⁴² Maria Snegovaya, "Anti-Western Sentiment as the Basis for Russian Unity," *Carnegie Moscow*, April 4, 2014, <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/57115>.

as emphasized in the national security documents promulgated in this period.²⁴³ Compared with the previous period, Russia adopted a more assertive stance in protecting and furthering its strategic interests, especially in the post-Soviet region.

The revision of the US foreign policy strategy under Obama enabled Russia to increase its influence not only in the post-Soviet region but also in the Middle East. In 2008, during Medvedev's first year in office, Russia conducted a military invasion into Georgia. Then, Obama's support for expanding NATO and the EU towards the post-Soviet space, met with Russia's harsh response, increasing tensions in the Black Sea region.²⁴⁴ Russia's assertiveness continued with the annexation of Ukraine's Crimea in 2014 and its military intervention in Syria in 2015. It should be noted that, in both instances, Russia minimized the risk by making use of private military contractors, airstrikes, and the local militia, along with conducting hybrid wars. Moreover, the Eurasian Economic Union, modeled after the EU for the post-Soviet region, became effective in 2015.

In this period, despite Russia's continued willingness to develop trade relations, its decisive steps negatively affected its relations with Turkey. Russia continued to expand its

²⁴³ By then, the emphasis on multipolarity had been consolidated as one of the core principles of Russia's strategy. This could be seen in the National Security Concept of 2013 and 2016. See Vladimir Putin, "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 30.11.2016 g. № 640" [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 640 of 30.11.2016], *Prezident Rossii*, November 30, 2016, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451>. The stronger rhetoric used in 2015 National Strategy Document was the reflection and harbinger of more assertive actions by Vladimir Putin, "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 31.12.2015 g. № 683" [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 683 31.12.2015], *Prezident Rossii*, December 31, 2015, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/40391>.

²⁴⁴ Chris Dolan, *Obama and the Emergence of a Multipolar World Order: Redefining U.S. Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018), 99.

partnership with Turkey on energy and trade despite conflicts of interest on several regional issues. When the South Stream was no longer viable due to the Ukrainian Crisis, Russia relied on Turkey and initiated the Turkish Stream. Furthermore, Turkey's objections to Russia's actions in Syria and the Black Sea regions did not deter Putin, who expected Turkey to adjust its strategy to the new regional balance of power.

4.3. Turkey-Russia Relations

4.3.1. Regional Cooperation and Competition

4.3.1.1. The Middle East in the Context of the Syrian Crisis

Although Turkey and Russia's policies towards the Arab Spring generally converged, they had a conflict over Syria. Both countries adopted a positive stance towards the emergence of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt²⁴⁵ and protested against the NATO intervention in Libya.²⁴⁶ During the initial phase of the unrest in Syria, Turkey and Russia

²⁴⁵ Medvedev commented that the Tunisia example should be a lesson for all the governments. "Prezident Rossii vystupil na otkrytii Vsemirnogo ekonomicheskogo foruma" [The Russian President spoke at the opening of the world economic forum], *Prezident Rossii*, January 26, 2011, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/10163/audios>.

²⁴⁶ Weeks before the intervention, Erdoğan rejected a NATO intervention as a solution to the situation in Libya. This would cause the sidelining of Turkey in the NATO operation. Jonathan Head, "Libya: Turkey's troubles with NATO and no-fly zone," *BBC*, March 25, 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12864742>. Russia enabled the operation by abstaining in the UNSC Resolution which authorized a no-fly-zone on Libya. When the no-fly-zone turned into an extensive military campaign led by France, Putin expressed his strong disapproval. Sergey Smirnov, "Medvedev nazval nedopustimymi slova Putina o Livii" [Medvedev called Putin's words about Libya unacceptable], *Vedomosti*, March 21, 2011, https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2011/03/21/medvedev_nazval_nedopustimymi_slova_putina_o_livii.

hoped that the Assad government could mollify the domestic discontents.²⁴⁷ Yet, the situation in Syria deteriorated from early 2011 with indiscriminate shelling of protesters, the polarization of Syrian society, and the defections from the Syrian Army.²⁴⁸ In mid-2011, the Free Syrian Army,²⁴⁹ an umbrella organization claiming to represent the opposition was formed. However, it lost ground to more radical groups such as ISIS²⁵⁰ and the YPG.²⁵¹ Meanwhile, the Iran-backed militia and the Lebanese Hezbollah further

²⁴⁷ Christopher Phillips, *The Battle for Syria: International Rivalry in the Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 59.

²⁴⁸ On March 6, 2011, a group of teenagers who painted anti-regime graffiti on a school wall were arrested and tortured. The brutal government crackdown on the protesting families further agitated the Syrians and protests spread to other cities. In the meantime, Assad took some steps for dialogue, such as giving citizenship to the Kurds in Northern Syria and allowing other political parties. Yet, these steps did not ease the tensions amid continued violent oppression of the protesters.

²⁴⁹ After a group of defecting soldiers labeled themselves as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) several groups of soldiers and militia began to nominally join FSA from mid-2011 onwards. Yet, the FSA lacked a line of command from the political leadership to the military leadership to the militiamen, the fighters were undisciplined, and it never had a strong leader. Efforts to regulate the opposition into a more formal structure through the involvement of Turkey, Qatar and exiled Syrian opposition also failed.

²⁵⁰ ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Sham, or simply ISIS) was born in Iraq as an Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist organization in the mid-2000s and became popular through graphic execution videos circulated online. The Syrian Civil War provided an opportunity to expand ISIS's regional influence. For more information about ISIS, see Charles Lister, *The Syrian Jihad Al Qaeda the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

²⁵¹ Formed in 2003 as a branch of the PKK, the PYD (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat - Democratic Union Party*) is a political organization based in Syria. The YPG (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel – People's Protection Units) is the PYD's armed wing. The power of the YPG significantly increased in Syria when the Syrian government forces tactically withdrawn from the Northern Syria. The YPG also had access to a formidable fighting force with a clear command structure and discipline from the PKK. see Can Acun and Bünyamin Keskin, *The PKK's Branch in Northern Syria PYD-YPG* (Ankara: SETA Yayınları, 2016).

negated the fighting force of the disunited opposition. In this period, the escalation of US diplomatic pressure on the Syrian government and strong signals from the Obama Administration for a US military involvement²⁵² created a false expectation that the Assad regime was about to fall, following the example of Ghaddafi.²⁵³ This expectation increased the diplomatic and military support towards the government and the opposition by regional actors. However, Syria was different from Libya, where Ghaddafi faced larger defections and stronger international pressure. In effect, Syria became a violent platform for several regional and global securitization dynamics (US-Russia, Iran-Saudi Arabia, Shia-Sunni-Salafi/Jihadist, PKK-Turkey, etc.). In parallel to the escalation of the conflict, the conflict of interests between Turkey and Russia over Syria also came to the surface.

Turkey's Syria policy was transformed in line with the course of the Syrian Civil War. Before the conflict, Turkey's relations with Syria had developed positively due to

²⁵² In late March 2011, the then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton emphasized on the widespread image of Assad as a reformer in the US Congress. Glenn Kessler, "Hillary Clinton's incredible statement on Syria," *Washington Post*, April 4, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/post/hillary-clintons-uncredible-statement-on-syria/2011/04/01/AFWPEYac_blog.html. By August, this position was revised with Obama calling Assad to step aside. Macon Phillips, "President Obama: "The future of Syria must be determined by its people, but President Bashar al-Assad is standing in their way," *White House President Barack Obama*, August 18, 2011, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/08/18/president-obama-future-syria-must-be-determined-its-people-president-bashar-al-assad>. In August 2012, with respect to the allegations about the chemical weapons usage by the Syrian government forces, Obama stated that chemical weapons usage by the Syrian government would constitute a 'red line' and change his calculus. See Barack Obama "Remarks by the President to the White House Press Corps," ed. by James S. Brady, August 20, 2012, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/08/20/remarks-president-white-house-press-corps>.

²⁵³ Phillips, *The Battle For*, 76.

Turkey's initiatives per Turkey's 'zero problems with neighbors' approach.²⁵⁴ By April 2011, however, Turkey was frustrated with futile diplomatic efforts to convince Assad into a more serious process for dialogue and began to back the opposition by hosting the Syrian National Council (SNC) in İstanbul in August 2011.²⁵⁵ However, Turkey's initiatives to foster a competent army of opposition failed. As a result of the conflict of interests between Turkey and the West, and the unwillingness of the West to share the cost of the Syrian Crisis with Turkey, the relations between Turkey and the EU as well as Turkey's relations with the US substantially deteriorated. The EU did not honor its responsibilities in the Readmission Agreement, where Turkey guaranteed to accept back illegal immigrants who had passed through Turkish soil into Europe.²⁵⁶ The emergence of the PYD and the ISIS along the Turkey-Syria border threatened Turkey's security with frequent terrorist attacks

²⁵⁴ Turkey and Syria had several unresolved issues in their bilateral relations until the early 2000s including water disputes and PKK camps in Syria, which ended when Syria agreed to expel the PKK in the Adana Agreement in 1998. During the 2000s, Turkey-Syria relations significantly developed within the framework of AK Party's zero problems with neighbors. The visa requirements were lifted, bilateral trade significantly increased after the signing of free trade agreements and Turkey mediated the rapprochement between Syria and Israel in 2008. In 2010, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria signed the Quadripartite High-Level Cooperation council for creating a zone of free movement of peoples and goods in Levant.

²⁵⁵ Throughout 2011, Turkey used diplomatic pressure to convince Assad to negotiate with the opposition. The continuing brutality by the Syrian forces and the expectation that Assad's fall was inevitable turned Turkey against Syria. The escalation of tone in Turkey's consideration of the Syria can be observed from the press releases of the National Security Council throughout the year 2011. See "2011 Yılı Basın Açıklamaları" [Press Releases of the Year 2011], *Milli Güvenlik Kurulu Genel Sekreterliği*, October 21, 2015, <https://www.mgk.gov.tr/index.php/2011-yili-basin-aciklamalari>.

²⁵⁶ When the increasing migration created instabilities in Europe, Turkey accepted to re-admit the illegal immigrants in return for the abolition of the visa regime for Turkish citizens and economic aid, with the EU Readmission Agreement in 2013.

in its major cities.²⁵⁷ The Patriot missiles that were placed on Turkey's border by Germany, Netherlands, and the US were pulled back in the year 2015, at a time when Turkey was receiving almost daily missile attacks from across the border.²⁵⁸ The US tacitly approved the 2013 coup in Egypt against the elected pro-Turkey government. The US also provided significant military support to the PYD to fight ISIS,²⁵⁹ making the presence of the US in Syria a liability for Turkey, which saw PYD as a more imminent security threat.

Before the Syrian Civil War, Russia had negligible economic relations with Syria, which hosted two small Russian military bases on Syria's Mediterranean coast.²⁶⁰ But the escalation of the crisis created the conditions in the region where Russia could enforce its

²⁵⁷ Since the beginning of the Syrian Crisis, multiple cities of Turkey were targeted by bombing attacks several times between 2013 and 2016. The most major ones of these were the 2013 Reyhanlı car bombing at a public market (53 civilians died, the perpetrator who was captured in Syria admitted his guilt and ties with the Syrian government), the 2015 Ankara bombing at a rally of leftist group (109 civilians died, one of the suicide bombers was identified as an ISIS member), 2016 Ankara car bombing targeting public buses (38 civilians died, PKK affiliated TAK claimed responsibility).

²⁵⁸ At that point, Syria began to use Soviet-era Scud missiles, which could represent a great security risk to Turkey especially if used with chemical warheads. See "Turkey requested NATO missile defences over Syria chemical weapons fears," *The Guardian*, December 21, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/02/turkey-syria-chemical-weapons-fears>.

²⁵⁹ Turkey and the US agreed on the necessity of eradicating ISIS. However, while the US considered ISIS as the source of insecurity in Syria, Turkey saw ISIS as a consequence of the chaos in Syria. More importantly, Turkey considered the PYD as a bigger threat to its national security while the US began to provide military support to the YPG from the late 2014 onwards in an attempt to eradicate ISIS.

²⁶⁰ Syria was one of the most loyal allies of USSR during the Cold War. Yet, Russia only developed relations with Syria in the 2000s, when it became Syria's most important arms supplier. It is noteworthy that Syria was one of the handful of countries that supported Russia's military endeavor in Georgia in 2008. For more information, see Nikolay Kozhanov, "Russian Support for Assad's Regime: Is There a Red Line?" *The International Spectator* 48, No.2 (June 2013): 25-31.

position in countering the US global hegemony and promoting a multipolar world system through supporting the Assad regime. Moreover, with the legitimate Syrian government on one side and Islamist rebels on the other, it was not hard for Russia to justify its allegiance. The opposition in Syria could be heavily securitized by Russia, which could draw similarities between the Syrian conflict, the Color Revolutions,²⁶¹ and the Chechen insurgency.²⁶² In line with this, having blocked several UNSC Resolution efforts against the Syrian government,²⁶³ the Russian military directly intervened in the Syrian conflict in September 2015, effectively turning the tide in favor of the armed forces of the Syrian government.

Until late 2015, incidents that raised the tensions in the Turkey-Russia nexus did not dramatically impact the general course of Turkey-Russia relations. In this period, the political authority of Turkey and Russia could handle several crises. The first prominent confrontation occurred when Syria shot down a Turkish reconnaissance jet in international waters in June 2012. In response to Assad and Putin's conciliatory statements,²⁶⁴ Erdoğan

²⁶¹ For more information see Yulia Nikitina, "The "Color Revolutions" and "Arab Spring" in Russian Official Discourse," *Connections* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Winter, 2014): 87-104.

²⁶² Noah Bonsey, "More Chechnya, less Afghanistan," *Foreign Policy*, December 10, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/12/more-chechnya-less-afghanistan/>.

²⁶³ "UN Documents for Syria: Other," *Security Council Report*, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/other-documents/?ctype=Syria&cbtype=syria.

²⁶⁴ Following the incident Assad claimed that the plane was shot down on the suspicion that it was an Israeli jet and expressed his regret. See Loveday Morris, "Assad: We shot down Turkish jet thinking it was Israeli," *Independent*, 4 July 2012, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/assad-we-shot-down-turkish-jet-thinking-it-was-israeli-7906821.html>.

accused Putin of using the language of the illegitimate Syrian regime.²⁶⁵ In October 2012, Turkey forced a Damascus bound commercial plane from Moscow to land in Ankara on suspicion that the plane was carrying illicit material to Syria.²⁶⁶ Russia protested to Turkey for hindering the safety of Russians on the plane.²⁶⁷ Russia also expressed discomfort towards the placement of Patriot missiles on the Turkey-Syria border, even though Putin also stated that Russia understands Turkey's security concerns.²⁶⁸

Following great losses suffered by the overstretched Syrian Army against the opposition in the summer of 2015, the Russian military intervened in Syria in September 2015.²⁶⁹ Although it was portrayed as a war against terrorism and ISIS by Russia, most of their airstrikes targeted the northwest of Syria, where other rebel groups operate.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁵ “*Erdoğan: Rusya Suriye'nin diliyle konuşuyor*” [Russia is using Syria's Talking Points], *Dünya Bülteni*, June 27, 2012, <https://www.dunyabulteni.net/politika/erdogan-rusya-suriyenin-diliyle-konusuyor-h215963.html>.

²⁶⁶ “Turkey Says Syrian Plane Contained Ammunition,” *VOA News*, October 11, 2012, <https://www.voanews.com/world-news/middle-east-dont-use/turkey-says-syrian-plane-contained-ammunition>.

²⁶⁷ “Syria plane carried radar parts, not weapons – Russia,” *BBC*, October 12, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-19928139>.

²⁶⁸ “Duvarda silah varsa piyesin sonunda patlar” [If you have a pistol hanging on the wall in the first act, it fires in the last act], *Hürriyet*, December 3, 2012, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/duvarda-silah-varsa-piyesin-sonunda-patlar-22068771>.

²⁶⁹ It should be noted that Iran played a significant role in convincing Russia to intervene through a visit of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani to Moscow. See: Laila Bassam and Tom Perry, “How Iranian general plotted out Syrian assault in Moscow,” *Reuters*, October 6, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-soleimani-insigh-idUSKCN0S02BV20151006>.

²⁷⁰ “Russians Strike Targets in Syria, but not ISIS Areas,” *NY Times*, September 30, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/01/world/europe/russia-airstrikes-syria.html>.

Russia's bombing of Turkmen villages, which had an ethnic affinity to Turks, created outrage in Turkey, which expressed its concerns to Russia.²⁷¹ Moreover, in his speech at the 70th session of UNGA in late September, Putin expressed his support to the PYD, noting that the Syrian armed forces and the YPG are the only forces fighting terrorists in Syria.²⁷² Such a discursive stance prompted a harsher response by Erdoğan.²⁷³ Turkey also warned Russia multiple times about the border violations by the Russian fighter jets operating over the sinuous border between Turkey and Syria.²⁷⁴

The tensions quickly escalated on November 24, 2015, when a Turkish F-16 shot down a Russian fighter jet, flying over the Turkey-Syria border in violation of Turkey's

²⁷¹ Before the Jet Crisis, Russia's Ambassador in Ankara was called in to the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs for this matter. "Türkmen'e bomba yağıyor" [Bombs are Raining on Turkmen], *Hürriyet*, November 20, 2015, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/turkmene-bomba-yagiyor-40016723>. It is noteworthy that in the interview he gave to Oliver Stone, Putin noted that Turkey's sensitivity regarding the Turkmens was never brought to him. Vladimir Putin, interview by Oliver Stone, *Putin Interviews*, Showtime, February 26, 2016.

²⁷² Vladimir Putin, "70-ya sessiya General'noy Assamblei OON" [70th Session of the UN General Assembly], *Prezident Rossii*, September 28, 2015, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50385>.

²⁷³ "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan 3. Uluslararası Ombudsmanlık Sempozyumu'nda açıklamalarda bulundu" [President Erdoğan Made Statements in the Third Symposium of Ombudsmanship], *Anadolu Ajansı*, September 16, 2015, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-3-uluslararasi-ombudsmanlik-sempozyumunda-aciklamalarda-bulundu/54913>. At this point, the activities of Russia were evaluated in Turkey's National Security Council, as an indication that Turkey was considering the issue at a strategic level. *Milli Güvenlik Kurulu Genel Sekreterliği "21 Ekim 2015 Tarihli Toplantı"* [Meeting on October 21, 2015], October 21, 2015, <https://www.mgk.gov.tr/index.php/21-ekim-2015-tarihli-toplanti>.

²⁷⁴ "Syria conflict: Russia violation of Turkish airspace 'no accident'," *BBC*, October 6, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34453739>.

airspace.²⁷⁵ The Jet Crisis was a critical juncture for Turkey-Russia relations. In his first reaction to the incident, Erdoğan underlined that the plane was in breach of Turkey's border and was warned multiple times.²⁷⁶ Putin described the incident as a “stab in the back by terrorist accomplices.”²⁷⁷ In its last attempt to use its alliance as leverage, Turkey called for a NATO meeting and sought support from the West. However, Turkey's pleas for support met with calls for calming down the tension by NATO.²⁷⁸ Turkey's attempts to involve its NATO partners further aggravated Putin, who expected to resolve the matter on a bilateral basis.²⁷⁹ In February 2016, on Putin's personal invitation, the PYD opened a

²⁷⁵ Regarding the issue, Turkey and Russia have contesting accounts. While Turkey argues that the Russian pilot was warned upon the violation of airspace, Russia argues that the violation never occurred and there was no warning. For Turkey's account with the voice recordings of the warnings, see “Genelkurmay Rus uçağına yapılan uyarıların ses kaydını yayımladı” [Turkish Chief of Staff Released the Voice Recordings of the Warnings Made to the Russian Aircraft], *Anadolu Ajansı*, November 25, 2015, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/genelkurmay-rus-ucagina-yapilan-uyarilarin-ses-kaydini-yayimladi/481350>. For Russia's account see “V Sirii sbit rossiyskiy Su-24” [A Russian SU-24 Fell in Syria], *Interfax*, November 24, 2015, <https://www.interfax.ru/world/481166>.

²⁷⁶ Elliott C. McLaughlin, Don Melvin and Jethro Mullen, “Turkey won't apologize for downing Russian warplane, Erdogan says,” *CNN*, November 26, 2015, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/11/26/middleeast/syria-turkey-russia-warplane-shot-down/index.html>.

²⁷⁷ ““Udar v spinu”: zayavleniya Vladimira Putina ob intsidente s Su-24,” [Stab in the Back: Statement of Putin on the incident of SU-24], *RIA Novosti*, November 24, 2015, <https://ria.ru/20151124/1327592353.html>.

²⁷⁸ “Statement by the NATO Secretary General after the extraordinary NAC meeting,” *NATO*, November 24, 2015, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_125052.htm.

²⁷⁹ Putin, *Putin Interviews*, Showtime, February 26, 2016.

representative office in Moscow.²⁸⁰ Russia activated the S-400 missile system at the Hmeymim airbase, closing Syrian airspace to Turkey, which was planning for a military operation in Northern Syria.²⁸¹ The impact of the Jet Crisis was not confined to the confrontation between between the two countries on the Turkish-Syrian border. Russia also placed economic sanctions on Turkey and initiated international propaganda against Turkey's Syria policy.

4.3.1.2. The Black Sea Region and the Annexation of Crimea

Russia's annexation of Crimea and the course of the Syrian Civil War primarily affected Turkey-Russia relations over the Black Sea region in this period. Russia's actions in the Black Sea region substantially narrowed Turkey's maneuvering area. However, Turkey expected the issue in the Black Sea to be resolved between Russia and the West and did not show a strong reaction towards Russia's aggression. As with every segment of the bilateral relations, the tensions of the Jet Crisis briefly spilled over into the Black Sea region as well.

In late 2013, widespread protests erupted in Ukraine against the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich, who had decided not to sign the Association Agreement with the EU in favor of a customs union agreement with Russia. Within the framework of its 'sovereign democracy' concept, the Putin Administration considered the protests as the

²⁸⁰ "PYD opens office in Moscow, inauguration attended by HDP deputy," *Daily Sabah*, February 11, 2016, <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2016/02/11/pyd-opens-office-in-moscow-inauguration-attended-by-hdp-deputy>.

²⁸¹ Emre Erşen, "Evaluating the Fighter," 92.

meddling of the US into Ukraine.²⁸² After Yanukovich fled to Russia, his coalition government was replaced by a pro-Western coalition. This transformation brought about increased tensions and led to pro-Russian protests in the east of Ukraine and Crimea, home to over two hundred thousand Crimean Tatars and about 1.5 million Russians.²⁸³ In Eastern Ukraine, the violent clashes between the Ukrainian security forces and separatist militias persisted for months. Russia's activities in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea represented Russia's new approach towards war-making. In Crimea, Russian soldiers in unmarked green uniforms paved the way for the annexation without creating accountability and plausible deniability for the Russian government.²⁸⁴ In Eastern Ukraine, Russia supported the local militia that eventually formed two separatist governments.²⁸⁵

²⁸² Andrew Higgins and Peter Baker, "Russia Claims U.S. Is Meddling Over Ukraine," *NY Times*, February 6, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/07/world/europe/ukraine.html>.

²⁸³ The Crimean Tatars, one of the many Turkic communities across the Black Sea region, have lived in the Crimean Peninsula for centuries. The demography of the peninsula began to change after the Russian takeover in 1783. In the following century, millions of Crimean Tatars were forced to migrate to Turkey to escape persecution. Following WWII, on Stalin's orders all the people of Crimean Tatar descent were forcibly relocated to Central Asia. After decades of struggle under Soviet autocracy a portion of them could come back to the peninsula but they now make up of only 10% of the population there.

²⁸⁴ Vitaly Shevchenko, "'Little green men' or 'Russian invaders'?" *BBC*, March 11, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26532154>.

²⁸⁵ Vladimir Peshkov, "The Donbas: Back in the USSR," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, September 1, 2016, https://ecfr.eu/article/essay_the_donbas_back_in_the_ussr/.

In response to Russia's annexation of Crimea, the US²⁸⁶ and the EU²⁸⁷ applied a series of economic sanctions, but the measures fell short of deterring Russia.²⁸⁸ The economic sanctions, together with falling oil prices, had a profound impact on the Russian economy. However, while Russia considered Ukraine as an area within its core security interests, for the Obama Administration it was not an issue that was worth going to war over with Russia.²⁸⁹ Therefore, the sanctions could not create a reversal in Russia's Ukraine policy. Meanwhile, through countersanctions on certain European products, especially in the agricultural sector, Russia boosted economic independence in its own agriculture and defense sectors.²⁹⁰

The events had profound implications on the Turkey-Russia nexus. Having established full control over the Crimean Peninsula, Russia deployed S-400 missiles and anti-ship cruise missiles there, establishing a formidable A2/AD (anti-access/area denial)

²⁸⁶ For a list of sanctions applied to Russia by the US, see "Ukraine and Russia Sanctions," *US State Department*, accessed at November 2, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/ukraine-and-russia-sanctions/>.

²⁸⁷ "EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine," *European Council*, accessed at November 02, 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/>.

²⁸⁸ For more information about this process, see Ulrich Speck, *The West's Response to The Ukraine Conflict: A Transatlantic Success Story* (Washington DC: Transatlantic Academy, 2016), 7-11.

²⁸⁹ Suzanne Loftus and Roger E. Kanet, "Growing Confrontation Between Russia and the West: Russia's Challenge to the Post-Cold War Order," in *The Russian Challenge to the European Security Environment*, ed. by Roger Kanet (Cham: Palgrave, 2017), 18.

²⁹⁰ Richard Connolly, *Russia's Response to Sanctions: How Western Economic Statecraft is Reshaping Political Economy in Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 192-195.

in the Black Sea.²⁹¹ The military buildup in the peninsula also supported Russia's naval deployment through the Mediterranean in Syria as well.²⁹² Following the annexation, the Crimean Tatars' representative body was abolished, and the community faced immense persecution by the new Russian authorities of the peninsula.²⁹³

Despite the dramatic impact of the annexation of Crimea on its strategic interests in the Black Sea region, Turkey did not exhibit a strong reaction against Russia. This was a continuation of Turkey's policy of neutrality in the conflicts between the West and Russia in the post-Soviet space. Turkey's limited capability, its preoccupation with Syria, and Russia's determination also prevented a strong reaction from Turkey towards Russia's aggression. Therefore, Turkey expected the tensions to be resolved between the US, EU, and Russia.²⁹⁴ Turkey did not recognize the annexation but did neither did it join the economic sanctions on Russia during the crisis.²⁹⁵ In compliance with Montreaux

²⁹¹ "Joint statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission," *NATO*, May 13, 2015, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_119425.htm.

²⁹² Igor Delanoë, "After the Crimean crisis: towards a greater Russian maritime power in the Black Sea," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol. 14, No.3 (2014): 373.

²⁹³For more information about the plight of Crimean Tatars, see Muhammet Koçak, *Crimea and the Crimean Tatars after Annexation by Russia* (Ankara: SETA, June 2014).

²⁹⁴ "Turkey waiting for Russia, West on Ukraine problem," *Hurriyet Daily*, May 12, 2014, <https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkey-waiting-for-russia-west-on-ukraine-problem-66311>.

²⁹⁵ "Erdoğan: Biz Rafa Kaldırdık" [Erdoğan: We Shelved It], *Milliyet*, December 5, 2015, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/erdogan-biz-rafa-kaldirdik-2158892>.

Convention Turkey continued to limit the passage of military vessels from non-littoral countries to the Black Sea through the Straits.²⁹⁶

During the Jet Crisis, Turkey briefly sought to use the Black Sea as leverage against Russia. With a U-turn from Turkey's neutral stance, Erdoğan expressed his desire to see an increased role of NATO in the Black Sea region to prevent the Black Sea from becoming a Russian lake.²⁹⁷ However, as with Turkey's pleas to NATO for support in Syria, Turkey's calls for greater NATO involvement in the Black Sea fell on deaf ears. In this period, Turkey also sow the seeds of stronger cooperation with Ukraine. In May 2016, Turkey and Ukraine signed a military cooperation plan, as a clear indication of collaboration against Russia,²⁹⁸ and they would further develop their relations in the following years.

4.3.1.3. The Post-Soviet Region

The volatilities in their bilateral relations also reflected on how Turkey and Russia reacted to the developments in the post-Soviet region. In Central Asia and South Caucasus, Turkey continued to pursue its influence through developing economic, cultural, and

²⁹⁶ In response to a claim by Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who claimed that a number of US vessels extended their presence beyond the established limits, Turkey immediately denied Lavrov's claim and provided a detailed report about the presence of the mentioned vessels. See Serkan Demirtaş "Turkey under NATO and Russia pressure over Black Sea," *Hurriyet Daily*, April 5, 2014, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/serkan-demirtas/turkey-under-nato-and-russia-pressure-over-black-sea-64579>.

²⁹⁷ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "*Suriye'de Tüm Kırmızı Çizgilerin Aşılmasına Rağmen Bir Adım Atılmadı*" [No Step Was Taken Despite All the Redlines Were Crossed in Syria], *TC Cumhurbaşkanlığı*, May 11, 2016, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/43922/suriyede-tum-kirmizi-cizgilerin-asilmasina-ragmen-bir-adim-atilmadi.html>.

²⁹⁸ "Ukraine, Turkey armies sign military cooperation roadmap until 2020," *Kyiv Post*, May 16, 2016, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/ukraine-turkey-armies-sign-military-cooperation-roadmap-until-2020-413826.html>.

political ties with the regional actors through bilateral and institutional ties. However, even though Russia continued to consider the post-Soviet region as its sphere of influence and took steps towards strengthening its hegemonic influence. Russia also did not consider Turkey's pursuit of economic and cultural influence as threatening to its national interests.

In this period, the issue of Chechnya continued to be one of the hot issues between Turkey and Russia. Russia's dissatisfaction with Turkey's position regarding the Chechen issue increased as Chechen fighters began to use Turkey as a passage to Syria and Turkey's Chechen Diaspora continued to harbor Chechen refugees.²⁹⁹ The activities of Chechen fighters within multiple radical organizations³⁰⁰ and the subsuming of the Chechen insurgency by ISIS³⁰¹ influenced the elevation of the importance of the issue for Russia. Meanwhile, a series of assassinations of important personalities in the Chechen Diaspora in Turkey drew the reaction of Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister, who stated that the Russian hand in the assassinations is a well-known secret.³⁰² During the Jet Crisis, Prime

²⁹⁹ “Kak Zhivut v Turtsii «Novyye Mukhadzhiry» iz Rossii: Migratsiya Rossiyskikh musul'man v 2000-ye gody” [How They Live in Turkey: New “Mukhadzhirs” from Russia: Russian Muslims in the 2000s], *Aziya i Afrika Segodnya*, No.8 (2018): 63.

³⁰⁰The Chechen fighters often quickly rose up the ranks within various organizations with one of them leading the attack which captured Iraq's Anbar province.

³⁰¹ For more information, see I. Dobaev and O. Cherevkov, “*Transformatsiya Radikal'nogo Islamistskogo Dvizheniya na Severnom Kavkaze: ot “Imarata Kavkaz” k “Vilayyatu Kavkaz”*” [Transformation of the Radical Islamic Movement in North Caucasus: From the “Emirate of Caucasus” to the “Wilayat of Caucasus”], *Rossiya i Musul'manskiy Mir* Vol. 9, (2017): 13-30.

³⁰² Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Another Chechen Émigré Murdered in Turkey,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, March 6, 2015, <https://jamestown.org/program/another-chechen-emigre-murdered-in-turkey-2/>.

Minister Davutoğlu drew attention to Russia's Chechen issue by arguing that Russia's vision in Syria is similar to the political arrangement in Chechnya.³⁰³

During the Jet Crisis, the renewed conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia in April 2016 created an occasion for Turkey and Russia to reassert their contrasting positions on Nagorno-Karabakh. The Azerbaijani military offensive, which was a long coming development due to the changing economic and demographic balance of power in the region, began on April 2, 2016, and ended after a few days with a unilateral ceasefire declared by Azerbaijan. Following these developments, Erdoğan blamed Russia and the Minsk Group's unjust and indecisive attitude and showed open support to the Azerbaijani forces.³⁰⁴ In response, Russia's Foreign Minister Lavrov pointed out Turkey's one-sided approach and said Turkey should stop meddling in other states' affairs.³⁰⁵ Russia, which had already increased support to Armenia before the conflict,³⁰⁶ intervened as a peacemaker.

³⁰³ “Başbakan Ahmet Davutoğlu’ndan Putin’e Esad göndermesi: Kadirov arıyor” [An Allusion from the Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to Putin on Assad: He is looking for a Kadirov], *Hürriyet*, February 16, 2016, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/basbakan-ahmet-davutoglundan-putine-esad-gondermesi-kadirov-ariyor-40055161>.

³⁰⁴ “Erdoğan’dan Azerbaycan-Ermenistan açıklaması,” *Yeni Şafak*, April 2, 2016, <https://www.yenisafak.com/dunya/erdogandan-azerbaycan-ermenistan-aciklamasi-2444314>.

³⁰⁵ “Turkey must stop meddling in other states’ affairs, end support of terrorism, Russia says,” *Reuters*, April 4, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-russia-syria-turkey-idUSKCN0X10XT>.

³⁰⁶ *Russia and Turkey in the Black Sea and the South Caucasus*, (Brussels: Crisis Group, 28 June 2018), 20.

The *modus vivendi* between Turkey and Russia prevailed in Central Asia with Turkey's continuing recognition of Russia's primacy in the region. Russia trumped up its efforts to increase the influence over the region through the Eurasian Economic Union, which entered into effect in 2015. Efforts to summon Turkic nations around a table provided a modest result with the founding of the *Türk Keneşi* [Cooperation Council of Turkish Speaking Countries or Turkic Council] in 2009. With the Turkic Council gaining official status in 2011, a multilateral platform for intensified cultural ties between Central Asia and Turkey was established. The Jet Crisis negatively affected Turkey's trade relations with Central Asia after Russia blocked the passage of Turkish trucks. Considering the damage this tension did to the Central Asian economies, it was not surprising that Kazakh President Nazarbayev played an active role in the writing and delivering Erdoğan's letter of regret to Putin.³⁰⁷

4.3.2. Trade Relations

As a result of their mutual commitment to compartmentalizing relations, bilateral trade continued to be the locomotive of Turkey-Russia relations despite tensions over the Syria Crisis. The further consolidation of Erdoğan and Putin's power and the establishment of the High-Level Cooperation Council contributed to the positive momentum on the development of trade relations. Turkey's continuing dependence on gas imports from Russia and the trade deficit in its trade with Russia remained in place. The upper hand that

³⁰⁷ For more information about the curious backchannel diplomacy behind the letter that took place with the involvement of Nazarbayev, see Murat Yetkin "'Türk-Rus krizini bitiren gizli diplomasinin öyküsü" [Story of the Secret Diplomacy that ended the Turkish-Russian Crisis], *Hürriyet*, August 8, 2016, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/murat-yetkin/turk-rus-krizini-bitiren-gizli-diplomasinin-oykusu-40185705>

Russia had in bilateral trade relations gained relevance during the Jet Crisis when Russia's economic sanctions played a significant role in changing Turkey's attitude.



Graph 4.1. Turkey-Russia trade volume (2009-2016).

Source: “*Dış Ticaret İstatistikleri*” [Foreign Trade Statistics], *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Ticaret Bakanlığı*, accessed at December 10, 2020, <https://ticaret.gov.tr/istatistikler/dis-ticaret-istatistikleri>.

Despite challenges in the Russian economy and disagreements over the Syrian Crisis, Turkey and Russia expanded trade ties and preserved the bilateral trade volume until the Jet Crisis (see Graph 4.1.). Russian tourists visiting Turkey, Russia's agricultural imports from Turkey, and Turkey's gas imports from Russia made up the bulk of the bilateral trade volume. In this period, three factors contributed to the resilience of trade relations. First, at this point, Turkey's imports from Russia reached the \$20-25 billion range, and Russia's imports from Turkey reached the \$5-7 billion range (See Graphs 4.2.). These figures made it harder for both countries to ignore the existing trade ties despite the escalations of tensions over Syria. Second, the synergy between the two leaders and the shared commitment to increase bilateral trade volume to \$100 billion also provided an

impetus to the positive trend.³⁰⁸ Third, the establishment of the High-Level Cooperation Council between Turkey and Russia in 2011 helped the coordination of bilateral trade relations with efforts from both governments.³⁰⁹ Thus, Turkey and Russia carried on with the compartmentalization and maintained good economic relations until the Jet Crisis.



Graph 4.2. Import-Export Balance in Turkey-Russia Bilateral Trade (2009-2016).

Source: “*Dış Ticaret İstatistikleri*” [Foreign Trade Statistics], *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Ticaret Bakanlığı*, accessed at December 10, 2020, <https://ticaret.gov.tr/istatistikler/dis-ticaret-istatistikleri>.

³⁰⁸ “*Rusya Devlet Başkanı Putin, Ankara’da, Türkiye-Rusya arasında 100 milyar dolarlık dev anlaşma*” [Russian President Putin is in Turkey, 100 Billion Dollar Worth Deal Between Turkey and Russia], *Habertürk*, December 1, 2014, <https://www.haberturk.com/ekonomi/is-yasam/haber/1014724-dev-anlasma-tamam>.

³⁰⁹ The Council was summoned every year, in either Ankara or in Moscow, with the participation of ministers from both countries. During the meetings, the delegations of two countries worked together to explore new areas of cooperation and strengthen the existing ties. Turkey had similar mechanisms with Greece, Serbia, Pakistan and Syria (until the Syrian Civil War). For more information, see Tekin Aycan Taşlı, “*Türkiye-Rusya İlişkileri ve Üst Düzey İşbirliği Konseyi (ÜDİK)*” [Turkey-Russia Relations and the High-Level Cooperation Council], *Kare*, No. 8 (2019): 81-128.

The Jet Crisis had a serious negative impact on the bilateral trade as Russia used its advantage in trade ties as leverage against Turkey on an unprecedented scale. Immediately after Turkey's shooting down of the Russian jet on November 24, 2015, Putin signed an executive order announcing an extensive economic sanctions package that included a ban or restriction of charter flights, suspension of package tours to, and imports from Turkey.³¹⁰ The package was subsequently expanded to include restrictions on the firms controlled by Turkish citizens.³¹¹ The sanctions caused a significant drop in Russia's imports from Turkey and Russian tourists visiting Turkey (See Graph 4.2. and 4.3.). The existence of many hotels and firms whose business was based on their ability to serve Russians weakened Turkey's hand.³¹² Moreover, Turkey could not threaten Russia with cutting gas exports since the incident occurred in Winter. In fact, at this point, Turkey's concern was planning to cope with a scenario where Russia cut the natural gas supply.³¹³

³¹⁰ Vladimir Putin, "Ukaz o merakh po obespecheniyu natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossii i zashchite grazhdan Rossii ot prestupnykh i inykh protivopravnykh deystviy i o primenenii spetsial'nykh ekonomicheskikh mer v otnoshenii Turtsii" [Decree on measures to ensure the national security of Russia and protect Russian citizens from criminal and other illegal actions and on the application of special economic measures against Turkey], *Prezident Rossii*, November 28, 2015, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50805>.

³¹¹ "Vneseny izmeneniya v Ukaz o merakh po obespecheniyu natsional'noy bezopasnosti i zashchite grazhdan Rossii ot protivopravnykh deystviy i o primenenii spetsial'nykh ekonomicheskikh mer v otnoshenii Turtsii" [Amendments were made to the Decree on measures to ensure national security and protect Russian citizens from illegal actions and on the application of special economic measures against Turkey], *Prezident Rossii*, December 28, 2015, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51027>.

³¹² "Antalya'nın "Turizm Krizi"" [Antalya's Tourism Crisis], *140 Journos*, May 31, 2016, <https://140journos.com/antalyanin-turizm-krizi-d83894c13ba8?gi=6bb0b6d9ac03>.

³¹³ "Rusya gazı keserse kısa vadede ısınma, elektrik ve sanayide alternatif zayıf" [Alternatives in Heating, Electricity and Industry are Weak in the Short-term if Russia Cuts



Graph 4.3. Number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey (2009-2016)

Source: “TC Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Sınır Giriş Çıkış İstatistikleri,” TC Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, accessed November 22, 2020, <https://yigm.ktb.gov.tr/TR-9854/sinir-giris-cikis-istatistikleri.html>.

4.3.3. Energy Relations

4.3.3.1. Turkey as a Hub? TANAP and Turkish Stream

Within the framework of its aim to become a hub for the pipelines in the region and bolster its regional influence, Turkey continued to strengthen its energy cooperation both with the West and Russia. In this period, the deterioration of Russia’s relations with Ukraine created opportunities for Turkey. Meanwhile, the Southern Gas Corridor gained a significant addition to Azerbaijan’s TANAP (Trans-Anatolian Pipeline) initiative.

Russia considered Turkey as an alternative route for the South Stream to avoid harsh EU regulations, which made it harder for the EU countries to host Russian pipelines

the Gas], *Hürriyet*, December 3, 2015, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/rusya-gazikeserse-kisa-vadede-isinma-elektrik-ve-sanayide-alternatif-zayif-40022179>.

even through intergovernmental agreements,³¹⁴ and to circumvent Ukraine after the crisis.³¹⁵ During his visit to Turkey in 2014, Putin announced Russia's Turkish Stream Pipeline Project, which was welcomed in Turkey. Following this announcement, however, the project ran into some problems with an escalation of disagreements over the price of gas between BOTAŞ and Gazprom led to the suspension of talks in July 2015.³¹⁶ Ünver argues that Turkey dragged its feet because the project would increase its dependence on Russia.³¹⁷ In contrast to most issues in bilateral relations, the tension caused by the Jet Crisis did not have a decisive impact on the negotiation process for the Turkish Stream. The disruption in the agreement over the price was settled in April 2016.³¹⁸

In 2011, Azerbaijan initiated the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline Project (TANAP) to transport Azerbaijani oil to Europe across Turkish land. In 2012, Turkey and Azerbaijan signed the Intergovernmental Agreement for TANAP, and the project effectively ended NABUCCO. Following the approval of TANAP by the Turkish Parliament in 2013, the

³¹⁴ Jonathan Stern, Simon Pirani and Katja Yafimava, *Does the cancellation of South Stream signal a fundamental reorientation of Russian gas export policy?* (Oxford: The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, January 2015), 3-4.

³¹⁵ "Russia to stop gas delivery via Ukraine by 2019, push ahead with Turkish Stream – Miller," *Russia Today*, April 13, 2015, <https://www.rt.com/business/249273-gazprom-ukraine-gas-transit/>.

³¹⁶ Gareth Winrow, "Turkey and Russia: The Importance of Energy Ties," *Insight Turkey* Vol. 19, No. 1 (2017): 23.

³¹⁷ Akın Ünver, "Russia May Block EU Energy Ambitions with Turkish Stream Pipeline," *World Politics Review*, November 7, 2016, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/20382/russia-may-block-eu-energy-ambitions-with-turkish-stream-pipeline>.

³¹⁸ Winrow, "Turkey and Russia," 24.

groundbreaking ceremony was held in March 2015. TANAP created a rival pipeline network for EU's gas imports and decreased Turkey's dependence on Russia (See Figure 4.1.).

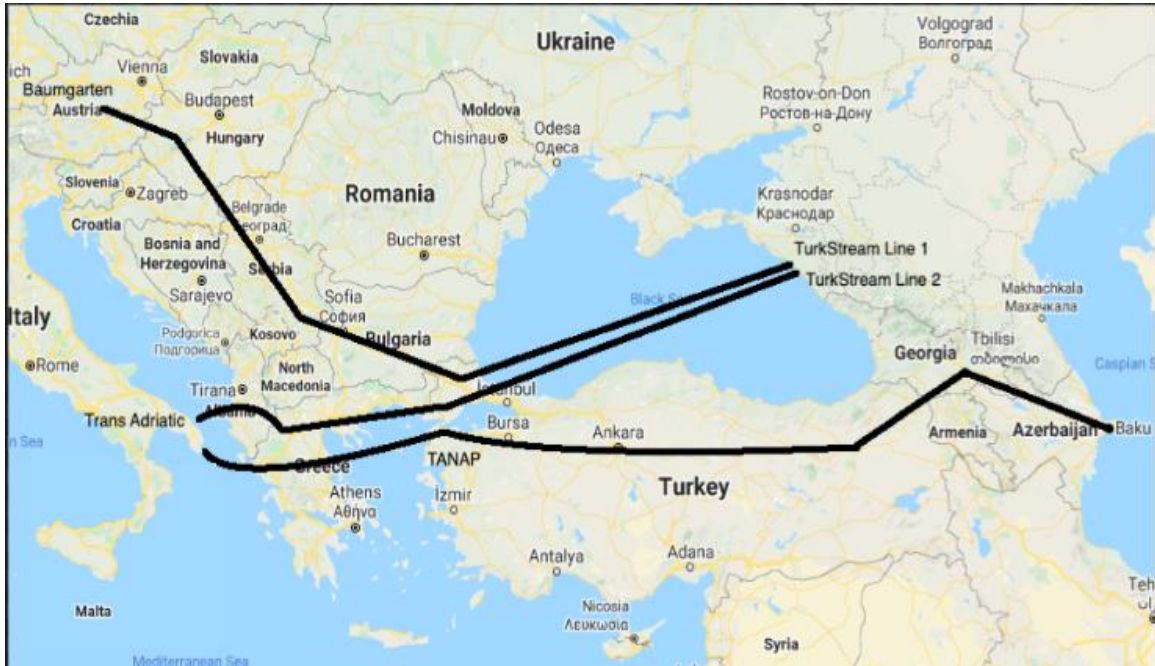


Figure 4.1. Turkish Stream and TANAP Pipelines.

Source: Google Maps, accessed December 20, 2020, <https://www.google.com/maps/@43.8386209,31.809691,5z>.

4.3.3.2. Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant

Another important segment of the energy cooperation between Russia and Turkey that formed in this period was the cooperation for the construction of the Akkuyu NPP in Turkey.³¹⁹ Akkuyu NPP emerged as a result of Turkey's long-running desire to increase its nuclear capacity. After decades of efforts to realize the construction of a nuclear power plant, Turkey declared its intention to build one and invited foreign companies for

³¹⁹ For the full timeline of the progression of the project, see "Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant," *Turkish Atomic Energy Authority*, accessed at November 14, 2020, <https://www.taek.gov.tr/en/institutional/akkuyu-nuclear-power-plant.html>.

investment proposals. Upon Russia's demonstration of interest in Turkey's need, intergovernmental talks started and then finalized with an agreement between Russia and Turkey in 2010. In the following process, the project began with the applications for relevant construction permits by Turkish authorities to the Russian company that was founded to carry out the project. Within the framework of the agreement, dozens of Turkish students were sent to Russia to gain an engineering education, which would enable them to work at Akkuyu.

This project has added yet another dimension to the cooperation between Turkey and Russia. Given the strategic nature of nuclear energy, the project could be considered as one more indication of how far Turkey-Russia relations have progressed. The construction of Akkuyu NPP was not affected by the Jet Crisis with Putin referring to the project as strictly commercial.³²⁰

4.4. Cooperation at Global Level

In this period, the souring of relations between Turkey and the West had caused Turkey to reconsider its place in global politics. The most visible symptom of this trend was Turkey's membership bid to the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO). Having emerged as a regional organization focusing on border security issues in 1996, the SCO transformed into a multilateral organization with the economic rise of China and the deterioration of relations between Russia and the West. In 2012, Turkey's application to become a dialogue partner in the SCO was approved by the organization. Even though this development did not give Turkey any substantial responsibility, the way Turkey perceived

³²⁰ Winrow, "Turkey and Russia," 24.

the SCO demonstrated its potential impact on the Turkey-Russia-West triangle. During his visit to Moscow in 2013, Erdoğan shared with reporters his exchange with Putin about this issue. He stated: “I said to Russian President Vladimir Putin, ‘You tease us, saying, ‘What [is Turkey] doing in the EU?’ Now I tease you: Include us in the Shanghai Five, and we will forget about the EU.’”³²¹ Even though Erdoğan’s overtures did not lead to Turkey’s membership of SCO, his remarks were significant by showing the discursive turn in Turkish Foreign Policy.

4.5. Conclusion

The period from 2009 to 2016 was one of the few occasions in history when Turkey had unfavorable relations with both Russia and the West. The Syrian Civil War was a ‘global warming’ type of development. Therefore, the evolving dynamics of this event continued to shape the bilateral relations throughout this period. The underlying dynamics of this event were the change in US foreign policy towards a diminished involvement in the Middle East and the Black Sea, the conflict of interest between Turkey and the US within the framework of regional turbulence caused by the Syrian Civil War, and Russia’s increasing assertiveness. Moreover, Turkey’s maladaptation to these regional and global changes and insisting upon its foreign policy strategy brought about a situation where Turkey had to deal with multiple challenges in isolation.³²² With the help of the framework

³²¹ “Turkish PM Erdoğan to Putin: Take us to Shanghai,” *Hurriyet Daily*, November 22, 2013, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-pm-erdogan-to-putin-take-us-to-shanghai-58348>.

³²² Nuri Yeşilyurt, “Explaining Miscalculation and Maladaptation in Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Middle East during the Arab Uprisings: A Neoclassical Realist Perspective,” *All Azimuth* Vol. 6, No. 2 (2017), 66.

I established, I analyzed how Turkey and Russia responded to these evolving dynamics. To do so, I examined the interaction between the composite decision-making mechanisms of both countries and the evolving dynamics of the Syrian Civil War. Then, I demonstrated how such interactions created reverberations for multiple segments of the bilateral relations.

The stiffening of tensions in Syria, the involvement of non-state actors in the conflict, and the increasing political and military investments to the opposing sides, from both parties, created a profound challenge to Turkey-Russia relations. The escalation of conflict made it harder for Turkey and Russia to ignore their differences in Syria and carry on with partnership in energy and trade. In this process, the mixed signals coming from the US about an intervention, as well as the widespread expectation that Assad's fall was near, also played very significant roles in the process by encouraging all sides of the conflict to increase their efforts to ensure their regional, political and security interests. The developments in the post-Soviet space remained under the shadow of more prominent developments in Syria. While Russia strengthened its impact in the region, for Turkey, Central Asia, and the Caucasus remained as regions of secondary importance in comparison to the Middle East.

In this period, Russia's upper hand in bilateral trade between Turkey and Russia gained relevance as a result of Russia's manipulation of its advantageous position in trade relations in order to force concessions on other issues. During the Jet Crisis, Russia's using sanctions as leverage for political ends showed that the compartmentalization of relations between Turkey and Russia had its limits.

The continuing mutual trust, intensifying trade ties, and strengthening of the synergy between the two leaders led to two important energy projects. The Akkuyu NPP was initiated as a result of Russia's interest in Turkey's decades-long plan to have its own nuclear energy source, while the Turkish Stream emerged as a result of Russia's desire to circumvent Ukraine and rely on Turkey as a transit country for transfer of its natural gas.

5. TURKEY-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN 2016 -2020

5.1.Introduction

In this chapter, I examine Turkey-Russia relations in the period between the years 2016 and 2020. In contrast to the first two periods, the *stimulus* that played a significant role in shaping the bilateral relations in this period stemmed from Turkey's inner-politics. The impact of the July 2016 coup attempt brought about a substantial change in Turkey's foreign policy strategy by encouraging the leadership to pursue a far more active and more independent foreign policy.

I argue that change in Turkey's foreign policy, which stemmed from the coup attempt, enabled Turkey and Russia to deepen their partnerships, especially in bilateral trade in the Syrian peace process. But, the change in Turkey's foreign policy encouraged Turkey to pursue its interests more assertively in the regions where the interests of Turkey and Russia conflicted. Similar to the invasion of Iraq, the coup in Turkey was an *earthquake* type of development that unfolded in a short period with repercussions in the longer-term. Throughout this chapter, I show how the shift in the way Turkey re-interpreted its place in the regional and global geopolitics reflected upon the dynamics of cooperation/competition in multiple regions as well as bilateral trade and energy relations. For Russia, deepening cooperation with Turkey was a positive development for its own attempts to diminish the US global hegemonic influence. Yet, in the absence of a strong Western pressure in Central Eurasia, Russia appeared as a hegemonic player to check Turkey's ambitions by limiting Turkey's influence in the Middle East, the Black Sea, and the post-Soviet regions.

This chapter starts with an appraisal of the era where I summarize the main dynamics that influenced Turkey-Russia relations. I then analyze the changes in cooperation/competition dynamics between Turkey and Russia in multiple selected regions. Finally, I examine the developments in trade and energy relations and the narrowing of differences in Turkey and Russia's global projections.

5.2.Appraisal of the Era

5.2.1. Regional and Global Context

In this period, the continuing turbulence in Central Eurasia provided Turkey and Russia with opportunities to further their regional influence. The continuation of the decrease in US security commitments in the region complemented this trend. The new US President Donald Trump by and large continued Obama's foreign policy towards the Middle East and the Black Sea. Yet, Trump called for less emphasis on the US role in maintaining the liberal world order and reducing global US military and economic spending. At the same time, the US foreign policy establishment tended to retain the US's leadership role in Western international institutions.³²³ Trump was unable to deliver on his promise to reduce the US military spending³²⁴ and authorized Sea Breeze drills under the auspices of NATO, with a clear objective to deter Russia. Yet, partially due to the friction and disharmony in the US foreign policy decision-making mechanism, the US efforts to deter Russia in the Middle East and in the Black Sea remained inadequate. Moreover, the

³²³ Stephan Walt, *The hell of good intentions: America's foreign policy elite and the decline of U.S. primacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2018), 92-93.

³²⁴ Christopher Giles, "US election 2020: Has Trump kept his promises on the military?" *BBC News*, October 16, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2020-54060026>.

intoxication of the US-Turkey relations with the alleged US support towards the coup-plotters and the conflict of interest in Syria harmed the cooperation between the US and Turkey against Russia. Within the framework of these dynamics, Turkey and Russia further deepen their partnership on multiple dimensions and increase their regional influence outside of the West's control.

The resolution of the Jet Crisis and the synergy between the two leaders enabled Turkey and Russia to repair trade relations while intensifying their bilateral partnership in 2016-2020. After the coup attempt, Erdoğan made his first diplomatic visit to Russia and met with Putin in Moscow, where the two leaders pledged themselves to a complete recovery of the bilateral relations from the impact of the Jet Crisis.³²⁵ In the following months, Russia began to lift the economic sanctions on Turkey, enabling the High-Level Cooperation Council meetings to restart and the bilateral trade volume to grow. The two countries did not allow the assassination of Russia's Ambassador to Turkey, Andrey Karlov, by a Turkish police officer in December 2016, and Russia's accidentally killing three Turkish soldiers in Syria in February 2017, to harm the positive trend in their relations. The Astana Process, in which Turkey, Russia, and Iran participated, became the main venue for Syria's restructuring. The ties in the defense sector significantly deepened with Turkey's purchase of the S-400 missile defense system from Russia, despite strong US opposition. Regardless of the competition over the Caspian energy sources and

³²⁵ "Rusya" [Rusya], *TC Cumhurbaşkanlığı*, August 9, 2020, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/yurt-disi-ziyaretler/355/49958/rusya>.

geopolitical influence in the Black Sea and the Middle East, Turkey and Russia continued to sustain intense diplomatic communication.

Following the emergence of COVID-19 as a ‘pandemic’ in March 2020,³²⁶ nations across the globe took steps towards preventing the further spread of the disease in their own countries by closing down borders. The global reduction of mobility led to falling oil prices, which harmed the economies of the oil-rich countries, including Russia. The precautions also impacted Turkey-Russia relations by decreasing bilateral trade and preventing diplomatic visits for several months. The conflict in Syria was at a stalemate for months while the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War took place during the pandemic.

5.2.2. Domestic Context and the Foreign Policy Strategy of Turkey

5.2.2.1. The Establishment of Executive Presidency under Erdoğan

On July 15, 2016, a faction within the Turkish army led by the members of the Gülen Movement attempted to take over the government by killing or capturing Erdoğan and intimidating the public. The coup plotters killed dozens of resisting civilians bombed the Turkish parliament and kidnapped the Turkish Chief of Staff to convince him to lead the coup. By the morning, however, the coup was largely suppressed with the active involvement of Turkish citizens who went out unarmed to protest against the coup plotters. Erdoğan, who was the primary target of the coup plotters narrowly escaped assassination and played the most significant role in suppressing the coup by inviting everyone onto the

³²⁶ “Timeline of WHO’s response to COVID-19,” *WHO*, September 9, 2020, <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-06-2020-covidtimeline>.

streets to show opposition to the attempted coup.³²⁷ The coup attempt had a strong psychological impact on the Turkish citizens and decision-makers. Having survived the coup, Erdoğan declared a state of emergency, which enabled the government to shut down all known Gülenist institutions and fire thousands of government employees accused of being members of the Gülen Movement.³²⁸

In the context of Erdoğan's increasing popularity and power within the framework of the post-coup political atmosphere, Turkey officially adopted a presidential system following a referendum in April 2017.³²⁹ The system came into force after early elections were held in June 2018, when Erdoğan was elected as the first President of Turkey under the new system, with the support of the MHP (Nationalist Movement Party – *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*), the ally of AK Party in the elections.³³⁰ Such transition further

³²⁷ M. Hakan Yavuz and Rasim Koç, "The Gülen Movement vs. Erdoğan The Failed Coup," in Baldı and Yavuz, *Turkey's July 15th Coup*, 87-89.

³²⁸ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "*Olağanüstü Hal Kapsamında Alınan Tedbirlere İlişkin Kanun Hükmünde Kararname*" [Decree Having the Force of Law on the Measures Taken Within the Framework of the State of Emergency], *Resmî Gazete* (July 22, 2016).

³²⁹ Under the new constitution, the President of Turkey selects his own cabinet from outside of the Parliament without parliamentary approval. The office of Prime Minister was abolished and subsumed by the President. The President is also able to issue decrees having the force of law on certain issues. With a change in law Erdoğan was able to return to the AK Party as the head of the party. All in all, the system provided more power to the President while decreasing the relevance of the Parliament.

³³⁰ The system would come into force with simultaneous parliamentary and presidential elections in 2019. However, the elections were moved earlier after the NMP leader Devlet Bahçeli called for early elections. In the 2018 parliamentary elections, AK Party ran with NMP, which supported Erdoğan's Presidency. Prior to the election, AK Party and NMP enabled the forming of pre-election alliances. In accordance with this law, AK Party and NMP formed the People's Alliance (*Cumhur İttifakı*). The formation of the Nation Alliance (*Millet İttifakı*) by four major opposition parties completely transformed the Turkish body politic, transforming it into a competition between two big blocs.

empowered the President within Turkey's political system, weakening the Parliament, civil society, and the bureaucracy. In addition, the alliance with the nationalist MHP facilitated Erdoğan to pursue a more active foreign policy. Although Erdoğan's power over Turkish politics considerably grew in the post-coup political atmosphere, the economic mismanagement and political quarrels with the US further deteriorated the Turkish economy and gave way to discontent. Under these conditions, the emerging coalition of opposition led to AK Party's loss of the municipalities of Ankara and Istanbul to the opposition, CHP, and several other cities to its partner MHP in the 2019 local elections.

5.2.2.2. The 'Independent' Turn in Turkish Foreign Policy

In this period, to resolve its immediate security concerns stemming from Syria, Turkey adopted a far more independent foreign policy than the previous era. The first step towards the beginning of such a turn was Erdoğan's letter of regret³³¹ to Putin. The residence of Fetullah Gülen in the US, as Turkey saw the Gülen Movement as an existential threat strengthened the belief in Turkey's necessity to fend for itself instead of relying upon the Western security umbrella,³³² a major dormant dynamic of the Turkish strategic culture.³³³ Regarding this, in October 2016, Erdoğan stated that: "Turkey has left behind an incorrect notion of security. From now on, we will not wait for the problems to come

³³¹ The letter was widely circulated as a letter of apology. However, the letter did not contain a general apology. Erdoğan used the Russian word *izviniite*, which means 'I am sorry' in Russian, specifically addressed to the family of the pilot.

³³² It should be remembered that such feeling was as discussed in the Chapter 2.

³³³ Burhanettin Duran, "15 Temmuz Darbe Girişiminin Türkiye'nin İç Ve Dış Politikasına Etkisi" [The Impact of the July 15 Coup Attempt of Turkey's Domestic and Foreign Policy], in *Türk Dış Politikası Yılığ 2017* [Yearbook of Turkish Foreign Policy 2017], ed. by Burhanettin Duran, Kemal İnat, Mustafa Caner (SETA: Ankara, 2018), 29.

and knock on our door. Instead, we face our own problems.”³³⁴ Within the framework of this change, Turkey would feel far less constrained by the Western or Russian preferences when forming alliances, conducting cross-border military operations, developing its independent defense industry, and fighting with the Gülen Movement, ISIS, and the PKK at home and abroad. As a representation of its revisionist approach towards the global system, Turkey adopted ‘The World is Bigger Than Five’ as a motto and drew attention to the failure of the UNSC in promoting peace and justice in the world and the need for a more pluralist world system.³³⁵

Such a shift in the foreign policy approach brought significant changes in Turkey’s foreign policy conduct. Between 2016 and 2020, Turkey conducted four major military operations in Syria, provided substantial military and political support to the UN-recognized Libyan government, assisted Azerbaijan in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, deepened relations with Georgia and Ukraine to balance Russia in the Black Sea, and remained adamant in protecting its offshore exploration rights in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey utilized the COVID-19 outbreak crisis to deliver aid to 138 countries to boost its soft power and international status as an independent power.³³⁶

³³⁴ “Erdoğan: Türkiye yanlış güvenlik anlayışını terk etmiştir” [Turkey has Left the Wrong Understanding of Security], *NTV*, October 19, 2020, <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/turkiye-yanlis-guvenlik-anlayisini-terk-etmistir,XQuseHLt2UW5dtuvV6m5oA>.

³³⁵ For more information, see Berdal Aral, ““The World Is Bigger than Five”: A Salutory Manifesto of Turkey’s New International Outlook,” *Insight Turkey* Vol. 21, No. 4 (2019): 71-95.

³³⁶ Dilek Kütük, “Importance of Humanitarian Aid During Covid-19 For Turkey as A Status-Seeking Country,” *Belgrade Security Forum*, May 16, 2020,

Turkey also managed the production of various weaponry,³³⁷ which enabled the Turkish Armed Forces to gain an expeditionary posture, allowing the country to intervene in regional crises through its army and armaments directly.³³⁸ Turkish UAVs and UACVs played a significant role in Turkey's military operations in Syria and it also exported its UAVs to Libya, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine. These steps substantially harmed Turkey's relations with the US, which opposed Turkey's newfound activism, despite seemingly good personal relations between Erdoğan and Trump. Moreover, the arrest and imprisonment of an American evangelical pastor in Turkey,³³⁹ the continuing residence of Fetullah Gülen in Pennsylvania, a trial against *Halkbank*³⁴⁰ in the US, and Turkey's

<http://www.belgradeforum.org/the-importance-of-humanitarian-aid-during-covid-19-for-turkey-as-a-status-seeking-country/>.

³³⁷ For more information about Turkey's pursuit of independence in defense industry, see Ismail Demir, "Transformation of the Turkish Defense Industry: The Story and Rationale of the Great Rise," *Insight Turkey* Vol. 22, No. 3 (2020): 17-40.

³³⁸ Can Kasapoğlu, "Turkey's Burgeoning Defense Technological and Industrial Base and Expeditionary Military Policy," *Insight Turkey* Vol. 22, No. 3 (2020): 116-117.

³³⁹ Andrew Brunson had lived in Turkey for over 20 years until his arrest in 2017 on terror charges and for his alleged connections with both FETÖ and PKK. The US President Trump was personally involved in pushing Turkey to release the pastor. When in August 2018 Trump raised the import taxes on Turkish steel, Turkish Lira lost 40% of its value in a day. For more information, see Jen Kirby, "The US-Turkey trade spat, explained," *Vox*, August 15, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/8/15/17687928/turkey-united-states-tariffs-lira-andrew-brunson>.

³⁴⁰ Halkbank is a state-owned Turkish bank. The deputy head of Halkbank was arrested in 2017 at the US border and faced a trial charging him for violating US sanctions against Iran. It is noteworthy that the case was significantly supported by evidence provided by a former Turkish police officer, who was fired from his job due to his connections with FETÖ. See "US jury finds Turkish banker Hakan Atilla guilty on five counts," *Hurriyet Daily*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkish-banker-convicted-of-helping-iran-evade-us-sanctions-125198>.

decision to purchase the S-400 missile defense system from Russia, further worsened the US-Turkey bilateral relations in this period.

Turkey deepened its partnership with Russia in the context of its deteriorating relations with the West and the regional dynamics stemming from the Syrian crisis. Putin did not see eye-to-eye with Erdoğan on multiple regional issues, yet, he did not contest Turkey's 'independent' foreign policy strategy and considered Turkey's steps as a legitimate use of its rights as a sovereign state. He was also one of the first leaders to call Erdoğan to offer his support and advanced the idea that there was US involvement in the coup attempt.³⁴¹ Most importantly, the rising influence of Russia in Syria compelled Turkey to work with Russia. However, such partnerships did not bring about Turkey's alignment with Russia as it continued to challenge Russia in multiple regions, and Russia did not always give the green light to Turkey in its efforts to expand its regional influence.

5.2.3. Domestic Context and the Foreign Policy Strategy of Russia

5.2.3.1. Putin President Forever?

In this period, the trend towards the strengthening of Putin's rule continued in Russia. In the 2016 Legislative Elections, the ER, now headed by Prime Minister Medvedev, increased its seats by 105, reaching a comfortable majority in the Duma. In the 2018 Presidential elections, Putin was elected the President of Russia once again with the support of 76% of the votes. Meanwhile, Russia's economy considerably worsened in this period. Aside from the sanctions, the falling oil rates resulting from conflict with Saudi

³⁴¹ "Putin says US knew about Turkey's July 15 coup attempt," *Yeni Şafak*, June 17, 2017, <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/news/putin-says-us-knew-about-turkeys-july-15-coup-attempt-2725798>.

Arabia followed by the COVID-19 outbreak also damaged Russia's flow of revenues.³⁴² As a result of the worsening economy and the controversial pension reform, which raised the retirement age, multiple country-wide protests emerged, joined by millions of people across Russia between 2017 and 2019.³⁴³ While it is incorrect to suggest that the protests produced a concrete challenge to Putin's rule, they represented the growing discontent among the population.

In January 2020, Putin unveiled his plans to make a series of changes³⁴⁴ to the Russian Constitution.³⁴⁵ The proposed constitution reiterated the President's role as the ruler of the country by lowering the authority of the Prime Minister over his/her own cabinet while strengthening the Parliament.³⁴⁶ Following the declaration of the changes, Medvedev resigned along with his cabinet, and Putin replaced him with the little-known

³⁴² Weizhen Tan, "Oil prices fall to 17-year low as Saudi Arabia-Russia standoff continues, coronavirus hits demand," *CNBC*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/30/oil-falls-amid-saudi-arabia-russia-price-war-coronavirus-hits-demand.html>.

³⁴³ "Doverie Politikam" [Trust in Politicians], *Levada Tsentri*, October 8, 2018, <https://www.levada.ru/2018/10/08/doverie-politikam-2/>.

³⁴⁴ These changes included social welfare measures, ensuring the supremacy of the Constitution over international law, securing the role of the State Council, enhancing the role of the Duma and strengthening the Constitutional Court. See "Kakiye Izmeneniya c Konstitutsiyu Podderzhany v Pervom Chtenii," *Gosudarstvennaya Duma Federal'nogo Sobraniya Rossiiskoy Federatsii*, January 23, 2020, <http://duma.gov.ru/news/47599/>.

³⁴⁵ Vladimir Putin "Poslaniye Prezidenta Federal'nomu Sobraniyu" [Message from the President to the Federal Assembly], *Prezident Rossii*, January 15, 2020, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62582>.

³⁴⁶ The new Constitution enabled the President to dismiss the Prime Minister and to supervise strategic ministries. Yet, the President can appoint the Prime Minister only after receiving the approval of the State Duma and the upper house of the Parliament can now fire the members of the Constitutional Court.

head of Federal Tax Service, Sergey Mishustin. With this move, aside from facilitating a smooth transition to the new system, Putin also ensured that Medvedev did not become a threatening figure for his mandate.³⁴⁷ Meanwhile, a new amendment reset Putin's served Presidential terms to zero, paving the way for him to serve as President until 2036.³⁴⁸ Although this amendment did not clearly respond to the question of whether Putin will run for President in 2024, it guaranteed Putin's control over Russia's political elites until 2024.

5.2.3.2. Maturing of Russian Foreign Policy Strategy

In this period, Russia maintained its core foreign policy principles and continued to aim for dominance in the post-Soviet region and multipolarity in the world political system. In this period, the further erosion of the US foreign policy influence in Central Eurasia enabled Russia to increase its regional influence from the Caucasus to North Africa. Despite Trump's favorable comments about Putin,³⁴⁹ and his (later retracted) comments on the irrelevance of NATO,³⁵⁰ the single-minded focus of the US foreign policy establishment on challenging and countering the alleged Russian interference in the US

³⁴⁷ Thomas Grove and Georgi Kantchev, "Discord in Kremlin Helps Putin Remain Russia's No. 1," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/putin-sows-discord-in-kremlin-to-remain-russias-no-1-11583424937>.

³⁴⁸ "Gosduma Prinyala Zakon o Popravkakh k Konstitutsii RF," *Interfax*, March 11, 2020, <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/698543>.

³⁴⁹ "Trump says Putin 'a leader far more than our president'," *BBC*, September 8, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-37303057>.

³⁵⁰ "Trump: I said NATO was obsolete 'not knowing much about NATO'," *Business Insider*, April 24, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-nato-obsolete-2017-4>

elections³⁵¹ due to the allegations of Russian interference in the US elections to help Trump win the elections,³⁵² harmed the US-Russia relations.

In this period, Russia continued to protect its interests and expand its influence in multiple regions. In contrast to the previous periods, however, Russia preferred flexible responses towards the developments in the Middle East and the post-Soviet regions instead of direct, assertive, and unilateral military interventions. In the absence of strong US pressure, there was less need for a strong assertive foreign policy posture. Also, such foreign policy conduct carried less risk and cost and enabled Russia to include other regional powers into the process on its terms. In this period, Russia pursued its interests in Syria through the Astana Process, supported Khalifa Haftar in Libya albeit through mercenaries, and intervened in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War only as a power broker after the Azerbaijani army recaptured most of the occupied region. Despite being relatively less aggressive, Russia continued to protect its redlines in Ukraine and Georgia by objecting to their closer ties with NATO and not retreating in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, or

³⁵¹ Dmitry Trenin, “The Relationship Between the USA and Russia in the Trump Era,” *Inside Over*, May 2, 2019, <https://www.insideover.com/politics/the-relationship-between-the-usa-and-russia-in-the-trump-era.html>.

³⁵² Following the allegations about Russia’s interference into the 2016 US Presidential Elections, Trump’s term was plagued with judicial investigations.

Crimea.³⁵³ In such an environment, Trump's scrapping START, and INF nuclear agreements caused Russia to adopt more aggressive naval³⁵⁴ and nuclear³⁵⁵ doctrines.

Russia considered Turkey a necessary regional power to construct arrangements to deter Western hegemonic control at the global and regional levels. Within the framework of its flexible regional foreign policy, Russia cooperated with Turkey in Syria, and did not take dramatic steps to deter Turkey from increasing its influence in the Black Sea. Turkey also became one of the few countries to which Russia agreed to sell the S-400 missile system, indicating the strategic partnership between the two countries. Despite the deepening of regional partnership, Russia did not grant Turkey excessive regional influence by putting limitations to Turkey's political and strategic regional influence.

5.3. Turkey-Russia Relations

5.3.1. Regional Cooperation and Competition

5.3.1.1. The Middle East in the Context of the Astana Process and Turkey's Cross-Border Operations

The Syrian Civil War remained the most crucial segment of the bilateral relations in this period. With the further diminishing of US influence on the ground, the relevance

³⁵³ Andrew Osborn, "Putin warns NATO against closer ties with Ukraine and Georgia," *Reuters*, July 19, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-nato-putin/putin-warns-nato-against-closer-ties-with-ukraine-and-georgia-idUSKBN1K92KA>.

³⁵⁴ Vladimir Putin, Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 20.07.2017 g. № 327" [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 327 of 20.07.2017], *Prezident Rossii*, July 20, 2017, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/42117>.

³⁵⁵ Vladimir Putin, "Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 02.06.2020 g. № 355" [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 355 of 02.06.2020], *Prezident Rossii*, June, 2, 2020, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/45562>.

of the dynamics of the Turkey-Russia nexus gained additional significance in Syria. Despite their contrasting interests, Turkey and Russia cooperated in resolving the crisis through the Astana Process, a multilateral project also joined also by Iran. Meanwhile, within the framework of its ‘independent’ foreign policy strategy and with the help of its more robust defense industry, Turkey conducted four major military operations in Syria.

Following the Jet Crisis’s resolution and the July 15 coup attempt, Operation Euphrates Shield (*Fırat Kalkanı*) became the first of the series of operations by Turkey in Northern Syria. The Euphrates Shield operation targeted the ISIS-controlled territories in the towns of Jarabulus and Al-Bab (See Figure 5.1.). During the operation, which ran from August 24, 2016, until February 2017, the normalization process with Russia was still ongoing, so Turkey could not take full benefit of its air power resources.³⁵⁶ The US also gave the green light to the operation and also agreed to Turkey’s red line regarding the YPG forces’ staying east of the Euphrates River.³⁵⁷ The Turkish Armed Forces conducted the operation together with local opposition forces and limited support from US and Russian airstrikes.³⁵⁸ In February 2017, a Russian airstrike in Al-Bab accidentally killed

³⁵⁶ Ufuk Ulutaş and Burhanettin Duran, “Türkiye’nin DEAŞ’la Mücadelesinin Kritik Dönemeci: Fırat Kalkanı Harekâtı,” [The Critical Juncture of Turkey’s Fight with ISIS: Operation Euphrates Shield], Türk in *Politikası Yıllığı 2016* [Yearbook of Turkish Foreign Policy 2016], ed. by Burhanettin Duran, Kemal İnat, Mustafa Caner (SETA: Ankara, 2019), 23.

³⁵⁷ “Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden and Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım at a Press Availability” *Obama White House*, August 25, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/08/25/remarks-vice-president-joe-biden-and-turkish-prime-minister-binali>.

³⁵⁸ “Syria conflict: Russia and Turkey ‘in first joint air strikes on IS’,” *BBC*, January 18, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-38667895>.

three Turkish soldiers, which paved the way for deepening military cooperation in Syria to prevent similar occurrences in the future.³⁵⁹ By the end of the operation, the Euphrates Shield forces had captured the strategic cities of Jarablus and Al-Bab from ISIS. However, there were limits to how much control the US and Russia would allow Turkey to have in Syria. Syrian government forces and the PYD prevented the Euphrates Shield forces' from advancing further into south beyond Al-Bab (See Figure 5.1. for the operation's borders).

The Astana Process offered a platform for Turkey, Russia, and Iran to work together to deescalate the conflict in Syria and ensure their security interests in proportion to their influence. In December 2016, the intense diplomatic contacts and negotiations between Turkey and Iran enabled opposition fighters and civilians from Eastern Aleppo to move to Idlib.³⁶⁰ One week after this agreement, the foreign ministers of Russia, Turkey, and Iran met in Moscow and signed the Moscow Declaration, committing to support a new negotiation process between the opposition and the Syrian government. This declaration laid the Astana Process's groundwork, which commenced with the first meeting on January 23, 2017, in Astana, Kazakhstan's capital. In the fourth meeting, the parties agreed to create four de-escalation zones within the rebel-held areas in Syria. By reassuring Russia and Iran, through the Astana Process, Turkey could eliminate PYD and ISIS from Northern Syria with its military operations. The increasing control of Turkey in Northern Syria would

³⁵⁹ “Telefonnyy razgovor s Prezidentom Turtsii Redzhepom Tayipom Erdoganom” [Telephone conversation with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan], *Prezident Rossii*, February 9, 2017, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53851>.

³⁶⁰ “Battle of Aleppo ends after years of bloodshed with rebel withdrawal,” *Reuters*, December 13, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKBN1420H5>.

augment its border security by weakening the PYD. In turn, through engaging in partnership with Turkey in Syria, Russia could consolidate its political and military influence in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East and contain the US hegemonic influence by acting as a power broker and alienating Turkey from the US. The US considered the Astana Process as a Russian attempt to steer the peace process away from Geneva.³⁶¹ Nevertheless, the Astana Process acted as the main forum for the negotiations between Turkey, Russia, Iran, the Syrian government, and the Syrian rebels.

The PYD-controlled Afrin province in Northwestern Syria was Turkey's next target for a military operation. In addition to the security threat posed by the PYD, the Afrin province has geo-economic significance as the North-westernmost corner of Syria near the Mediterranean Sea, well-positioned to act as a transit location for energy pipelines in the future (See Figure 5.1.). The Olive Branch (*Zeytin Dalı*) operation began in January 2018. In contrast to the situation during the Euphrates Shield operation, during the Olive Branch operation, Turkey used a better organized, more professional local militia and extensive air power, which would not have been possible without Russia's tacit approval. Furthermore, Turkish UAVs and UACVs also played a crucial role in collecting intelligence and neutralizing targets. For Russia, which began to consider the increasing US support

³⁶¹ "Background Briefing on the Joint Statement by the President of the United States And the President of the Russian Federation on Syria," *US Department of State*, November 11, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/background-briefing-on-the-joint-statement-by-the-president-of-the-united-states-and-the-president-of-the-russian-federation-on-syria/>.

towards the PYD in Afrin as a provocation,³⁶² the best-case scenario was the restoration of the control of the Syrian government over the area. For this purpose, Russia approached the PYD to hand over the area to the Syrian government forces.³⁶³ When the PYD insisted on defending the area from the Olive Branch forces, Russia attempted to mediate between Turkey and the Assad government to establish the control of Syrian government forces over Afrin, but Erdoğan immediately rebuked this proposal, moving forward with the operation.³⁶⁴ The Olive Branch forces completed the combat phase of the operation in March 2018 with the capture of Afrin province.

In 2018, the Syrian government forces captured three of the four rebel-held territories, in contrast to their designation as de-escalation areas in Astana. In April 2018, due to the rapid advancement of the Syrian government forces in the Eastern Ghouta suburb of Damascus, the rebel forces surrendered and evacuated to Idlib and Al-Bab.³⁶⁵ A similar

³⁶² “Lavrov ob”yasnil slozhivshuyusya v Afrine situatsiyu provokatsiyami SSHA” [Lavrov explained the situation in Afrin as a US Provocation], *Interfax*, February 20, 2018, <https://www.interfax.ru/world/600761>.

³⁶³ “The Latest: Russia warned Kurdish officials of Turkey attack” *Associated Press*, January 21, 2018, <https://apnews.com/article/1ca16b2e78c944bbbb7d092554be906b>.

³⁶⁴ “Turkey refutes Russian call for Syria’s Afrin,” *Hurriyet Daily*, April 10, 2018, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-refutes-russian-call-for-syrias-afrin-130097>.

³⁶⁵ “Russia says evacuation from Syria’s eastern Ghouta to end within days,” *TRT World*, April 4, 2018, <https://www.trtworld.com/mea/russia-says-evacuation-from-syria-s-eastern-ghouta-to-end-within-days-16463>.

scenario played out in Homs in May³⁶⁶ and Deraa in July.³⁶⁷ This process turned Idlib into an overburdened massive refugee camp with almost 4 million people, who had already migrated multiple times. To maintain the situation in Idlib, Turkey built twelve, Russia built ten, and Iran built seven military observation posts around the province.³⁶⁸ The situation posed a danger for Turkey since the coming regime offensive would create another wave of refugees towards the country. To alleviate the situation, in October 2018, Erdoğan and Putin signed the Sochi Memorandum, whereby Turkey promised to remove terrorist groups from Idlib and the opening of the M4 and M5 highways³⁶⁹ in exchange for the preservation of the status quo via Russia's prevention of the Syrian government forces' military offensive.³⁷⁰ The emphasis on the Adana Agreement³⁷¹ in the Sochi Memorandum

³⁶⁶ “Rebels agree withdrawal deal for enclave near Syria’s Homs,” *Reuters*, May 2, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-homs/rebels-agree-withdrawal-deal-for-enclave-near-syrias-homs-idUSKBN1I329Y>.

³⁶⁷ “Syrian army continues push into Quneitra amid ongoing evacuations,” *Al Jazeera*, July 22, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/22/syrian-army-continues-push-into-quneitra-amid-ongoing-evacuations/>.

³⁶⁸ “Rudskoy: Astana sürecinin garantör ülkeleri, İdlib’de gözlem noktası kurma çalışmalarını tamamladı” [Rudskoy: Guarantor States of the Astana Process Completed Setting Up Observation Posts in Idlib], *Sputnik Türkiye*, May 23, 2018, <https://tr.sputniknews.com/rusya/201805231033562557-rudskoy-astana-sureci-idlib/>.

³⁶⁹ The M4 highway connects Latakia and Aleppo and the M5 highway connects Aleppo and Damascus.

³⁷⁰ “İdlib mutabakatı zaptının 10 maddesi” [10 Articles of Idlib Memorandum of Understanding], *Sputnik Türkiye*, September 19, 2018, <https://tr.sputniknews.com/ortadogu/201809191035276132-idlib-mutabakat-zaptinin-on-maddesi/>.

³⁷¹ Following the intensification of PKK attacks in Turkey in 1998, Turkey threatened Syria with a ground invasion if the latter did not expel PKK camps inside Syria. With Egypt’s

indicated the Russian desire to push Turkey to operate within the framework of Syria's sovereignty under the Assad-led Syrian government.

Meanwhile, as of late 2018, in Manbij, the PYD-held territory between Al-Bab and the Euphrates river, Turkey and the US could not agree on a solution. Having failed to enable the removal of the YPG forces from the region, the US proposed to maintain the security of the province together with Turkey through independent and coordinated patrols. Within the framework of an agreement, Turkish and US armed forces conducted patrols in late 2018.³⁷² In the meantime, Turkey continued its preparations for a new operation in Northern Syria, this time towards the east of the Euphrates River. At this juncture, in December 2018, with a surprising declaration, Trump declared that the US troops would "return home" after the "historic victory" against ISIS.³⁷³ Following this decision, the US Secretary of Defence Jim Mattis and the US Envoy to the Coalition Against ISIS Brett McGurk resigned, an indication of the disorder in the US foreign policymaking administration.³⁷⁴ After months of diplomacy, the execution of Trump's earlier decision came with another surprising declaration stating that Turkey's next military operation

mediation, the Adana Agreement was signed between Turkey and Syria. Through the agreement Syria enabled Turkey to chase PKK militants 5km deep into the Syrian territory.

³⁷² "Turkish and US troops begin joint patrols in Syria's Manbij," *Middle East Eye*, November 2, 2018, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkish-and-us-troops-begin-joint-patrols-syrias-manbij>.

³⁷³ Donald Trump (@realdonaldtrump), "After historic victories against ISIS, it's time to bring our great young people home!" *Twitter*, December 19, 2018, 06:10 PM, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1075528854402256896>.

³⁷⁴ "U.S. Envoy To The Coalition Against ISIS Resigns Over Trump's Syria Policy," *NPR*, December 22, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/12/22/679535003/u-s-envoy-to-the-coalition-against-isis-resigns-over-trumps-syria-policy>.

would begin on October 6, 2019.³⁷⁵ Turkey initiated the Peace Spring (*Barış Pınarı*) operation three days later and began to capture the area between Tal-Abyad and Rasulayn. Left without the protection of the US forces, YPG abandoned the control of Manbij province to the Syrian government forces to prevent the area from being Turkey's next target.³⁷⁶ Finally, on October 22, with an agreement reached between Turkey and Russia, the Assad forces moved to the border area between Turkey and Syria outside the Tal-Abyad-Rasualyn line (See Figure 5.1.).³⁷⁷

Despite the Sochi Memorandum, the Idlib issue remained unresolved as Turkey was unable to push back terrorist groups and failed to secure the M4-M5 highways. In April 2019, the Syrian government forces initiated a military operation to capture the highways of Idlib. The operation started with Russian and Syrian airstrikes on rebel positions.³⁷⁸ During the offensive, the Syrian government forces captured several villages and hilltops, encircled one Turkish observation post, and conducted an airstrike on a

³⁷⁵ "Statement from the Press Secretary," *White House*, October 6, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-press-secretary-85/>.

³⁷⁶ "Kurdish forces backed by US strike deal with Syria's Assad, in major shift in 8-year war," *CNN*, October 14, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/14/middleeast/syria-turkey-kurds-civilians-isis-intl-hnk/index.html>.

³⁷⁷ "FULL TEXT: Memorandum of Understanding between Turkey and Russia on northern Syria," *The Defense Post*, October 22, 2019, <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2019/10/22/russia-turkey-syria-mou/>.

³⁷⁸ "Dozens killed as Russian, Syrian air attacks in Idlib intensify," *Al Jazeera*, May 4, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/04/dozens-killed-as-russian-syrian-air-attacks-in-idlib-intensify/>.

Turkish convoy.³⁷⁹ After multiple attempts for a ceasefire, through meetings between Turkish and Russian officials, the Syrian government declared a unilateral ceasefire on August 30, 2019.³⁸⁰ But the offensive resumed in December 2019. By February 2020, the Syrian forces had killed eight Turkish soldiers and encircled multiple other Turkish observation posts.³⁸¹ Moreover, the advance of the Syrian government forces created a flow of refugees to the rebel-controlled part of Idlib, further deteriorating the humanitarian situation in the province. Until this point, the Turkish Army did not actively fight to push back the offensive.

On February 27, 2020, an airstrike on a post that hosts hundreds of Turkish soldiers killed at least 33 Turkish soldiers, injuring several others. Upon allegations over the Russian forces' culpability, the Russian Defense Ministry stated that the Syrian government conducted the airstrikes and that Turkey had not revealed Turkish soldiers' presence in the area to Russia.³⁸² Contesting Russia's claim, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar claimed that Russia was well informed about the Turkish soldiers' location. Regardless, Turkey avoided openly accusing Russia of targeting Turkish soldiers. The

³⁷⁹ Sarp Özer, "İdlib'de askeri konvoya saldırı" [Attack on a Military Convoy in Idlib], *Anadolu Ajansı*, August 19, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/idlibde-askeri-konvoya-saldiri/1559639>.

³⁸⁰ "Syria war: Russia announces ceasefire in Idlib rebel stronghold," *BBC*, August 30, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-49527419>.

³⁸¹ Carlotta Gali, "Syrian Attacks Draw Turkey Deeper into Syrian War," *NY Times*, February 28, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/12/world/middleeast/syria-turkey-russia-war.html>.

³⁸² Fatima Tlis, "The Strike: Did Russia Knowingly Target Turkish Troops?" *Polygraph*, February 28, 2020, <https://www.polygraph.info/a/turkey-russia-syria-fact-check/30460458.html>.

Operation Spring Shield (*Bahar Kalkanı*) began on the same day to push back the Syrian government forces from the recently captured areas in Idlib province. During the operation, the Spring Shield forces recaptured the strategic Saraqib town, at the intersection of the M4 and M5 highways. They reportedly killed hundreds of Syrian government forces.³⁸³ On March 5, 2020, after a meeting between Erdoğan and Putin, a ceasefire agreement was announced. Within the framework of the agreement, the Syrian government forces kept the captured areas plus the strategic Saraqib town, ensuring control of the M5 highway. The M5 highway also opened under Russia and Turkey’s supervision through joint patrols (See Figure 5.1.).

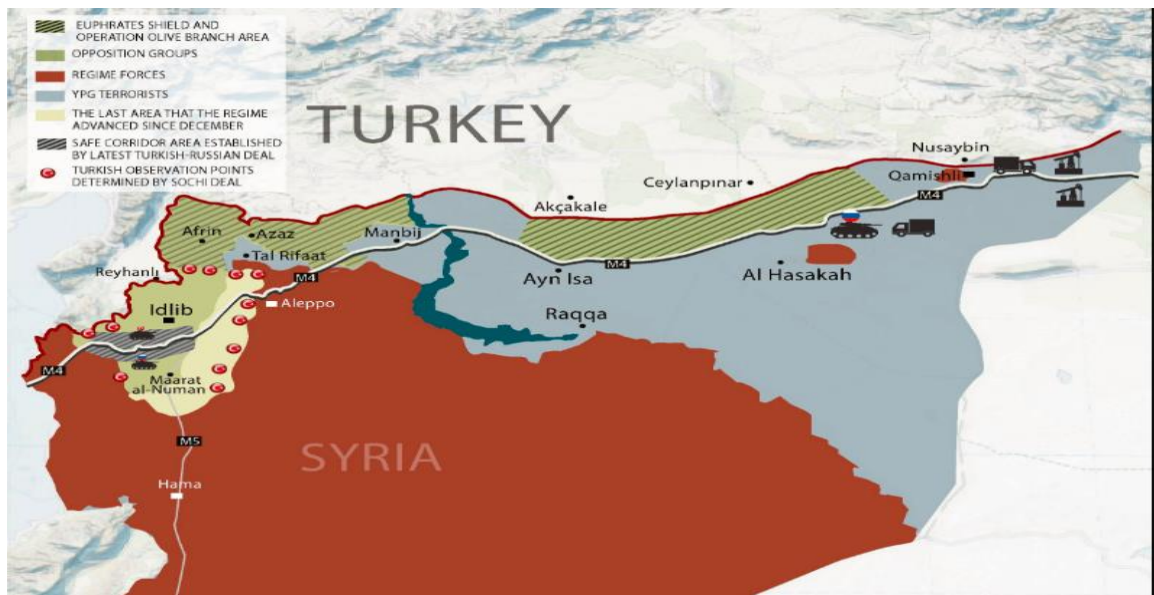


Figure 5.1. Areas of influence in Syria as of March 2020.

Source: “Turkey, Russia complete joint patrol along Idlib’s M4 highway in Syria,” *Daily Sabah*, March 15, 2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/turkey-russia-complete-joint-patrol-along-idlibs-m4-highway-in-syria/news>.

³⁸³ “Bahar Kalkanı Operasyonu Kapsamında Rejim Kayıpları” [Losses of the Regime in the Spring Shield Operation], *Suriye Gündemi*, March 2, 2020, <https://www.suriyegundemi.com/bahar-kalkani-operasyonu-kapsaminda-rejim-kayıplari>.

The agreement left a small territory with 4 Million refugees, stripped from access to strategic highways to the rebel forces in Idlib. The presence of radical groups in the area also remained a potential occasion for an operation by the Syrian government forces. In the following months, the Syrian government forces' offensive on Idlib did not resume, partially due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Turkey, Russia, and Iran also prioritized dealing with the pandemic. They did not push for a change in the status quo. The latest Astana Summit was held virtually through videoconference on July 1, 2020.³⁸⁴

5.3.1.2. Eastern Mediterranean in the Context of the Libyan Civil War

The overthrow of Ghaddafi in 2011 did not bring stability to Libya. In 2014, the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) led by President Fayeze Al-Serraj was formed in Libya's capital Tripoli. However, this government was challenged by former Libyan general Khalife Haftar. Having failed to take over the government with two coup attempts in 2014, Haftar moved to Eastern Libya and established control in the oil-rich regions of Northeastern Libya through his self-designated Libyan National Army (LNA). The Libyan conflict was internationalized, with Turkey backing the GNA and France, Russia, Egypt, and UAE backing the LNA.

Turkey and Russia picked their sides in the Libya conflict as per their securitization dynamics and foreign policy strategies. The GNA formed as a popular government after Ghaddafi's deposition and signified the last stronghold of Turkey's competition for regional influence with Saudi Arabia, since the beginning of the so-called Arab Spring

³⁸⁴ "Üçlü Astana Zirvesi sona erdi" [Trilateral Astana Summit has ended], *TRT Haber*, July 1, 2020, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/uclu-astana-zirvesi-sona-erdi-497705.html>.

process.³⁸⁵ The exclusive economic zone agreement between Turkey and Libya, which will be analyzed under the relevant section below, gave another reason for Turkey to back the GNA. Haftar's visit to Russia in 2015, where he offered them access to Libya's natural resources, reportedly shaped Russia's Libya policy.³⁸⁶ Within the framework of its global strategy, increasing its political influence over Libya would serve Russia's aim to foster global multipolarity by confronting Western hegemony. Haftar also appealed to Russia's securitization dynamics by promising to "drive out Islamists" when he first emerged as a renegade general in 2014.³⁸⁷ From 2015 onwards, Russia provided support to Haftar by printing money for his self-declared government, blocking UNSC resolutions to condemn Haftar's army's atrocities, and sending mercenaries to support him (through Wagner, a Russian private military contractor, paid by the UAE).³⁸⁸ Following the advance of Haftar's

³⁸⁵ "Why Turkey's Libya commitment angers Arab nations," Deutsche Welle, January 18, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/why-turkeys-libya-commitment-angers-arab-nations/a-52052924>.

³⁸⁶ "A small price to pay for Tripoli," *Meduza*, October 2, 2019, <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2019/10/02/a-small-price-to-pay-for-tripoli>.

³⁸⁷ Priyanka Boghani, "The man at the center of the chaos in Libya: Khalifa Haftar," *PRI*, May 31, 2014, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-05-31/man-center-chaos-libya-khalifa-haftar>.

³⁸⁸ Mona Thakkar, "Russia and Turkey in Libya, Testing the Waters?" *International Policy Digest*, February 3, 2020, <https://intpolicydigest.org/2020/02/03/russia-and-turkey-in-libya-testing-the-waters/>.

forces on Tripoli in April 2019, with the help of the Wagner forces and UAE drones,³⁸⁹ Turkey began to increase its political and military support to GNA.³⁹⁰

The escalation of the conflict opened another front in the map of regional competition between Turkey and Russia. Meanwhile, the US under the Trump administration further diminished its involvement in Libya; a step criticized for paving the way for Russia's increased influence through Haftar.³⁹¹ Trump also called Haftar and supported his effort to "ensure stability in Libya" during the offensive against GNA forces towards Tripoli in April 2019.³⁹² Against the backdrop of the intense clashes in Libya, Turkey and Russia attempted to broker a ceasefire deal between the legitimate Libyan government and Haftar. The parties met in Moscow in January 2020 and worked on a potential agreement, yet, the sudden departure of Haftar from Moscow, amid the negotiations, ended the initiative.³⁹³ This was a significant representation of Turkey and Russia's concerted effort to form alternative platforms for the resolution of international

³⁸⁹ "Tripoli: UAE drones hit residential area, injure family," *Middle East Monitor*, September 22, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190922-tripoli-uae-drones-hit-residential-area-injure-family/>.

³⁹⁰ "Libya's GNA activates security deal with Turkey," *Anadolu Agency*, December 19, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/libyas-gna-activates-security-deal-with-turkey/1678715>.

³⁹¹ Jo Becker and Eric Schmitt, "As Trump Wavers on Libya, an ISIS Haven, Russia Presses On," *NY Times*, February 7, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/07/world/africa/trump-libya-policy-russia.html>.

³⁹² "Trump has praise for controversial Libyan Gen. Khalifa Haftar in phone call," *Associated Press*, April 19, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/7cc6cc853ab05d1adda72195b5f58d4c>.

³⁹³ "Libya conflict: Haftar 'leaves' Moscow ceasefire talks without deal," *BBC*, January 14, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-51104846>.

conflicts. Haftar would sign a ceasefire agreement in the Berlin Conference, under the auspices of the UN, a few days later. Meanwhile, the EU propped up its efforts to impose an arms embargo through a military mission called Operation IRINI with Italy, Greece, and Germany's participation.³⁹⁴ Turkey vehemently criticized this step and blamed the Operation for enabling the arms *en route* to Haftar to pass while blocking those for the legitimate Libyan government.³⁹⁵

5.3.1.3. South Caucasus in the Context of Nagorno-Karabakh War

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh was a long-expected development due to Azerbaijan's military and economic superiority and the failure of light diplomatic pressure on Armenia to secure Armenia's departure from the occupied territories.³⁹⁶ The tensions between the two countries evolved into a full-scale military conflict in late-September and ended with a Russian brokered ceasefire after a decisive Azerbaijani victory. While Turkey actively supported Azerbaijan during the battle, Russia preferred to play the role of power broker and the West had a muted reaction with the Minsk Group remaining irrelevant.

Following the beginning of the war, the Azerbaijani forces quickly recaptured several villages and strategic hilltops with a quick land offensive, supported by UAVs and

³⁹⁴ "EU launches Operation IRINI to enforce Libya arms embargo," *European Council*, March 31, 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/03/31/eu-launches-operation-irini-to-enforce-libya-arms-embargo/#>.

³⁹⁵ "Operation Irini: Turkey slams EU mission to contain arms to Libya," *Al Jazeera*, June 19, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/19/operation-irini-turkey-slams-eu-mission-to-contain-arms-to-libya>.

³⁹⁶ "The Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict hints at the future of war," *Economist*, October 10, 2020, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/10/10/the-azerbaijan-armenia-conflict-hints-at-the-future-of-war>.

UACVs, purchased from Israel and Turkey. The Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan attempted to turn the tide with diplomatic maneuvers in a series of phone calls to European leaders and Putin.³⁹⁷ Pashinyan also tried to attract attention by magnifying Turkey's involvement in the war, claiming that Turkey was working towards re-creating the Turkish Empire.³⁹⁸ Following Shusha's capture, the second biggest city in Nagorno-Karabakh, a Russian-brokered ceasefire was declared on November 10, 2020. Armenia left the territories yet to be captured by the Azerbaijani army, and 5000 Russian peacekeepers settled in the Nagorno-Karabakh proper to keep the peace.

Within the framework of its new foreign policy strategy, Turkey provided significant military, political, and moral support to Azerbaijan from the beginning of the conflict.³⁹⁹ Following the skirmishes in July, the Turkish Armed Forces conducted joint military drills with the Azerbaijani Army. Turkey's capable UAVs and UACVs played a significant role in the quick defeat of the Armenian forces through reconnaissance flights and precise strikes on Armenian targets.⁴⁰⁰ In contrast to its stance in the

³⁹⁷ "Pashinyan says he twice had phone calls with Russia's president but thinks he will be having more with the French President," *Aysor*, October 3, 2020, <https://www.aysor.am/en/news/2020/10/03/pashinyan-phone/1751306>.

³⁹⁸ "'Turkey has a clear objective of reinstating the Turkish empire', Armenian PM says," *France 24*, October 2, 2020, <https://www.france24.com/en/20201002-turkey-has-a-clear-objective-of-reinstating-the-turkish-empire-armenian-pm-says>.

³⁹⁹ "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Azerbaycanlı kardeşlerimizin yanlarındayız" [President Erdoğan: We are with our Azerbaijani Brothers], *TRT Haber*, October 1, 2020, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-azerbaycanli-kardeslerimizin-yanlarindayiz-520086.html>.

⁴⁰⁰ Sebastien Roblin, "Cheap drones from China, Turkey and Israel are fueling conflicts like Armenia and Azerbaijan's," *NBC News*, October 14, 2020,

Nagorno-Karabakh War in 1992-1995, Russia adopted a relatively neutral stance. Russia's relations with Armenia had deteriorated due to the arrest of pro-Russian political figures by the Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan, who was elected after a wave of popular protests.⁴⁰¹ When asked whether Russia would assist Armenia, Putin responded that it could do so only if Azerbaijan attacks the Armenian territory,⁴⁰² with reference to the status of Nagorno-Karabakh in international law.⁴⁰³ From the beginning of the conflict, Russia never objected to Turkey's support towards Azerbaijan, and Putin stated that the country's support is within the framework of international law.⁴⁰⁴ Yet, in South Caucasus too, there were limits to how much Turkish influence Russia could tolerate. Despite Turkey's willingness to participate in the peacekeeping mission, Russia prevented Turkish military

<https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/cheap-drones-china-turkey-israel-are-fueling-conflicts-armenia-azerbaijan-ncna1243246>.

⁴⁰¹ "Russia Deplores 'Political' Charges Against Former Armenian Officials," *Azatutyun*, July 31, 2018, <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29401668.html>.

⁴⁰² "Russia to 'assist' Armenia if conflict with Azerbaijan spreads beyond Nagorno-Karabakh," *Deutsche Welle*, October 31, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/russia-to-assist-armenia-if-conflict-with-azerbaijan-spreads-beyond-nagorno-karabakh/a-55457174>.

⁴⁰³ UNSC Resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 of 1993 called for the Armenian forces to evacuate the Azerbaijani territories. See Security Council, "Resolution 884," November 12, 1993, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/884>.

⁴⁰⁴ Elena Teslova, "No one can say Turkey flouted int'l law in Karabakh: Putin," *Anadolu Agency*, November 17, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/no-one-can-say-turkey-flouted-intl-law-in-karabakh-putin/2047249>.

from accessing newly recaptured territories allowing their access only in the joint peacekeeping center with no troops on the ground.⁴⁰⁵

5.3.1.4. The Black Sea Region

Aside from its deepening cooperation with Azerbaijan, Turkey also took multiple steps towards strengthening collaboration with Ukraine and Georgia to balance the increasing Russian military superiority in the Black Sea region. Russia preserved the status quo following the annexation of Crimea while not opposing Turkey's moves with tough measures. In this period, Turkey's partnership with Ukraine in the military and defense industry sector significantly strengthened in this period through agreements⁴⁰⁶ that paved the way for cooperation between the defense sectors of the two countries and Ukraine's purchase of Turkish drones.⁴⁰⁷ Contrasting its earlier position, Turkey declared its support for Ukraine's membership of NATO.⁴⁰⁸ Turkey's partnership with Georgia deepened as

⁴⁰⁵ "Nagorno-Karabakh: Turkey to send peacekeepers to Azerbaijan to monitor truce," France 24, November 17, 2020, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20201117-nagorno-karabakh-turkey-to-send-peacekeepers-to-azerbaijan-to-monitor-truce>.

⁴⁰⁶ "Ukrayna ile Türkiye arasında savunma sanayinde iş birliği" [Cooperation Between Ukraine and Turkey in Industry], *Anadolu Ajansı*, July 4, 2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/ukrayna-ile-turkiye-arasinda-savunma-sanayinde-is-birligi-/1195063>.

⁴⁰⁷ Burak Ege Bekdil, "Turkey, Ukraine seek to jointly produce 'sensitive' defense technology," *Defensenews*, September 16, 2020, <https://www.defensenews.com/unmanned/2019/09/16/turkey-ukraine-seek-to-jointly-produce-sensitive-defense-technology/>.

⁴⁰⁸ "Erdoğan-Zelenskiy görüşmesine ilişkin ortak bildiri" [Joint Declaration on Erdoğan-Zelenskiy Talk], *TGRT Haber*, October 16, 2020, <https://www.tgrthaber.com.tr/politika/erdogan-zelenskiy-gorusmesine-iliskin-ortak-bildiri-2748144>

well with a donation of 17 million dollars to Georgia for reforms in military logistics⁴⁰⁹ and a declaration of its support for Georgia's membership of NATO.⁴¹⁰ Moreover, in this period, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project and the TANAP pipeline project became operative, strengthening economic cooperation between Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

5.3.1.5. Central Asia

In this period, Central Asia continued to be a region where conflicts of interests between Russia and Turkey did not have a negative influence on their bilateral relations. Russia continued to strengthen its hegemonic influence in the region and Turkey strengthened its cultural and economic ties without antagonizing Russia. China's economic influence continued to increase as the Belt and Road Initiative expanded, but China's careful diplomacy kept the project strictly to the economic dimension so as not to antagonize Russia.⁴¹¹ The commencement of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway linked Turkey to the Chinese-led economic network. The establishment of such a connection formed an alternative to the economic transportation network that passed through Russia.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ "Türkiye'den, Gürcistan'a 17 milyon dolarlık askeri reform tahsisi" [17 Million Dollar Worth of Grant for Military Reform from Turkey to Georgia], *Akşam*, December 25, 2019, <https://www.aksam.com.tr/guncel/turkiyeden-gurcistana-17-milyon-dolarlik-askeri-reform-tahsisi/haber-1032779>.

⁴¹⁰ "Turkish foreign minister calls for enlarged NATO, Georgia membership," *Reuters*, January 23, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-davos-meeting-turkey-georgia/turkish-foreign-minister-calls-for-enlarged-nato-georgia-membership-idUSKBN1ZM1HB>.

⁴¹¹ Paul Stronski and Nicole Ng, *Cooperation and Competition Russia and China in Central Asia, The Russian Far East, And the Arctic* (Washington, DC: Carnegie, 2018), 10.

⁴¹² Seçkin Köstem, "Geopolitics, identity and beyond Turkey's renewed interest in the Caucasus and Central Asia," in *Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia Geopolitics and Foreign Policy*

5.3.2. Trade Relations

Following the resolution of the Jet Crisis, Turkey and Russia reactivated their commitment to increase their bilateral trade volume. Most economic sanctions placed by Russia on Turkey were lifted, re-enabling Turkey's agricultural exports to Russia and Russian tourists' visits to Turkey but the suspension of the visa-free regime on Turkish citizens remained in effect.⁴¹³ The High-Level Cooperation Council meetings took place as scheduled, while the ninth meeting was canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The leaders reiterated the target of \$100 billion volume in bilateral trade.⁴¹⁴ As a result, the bilateral trade relations experienced a significant recovery in 2017-2019 (See Graph 5.1.).

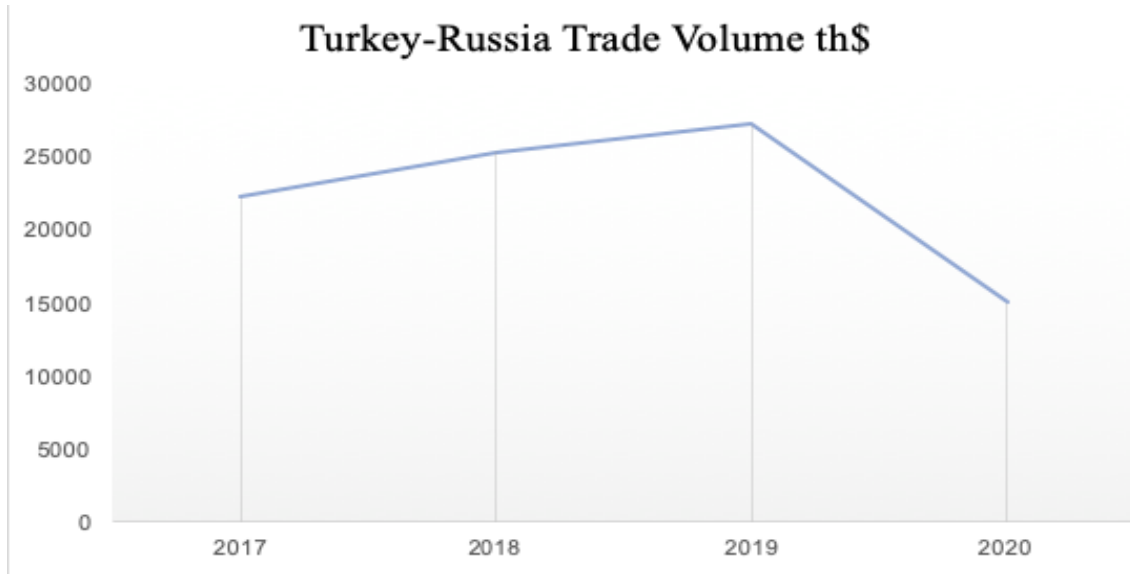
However, in 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak damaged the bilateral trade between the two countries, as a result of the global economic stagnation (See Graph 5.1.). Meanwhile, Turkey's deficit in its trade with Russia diminished due to Turkey's diversification of its natural gas supply (See Graph 5.2.). To reduce the dollarization in their bilateral trade, two countries signed an agreement to use the Lira and Ruble in 2019. However, the usage of Ruble and Lira is yet to have substantial shares in bilateral trade.⁴¹⁵

in a Changing World Order, ed. by Emre Erşen and Seçkin Köstem (London: Routledge, 2018), 118.

⁴¹³ "Putin: Erdoğan'ın katkısı büyük" [Putin: Erdoğan's Contribution is Big], *Takvim*, September 28, 2017, <https://www.takvim.com.tr/guncel/2017/09/28/putin-erdoganin-katkisi-buyuk>.

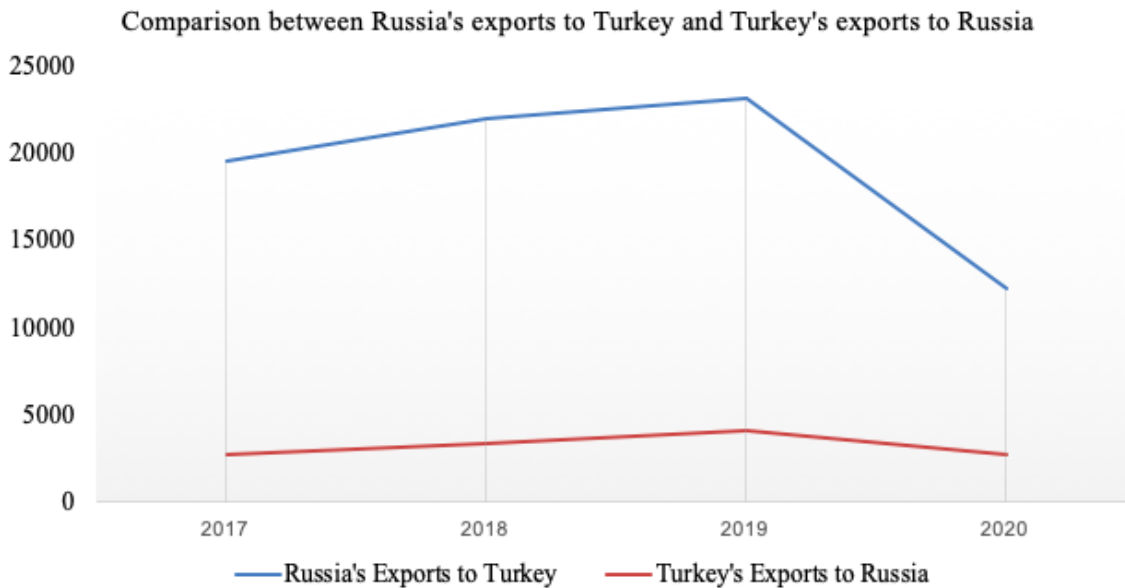
⁴¹⁴ "Turkey, Russia seek new ways to reach \$100B in bilateral trade," *Daily Sabah*, April 09, 2019, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/2019/04/09/turkey-russia-seek-new-ways-to-reach-100b-in-bilateral-trade>.

⁴¹⁵ "Rus ticaretinde TL'nin adı yok" [Turkish Lira Doesn't Have a Place in Russian Trade], *Ekonomi Alla Turca*, November 1, 2019, <https://ugurses.net/2019/11/01/rus-ticaretinde-tlnin-adi-yok/>.



Graph 5.1. Turkey-Russia Trade Volume (2017-2020)

Source: “*Dış Ticaret İstatistikleri*” [Foreign Trade Statistics], *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Ticaret Bakanlığı*, accessed at December 10, 2020, <https://ticaret.gov.tr/istatistikler/dis-ticaret-istatistikleri>.



Graph 5.2. Import-Export Balance in Turkey-Russia Bilateral Trade (2017-2020)

Source: “*Dış Ticaret İstatistikleri*” [Foreign Trade Statistics], *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Ticaret Bakanlığı*, accessed at December 10, 2020, <https://ticaret.gov.tr/istatistikler/dis-ticaret-istatistikleri>.

In this period, the arms sales between Turkey and Russia, more specifically Turkey's purchase of the S-400 missile defense system from Russia, provided a strategic edge to the Turkey-Russia trade. Until this period, the US and Turkey's other NATO allies had been Turkey's most significant partners in its arms purchases. As a result of the 'independent' turn in Turkish foreign policy, deterioration in relations with the West, Turkey's pursuit of reaching independence in the defense industry, and Turkey's need for a missile shield system, Turkey's interest in the Russian-made S-400 missile defense system emerged. Following Russia's offer, Turkey and Russia finalized negotiations for the sale in December 2017. Turkey faced significant diplomatic, political, and economic pressure from the US. Emphasizing the interoperability problems and risk to the security of the data in the NATO defense systems, the US canceled the delivery of F-35 fighter jets⁴¹⁶ and threatened Turkey with sanctions within the framework of Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).⁴¹⁷ The US President Trump used his political influence to delay the application of CAATSA, while Turkey has tested the S-400's multiple times.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ Aaron Mehta, "Turkey officially kicked out of F-35 program, costing US half a billion dollars," *Defense News*, July 17, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/air/2019/07/17/turkey-officially-kicked-out-of-f-35-program/>.

⁴¹⁷ Joe Gould, "US could buy Turkey's Russian-made S-400 under Senate proposal," *Defense News*, June 29, 2020, <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2020/06/29/us-could-buy-turkeys-russia-made-s-400-under-senate-proposal/>.

⁴¹⁸ Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas, "Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations In Brief," *Congressional Research Service*, November 9, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44000>.

Meanwhile, with the lifting of sanctions on Turkey’s tourism industry, its southern coasts became a top tourism destination for Russian tourists again and the number of Russian tourists visiting the country continued to rise steadily. Moreover, Turkey’s currency crisis in 2018, which led to the Turkish Lira’s losing value, contributed to this process. To add to the developing relations, Turkey and Russia declared 2019 as ‘Turkey-Russia Cross-cultural year of Culture and Tourism.’⁴¹⁹ However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak’s decisively negative impact, the number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey substantially dropped in 2020 (see Graph 5.3.).



Graph 5.3. Number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey (2017-2020)

Source: “TC Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Sınır Giriş Çıkış İstatistikleri,” *TC Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı*, accessed at November 27, 2020, <https://yigm.ktb.gov.tr/TR-9854/sinir-giris-cikis-istatistikleri.html>.

⁴¹⁹ “Russia-Turkey cross-cultural year has lots in store, says Russia’s ambassador to Turkey,” *TASS*, February 10, 2019.

5.3.3. Energy Relations

5.3.3.1. Competition over the Energy Resources in Eastern Mediterranean

The geological studies on potential energy resources, conducted since the early 2000s, demonstrated that the Eastern Mediterranean is home to one of the world's richest natural gas reserves.⁴²⁰ The contested maritime jurisdiction areas among the countries with a coastline to the Mediterranean Sea complicated the geo-economics in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Diminishing, or at least diversifying, its reliance on foreign sources for its natural gas demand became a significant part of Turkey's foreign policy strategy following the coup in 2016. In line with this, Turkey closely monitored the developments and took substantial steps towards securing its commercial interests in the region. In turn, Russia was also actively involved in the region through military and diplomatic efforts.

The disputes between Turkey and Greece on their claims to maritime jurisdiction and the island of Cyprus's legal status caused a conflict over the resources in its Eastern Mediterranean coasts. Turkey also had problematic relations with Israel, the Greek Cypriot Administration in Cyprus, Greece, the Syrian government, and had minimal contact with Egypt. Thus, the regional geo-economics was formed in a manner that excluded Turkey. An exclusive economic zone agreement between Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 2011 had already formed the basis of cooperation over the gas resources.⁴²¹ In January 2019, Greece, Israel, Cyprus, Egypt, and Jordan created the

⁴²⁰ "Gas fields and tensions in the eastern Mediterranean," *Euractiv*, October 26, 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/news/gas-fields-and-tensions-in-the-eastern-mediterranean/>.

⁴²¹ "No. 216, 21 Eylül 2011 Türkiye – KKTC Kıta Sahaneliği Sınırlandırma Anlaşması İmzalanmasına İlişkin Dışişleri Bakanlığı Basın Açıklaması" [No. 216, September 21,

Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum to enhance their regional cooperation in the supply and the marketing of the reserves from the region.⁴²² At this point, the exclusive economic zone agreement between Turkey and Libya, signed on November 27, 2019, provided legal support to Turkey's claim for energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean (see Figure 5.2.).⁴²³ One year after the initial Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, Israel, the Greek Cypriot Administration in Cyprus and Greece formed the EastMed consortium to form the basis of a pipeline project that would carry the Israeli and Greek Cypriot gas to Europe ignoring Turkey's claims.⁴²⁴ Turkey also began to conduct drilling in the area between Turkey and Cyprus, which caused a backlash from the EU.⁴²⁵

As discussed in Chapter 2, access to the Mediterranean Sea has been a strategic aim for Russia for centuries and a source of contention between Russia, Turkey, and the West. Since Russia remained Turkey's number one natural gas supplier, the emergence of another

2011 Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release for the Signing of the Continental Shelf Agreement Between Turkey and the TRNC]. *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, September 21, 2011, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-216_-21-eylul-2011-turkiye-_kkkc-kita-sahanligi-sinirlandirma-anlasmasi-imzalanmasina-iliskin-disisleri-bakanligi-basin-ac_.tr.mfa.

⁴²² "Eastern Mediterranean countries to form regional gas market," *Reuters*, January 14, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-energy-gas-idUSKCN1P81FG>.

⁴²³ Ariel Cohen, "Turkey-Libya Maritime Deal Upsets Mediterranean Energy Plan," *Forbes*, January 8, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/arielcohen/2020/01/08/turkey-libya-maritime-deal-upsets-mediterranean-energy-plan/?sh=985e1bb6bee4>.

⁴²⁴ "Greece, Israel, Cyprus sign EastMed gas pipeline deal," *Reuters*, January 2, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-cyprus-israel-pipeline/greece-israel-cyprus-sign-eastmed-gas-pipeline-deal-idUSKBN1Z10R5>.

⁴²⁵ "Turkey spars with EU over fresh drilling off Cyprus," *Reuters*, January 19, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-cyprus/turkey-spars-with-eu-over-fresh-drilling-off-cyprus-idUSKBN1ZI0G0>.

significant potential gas supply would hurt Russia’s commercial and strategic interests as it would diminish Turkey’s reliance on Russia. Also, Russia and Turkey directly clashed with one another in Syria, Libya, and Cyprus through the alliances they formed. To maintain its influence in the region and protect its commercial interest, Russia kept its military in Syria, gave lifeline support to Haftar, and signed defense agreements with the Greek Cypriot Administration in Cyprus. Russia also offered to mediate between Turkey and Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean in September 2020.⁴²⁶

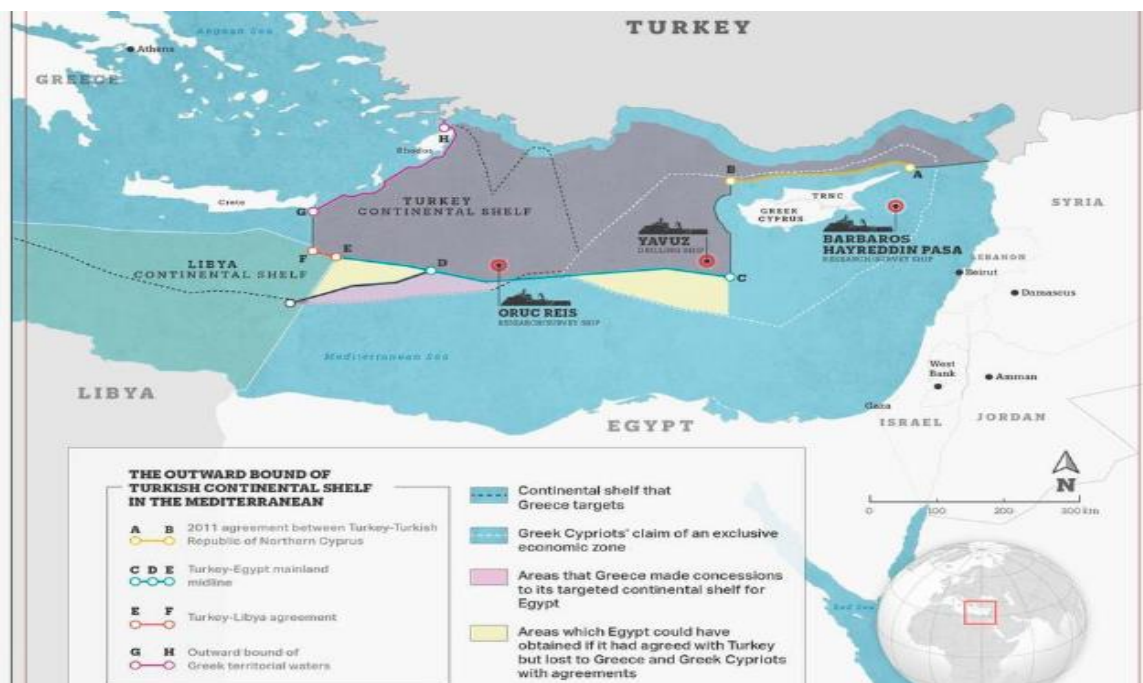


Figure 5.2. Turkey’s activities in the Eastern Mediterranean
 Source: “What is at stake in the eastern Mediterranean?” *TRT World*, September 11, 2020, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/what-is-at-stake-in-the-eastern-mediterranean-39681>.

⁴²⁶ “Russia ready to mediate in Eastern Mediterranean crisis: Lavrov,” *Al Jazeera*, September 8, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/8/russia-ready-to-mediate-in-eastern-mediterranean-crisis-lavrov>.

5.3.3.2. Cooperation and Conflict with Energy Projects

In this period, the energy cooperation between Turkey and Russia continued with the progress made in multiple projects. The Turkish Stream was completed, and the groundbreaking ceremony of Akkuyu NPP took place. Meanwhile, Turkey took additional steps towards reducing its energy reliance on Russia with drilling activities and shale gas purchases. The beginning of gas flow through the TANAP helped Turkey balance Russia's dominance of the region's energy geopolitics and diversify Turkey's energy supply.

The completion of the Turkish Stream pipeline project created substantial geopolitical regional consequences. With continued political support, the subsea portion of the Turkish Stream pipeline was finished in late 2018. In January 2020, the Turkish Stream was officially launched with a ceremony that included Putin, Serbian President Vucic, and the Bulgarian Prime Minister Borisov.⁴²⁷ Meanwhile, upon the US sanctions threat towards the Nord Stream 2 project, Russia brought up the possibility of constructing an additional pipeline called Turkish Stream 2, as an alternative route for the transportation of Russian natural gas to Europe. The completion of the Turk Stream project, along with the possibility of Turkish Stream 2, increased Russia's influence in the European gas market while increasing Europe's reliance on Russia's supply of energy. The project also contributed to Turkey's regional geo-economic power in the Balkans and Europe.

⁴²⁷ "Türkiye'de tarihi gün! Türk Akımı vanasını dört lider çevirdi" [Historic Day in Turkey! Four Leaders Turned the Valve of the Turkish Stream], *CNN Türk*, January 8, 2020, <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ve-putin-turkakiminin-acilisini-bugun-gerceklestirecek>.

In April 2018, the groundbreaking ceremony of the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant took place in Turkey with the participation of Putin and Erdoğan. During the visit, Putin stated that the first block of the Akkuyu NPP will commence operation in 2023 and that the best Russian technologies will be used in the construction of the plant. In turn, Erdoğan stated the Akkuyu NPP would meet 10 percent of Turkey’s electricity needs. In 2019, the construction works of Akkuyu NPP continued, with the number of workers in the construction of the facility reaching 4,500.⁴²⁸ Meanwhile, some of the Turkish engineers who were educated in Russia began to work in Akkuyu NPP in late 2020.⁴²⁹

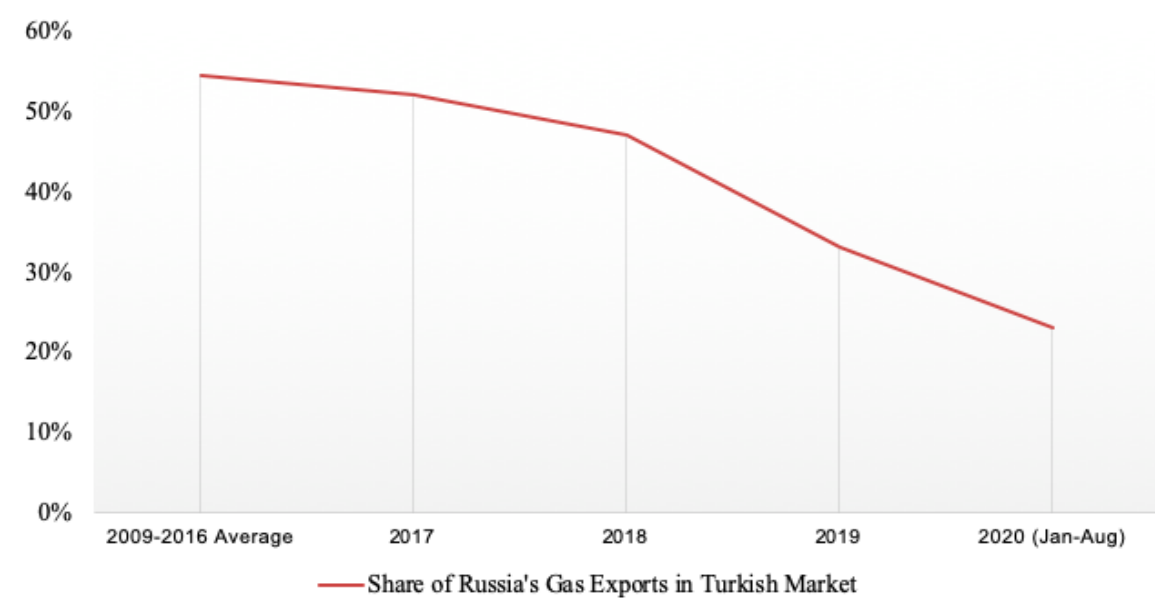
In this period, Turkey significantly diminished its natural gas dependence on imports from Russia. Turkey took the first step towards this direction during the Jet Crisis, by increasing LNG storage and regasification investments and continuing with additional facilities.⁴³⁰ Turkey also diversified its energy supply by purchasing more gas from Azerbaijan and less from Russia. The data taken from Turkey’s Energy Market Regulatory Authority demonstrates a sharp decrease in Russia’s natural gas share in Turkey’s energy supply. The average percentage of energy supply, which was 54% between 2009 and 2016, diminished to 23% by August 2020 (see Graph 5.4.).

⁴²⁸ “*Akkuyu Nükleer Santrali inşaatı görünlendi*” [The Construction of Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant Was Monitored], *Hürriyet*, July 23, 2019, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/galeri-akkuyu-nukleer-santrali-insaati-goruntulendi-41281990/1>.

⁴²⁹ Sezgin Pancar, “Eğitimlerini tamamlayan 53 Türk mühendis Akkuyu NGS’de işe başladı” [53 Turkish Engineer Who Completed Their Studies Started Work in Akkuyu NPP], *Anadolu Ajansı*, October 6, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/egitimlerini-tamamlayan-53-turk-muhendis-akkuyu-ngsde-ise-basladi/1872114>.

⁴³⁰ “Turkey to expand LNG storage capacity with 3rd FSRU,” *Hurriyet Daily*, October 09, 2020, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-expand-lng-storage-capacity-with-3rd-fsru-158966>.

The completion of the TANAP project strengthened Turkey’s position in the regional geo-economics vis-à-vis Russia. The ribbon-cutting ceremony for TANAP took place in July 2018, and TANAP’s connection to the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline was completed in December 2019.⁴³¹ By increasing the flow of Azerbaijani gas to Turkey, TANAP helped Turkey to decrease its reliance on Russian gas and bolstered its role as an energy hub between the Caucasus and Europe.⁴³²



Graph 5.4. Share of Russia’s Gas Exports in Turkish Market (2009-2020)

Source: “Doğal Gaz Piyasası Yıllık Sektör Raporu Listesi” [Natural Gas Market Yearly Sector Report List], *Enerji Piyasası Denetleme Kurulu*, accessed at November 29, 2020, <https://www.epdk.gov.tr/Detay/Icerik/3-0-94/yillik-sektor-raporu>.

⁴³¹ “TANAP is ready to deliver natural gas to Europe,” *TANAP*, December 24, 2019, <https://www.tanap.com/media/press-releases/tanap-is-ready-to-deliver-natural-gas-to-europe/>.

⁴³² Kostis Geropoulos, “Reducing Dependence on Russia, Turkey Speeds Up TANAP Pipeline to EU,” *New Europe*, February 20, 2018, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/reducing-dependence-russia-turkey-speeds-tanap-pipeline-eu/>.

5.4. Cooperation at Global Level

Turkey and Russia's foreign policies and the deepening of bilateral partnerships between Turkey and Russia brought about significant global political consequences. Turkey's assertive actions in Syria, Libya, and Nagorno-Karabakh reinforced the erosion of Western influence in these regions. The cooperation between Turkey and Russia also signified the possibility of non-Western solutions to global problems.

The election of Trump was a significant factor in encouraging Turkey and Russia to further advance their agenda beyond the US security interests. Aside from facilitating Turkey and Russia to strengthen their partnerships, Trump's Presidency also weakened the global context through which the US used to put pressure on the two countries. The so-called liberal international order seemed not as essential as it had been, since the acting US President, who is supposed to lead this order, was no longer acting accordingly.

5.5. Conclusion

In this period, Turkey's increasing activism after the July 2016 coup attempt shaped the course of bilateral relations. As demonstrated in this chapter, while the resolution of the Jet Crisis paved the way for Turkey's rapprochement with Russia, Turkey's new foreign policy strategy strongly challenged Russia in multiple regions. Against the backdrop of these dynamics, Turkey and Russia utilized their bilateral mechanisms to resolve their differences, while the positive trend in trade and energy continued. The coup attempt was an 'earthquake' type of development as it took place overnight with reverberations for Turkish foreign policy, and for Turkey-Russia relations indirectly, for years to follow. I demonstrated this impact with the help of the framework I utilize in this work. Accordingly, I analyzed how the change in Turkey's foreign policy strategy and the

way such change was perceived by Russia reflected upon multiple segments of the bilateral relations between two countries.

Turkey's activism and the continued regional turbulence shaped the dynamics of cooperation and conflict between Turkey and Russia in different regions. The Syrian Civil War continued to be the most critical subject of their bilateral relations. As the US military and political influence further diminished in Syria under Trump, Turkey and Russia played a significant role in shaping Syria's future through Turkey's military operations in Northern Syria and the Astana Process. The decreasing US involvement and inconsequential EU initiatives enabled Turkey and Russia, with assertive foreign initiatives, to work over Libya in a manner that operates separately from a somewhat broader international framework. In Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey's daring involvement in the post-Soviet region, with its strong support towards Azerbaijan, was indicative of the changes in regional dynamics, Russian foreign policy, Turkish foreign policy, and Turkey-Russia relations. While Russia overlooked Turkey's activism, the way Russia set the terms of the ceasefire demonstrated its continued interest in keeping the region under control.

In this period, the two countries attempted to improve their bilateral trade relations from the impact of sanctions. Although bilateral trade relations recovered after the Jet Crisis, Turkey reduced the share of energy it imported from Russia per its 'independent' foreign policy strategy. Turkey and Russia also continued to make progress in mutual energy projects. With Turkey's purchase of the S-400, the missile defense system from Russia, the two countries' trade relations acquired a strategic edge. However, the bilateral trade volume began to diminish due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the increase of Turkey's shale gas purchase from the US in place of Russian natural gas.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

This dissertation attempts to analyze the evolution of Turkey-Russia relations in 2001-2020, using an eclectic framework benefitting from various primary and secondary sources. It utilizes process tracing as a methodological instrument. Within the framework of the methodological approach and model used in this research, I have investigated the subject in three body chapters, focusing on different periods (2001-2009, 2009-2016, and 2016-2020). In this chapter, I present concluding remarks, starting with a discussion of the findings of this research. Then I explain how this study may contribute to various research areas. Next, I discuss the limitations of this research. Finally, I provide suggestions for further research.

6.2. Findings

The main question of this research was: How did Turkey and Russia's cooperation prevail over the competition between them in 2001-2020? This dissertation comprehensively addresses this question by a thorough analysis of Turkey-Russia relations during the period between 2001 and 2020. The framework used in this research enabled me to consider factors that stem from different levels (systemic, regional, state, and individual) and different dimensions (strategic, economic, and normative). I argue that the most critical factors in shaping bilateral relations were the changes in the balance of power in the Turkey-Russia nexus. Therefore, I consider the concept of "change in the balance of power" as not just a result of comparing the total resources of each country in a particular period of time. Instead, I argue, various factors can be influential in turning the tide in the balance of power. Moreover, these resources can be economical, strategic, and even

normative. Most importantly, the concept of balance of power I use should not be confused with the global balance of power in a Realist sense as I indicate the balance specifically between Turkey and Russia. Explaining the impact of various factors on bilateral relations in this context helps reveal the nature of the relations in the context in which they occur.

In the first period, between 2001 and 2009, the most significant factor that shaped bilateral relations was the invasion of Iraq. This invasion had a transformative impact on the global balance of power by bringing about a rather multipolar world order than compared to the 1990s. Although the global backlash against the US invasion of Iraq did not have an immediate impact on the US superiority in economic and strategic dimensions, the belief in the wise and moral leadership of the US was significantly tarnished. This decay in US normative power enabled Turkey to pursue a multidimensional foreign policy and encouraged Russia to foster a multipolar world order. The foreign policy approaches of the Putin Administration in Russia and the AK Party government in Turkey fitted this trend. In such an environment, Turkey could consider Russia as more than an actor that used to be securitized within the framework of the regional competition between Turkey and Russia, on the one hand, and the Cold-War era global securitization dynamics, on the other. In turn, Russia considered Turkey as an independent actor, which could assist Russia's attempts to foster a multipolar world order. Russia also aimed to pragmatically cooperate with Turkey in the areas of trade and energy. Therefore, during this period, Turkey and Russia increased their bilateral trade volume and strengthened their ties in the energy sector.

In the second period, between 2009 and 2016, the most significant factor shaping the bilateral relations was the Syrian Crisis. In this period, under the Obama

Administration, the US attempted to restore its global leadership role by refraining from unnecessary military entanglements. However, the reverberations of the change in US foreign policy had unintended consequences within the framework of the Syrian Civil War. In the initial phase of the Arab Spring, the US support for the so-called Arab Spring process caused the collapse of many autocratic regimes in the Middle East. In Syria, however, the situation required a concrete military response for any actor wishing to bring about a real change on the ground. In the absence of a US military investment, Russia and Iran filled the vacuum and helped the Syrian government forces. On the other hand, Turkey continued to rely on the US as a partner, one which, however, did not highly consider Turkey's security interests. Turkey's maladaptation to the changing conditions, which was also a liability, caused Turkey to lose ground to Russia in the Middle East and in the Black Sea.

In the third period, between 2016 and 2020, the most significant factor in shaping bilateral relations was the July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey. Against the backdrop of the increasing frequency of terrorist attacks and domestic political instability, the coup attempt forced Turkey to consider it urgent to deal with the country's imminent security issues. During this period, Turkey would be prone to take risks and ignore institutional frameworks. At this juncture, the incompatibility between Turkey and the West pushed Turkey to consider a rapprochement with Russia. By encouraging Turkey's participation in regional orders, Russia enabled the amplification of Turkey's regional influence. Even though this development challenged Russia's interests in multiple regions, such a step made Russia a power-broker in the Middle East. Moreover, the change in Turkish foreign policy and Russia's increasing influence in the Middle East brought the global political system closer to multipolarity.

Within the framework of the absence of Cold War era securitization dynamics and the erosion of Western influence in Central Eurasia, Turkey and Russia were able to develop trade relations and strengthen regional institutions. This process decreased the Western influence over the region. The domestic changes in Turkey and Russia complemented this process by increasing both countries' maneuvering area. The consolidation of Erdoğan and Putin's power in their domestic realms enabled these two leaders to more comfortably adopt an independent foreign policy that counters the Western hegemonic influence in multiple regions as well as at the global level. In Turkey, Erdoğan gradually consolidated power over state institutions by prevailing over secular guardians of the bureaucracy and the Gülen Movement. The arming of the PYD by the US and the harboring of the Gülen Movement in the US convinced Erdoğan that the US is not an actor that will help Turkey maintain its security. For Putin, the invasion of Iraq and the US support for the Color Revolutions demonstrated that Russia needs to counter the US to realize its core strategic aims: restoring Russia's hegemony in the post-Soviet region and fostering a multipolar world order. As two significant powerhouses in Central Eurasia, Turkey and Russia strengthened their ties in the Black Sea, the South Caucasus, and in the Middle East, although their interests were often in conflict with one another.

I tend to see bilateral trade, energy, and people-to-people relations in the Turkey-Russia nexus as of secondary importance. The statist tradition in both countries brought about the developments in these sectors following the strategic issues, not vice versa. I refer to the sudden impact of the Jet Crisis on bilateral trade relations and the recovery of those relations after the resolution of the Jet Crisis to bolster this point. However, the trade relations also had their strategic dimension, through which they may

become significant. For example, the extent to which Turkey is dependent on Russia in bilateral trade and who has the upper hand in this dimension may impact the course of their bilateral relations.

6.3. Contribution

This dissertation potentially contributes to different research topics in studies on multiple regions in Central Eurasia, to the scholarly attempts to explain the global political changes and to theoretical attempts to explain state behavior.

Essentially, this dissertation provides a comprehensive analysis of Turkey-Russia relations between 2001 and 2020. Second, this work contributes to the studies that focus on the foreign policy making in Turkey and Russia, with its thorough examination of how both countries responded to the main regional and global events in 2001-2020. Third, by examining the interaction between Turkey and Russia with regional events, this dissertation also contributes to the studies that attempt to explain the regional dynamics in the Middle East, the Black Sea, Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and the Eastern Mediterranean. Fourth, since it also analyzes the interaction between US foreign policy and the regional dynamics in Central Eurasia, one might utilize this work to explain the consequences of US foreign policy in different regions.

Using its original framework, this work contributes to explaining state behavior and international consequences. To create a comprehensive framework through which state behavior may be understood in the sophisticated context in which it takes place, I created an eclectic framework and model. This model, adapted by the Type-3 Neoclassical Realist framework, enables one to consider factors stemming from different levels and dimensions if appropriately applied. Such a model could be adapted to explain how states behave and

how international consequences occur as a result of the interactions between more than one state. Its flexible and eclectic nature enables one to utilize various issues, including strategic culture, political psychology, and balance of power, when explaining state behavior and international consequences.

6.4. Limitations

The most significant limitation of this study was the amount of relevant information it could process. At every level and every dimension, the dynamics that might impact bilateral relations are virtually endless. In this research, I attempted to assess the impact of trade relations, energy geopolitics, regional events, global political transformations, and domestic political developments. In each chapter, examined how a change in one of those dimensions impacted the overall trend of the bilateral relations. However, these factors are multidimensional and operate within a broader web of dynamics. For example, Turkey's decision-making dynamics involve parties, civil society representatives, state officials, and the President. Moreover, the level of influence these actors have on the decision-making changes from time to time. Assessing the impact of all these actors on policy making could have been beneficial for this study. Still, I looked only at the output of the decision-making process and then analyzed its basis through the speeches of the President.

I have two justifications for these limitations. One reason was my inability to access the relevant information. For example, to know exactly why Erdoğan and Putin responded in a certain way in certain situations, one should be in every meeting between state officials and fully comprehend how these leaders think and behave to assess their behavior accurately. In the absence of such an opportunity I relied upon open-source documents to trace the process of their behaviors. Process tracing, which is the main methodology of this

dissertation, helped me in that respect. Another reason was the limited economic resources and time I had for this research, which pushed me to use my resources smartly. For example, interviewing the owners of hotels in Turkey serving Russian tourists could contribute to this research, but I could assess only the rise and fall in the number of Russian tourists to Turkey to understand the interaction between tourism and the general course of bilateral relations.

6.5. Suggestions for Further Research

Examining Turkey-Russia relations required me to consider the domestic politics and foreign policy making in both countries, regional political dynamics, and global political changes. During this research, I discovered multiple vital topics still to be thoroughly investigated.

First, the contours of the global political system are only just emerging. Researchers have yet to identify the main tenets of the global system that impact the behavior of different states. I argue that the proliferation of studies that consider the way regional powers like Turkey and Russia interact with their surroundings, provides significant insights into our efforts to understand the contours of the world order.

Second, in my research, I define the region that comprises the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and the Middle East as Central Eurasia. I argue that the intensifying dynamics of cooperation and competition between Turkey, Russia, and Iran point toward an eventual? regionalization process in Central Eurasia. Analyses of trilateral relations between Turkey, Russia, and Iran, and the multilateral relations between these three countries plus the US and other regional actors, may promote a more accurate understanding of the behaviors of the states in this region.

Third, most studies on Turkey-Russia relations base their narrative on the conflict between Turkey and Russia in different regions and their mutually beneficial trade relations. I argue that such studies benefit more from analyses that use a theoretical approach, demonstrating how trade and regional competition interact with different dynamics of the bilateral relations. There are also many books on Turkey-Russia relations that provide a historical background of the relations in 90% of the book and analyze the contemporary dynamics in the remaining 10%. I think the historical background is only one factor in their bilateral relations.

Fourth, part of this research was to explain the foreign policy behaviors of Turkey and Russia. Many studies consider Turkey and Russia as non-Western, illiberal and revisionist powers and refuse to engage with the underlying dynamics that translate into foreign policy in these countries. Such studies refuse to acknowledge the agency of Turkey and Russia and preclude an understanding of how and why these countries act the way they do. Moreover, although Erdoğan and Putin are powerful figures, the wider domestic, regional, and global institutional framework limit their options and behavior. Therefore, considering these limitations when explaining these countries' foreign policies promotes a better understanding of their foreign policies.

Fifth, this dissertation uses an eclectic framework to explain the transformation in Turkey-Russia relations in the period from 2001 to 2020. The framework that I use benefited from a set of other frameworks, produced mainly in the West. However, under empires and secular states, these two nations have been in contact with one another for centuries. Therefore, thoroughly explaining their policies towards one another can be better assessed through theoretical frameworks that consider region-specific dynamics.

Homegrown theories, employed properly, can be an immense help in fully capturing the true nature of the political dynamics of a region.

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