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CONTEMPORARY TURKISH – RUSSIAN RELATIONS

FROM PAST TO FUTURE

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İlyas TOPSAKAL, Ali ASKEROV

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CONTENTS

PREFACE v
INTRODUCTION vii

CHAPTER 1
TURKISH RUSSIAN RELATIONS IN THE SOVIET AND POST SOVIET PERIOD
Ilyas TOPSAKAL 1

CHAPTER 2
TURKISH – RUSSIAN RELATIONS IN THE PUTIN ERA
Okan YEŞİLOT, Burcu ÖZDEMIR 27

CHAPTER 3
TURKEY – RUSSIAN FEDERATION RELATIONS IN THE NEW ERA
Giray Saynur DERMAN 39

CHAPTER 4
TURK AND RUSSIAN RELATIONS FROM DISTANT NEIGHBOURSHIP TO CLOSE NEIGHBOURSHIP
Ragip Kutay KARACA, Ece BABAN, Müge YÜCE 69

CHAPTER 5
EURASIAN PIVOT IN RUSSIAN AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY: EURASIANISM AS AN IDEATIONAL PREMISE?
Kamala VALIYEVA 87

CHAPTER 6
THE TURKISH-RUSSIAN "COALITION OF INTERESTS", IN SYRIA: AN ANALYSIS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF NEO REALIST THEORY
Alperen Kürşad ZENGİN 113

CHAPTER 7
THREAT AND COOPERATION: SYRIA IN RUSSO-TURKISH RELATIONS
Lasha TCHANTOURIDZE, Ali ASKEROV 137

CHAPTER 8
RUSSIA'S POLICY OF PROXY WAR IN SYRIA: WILL IT BE A GAME CHANGER OR WILL NAVAL POWER STAY IN MEDITERRANEAN WATERS
Mesut Hakkı CAŞIN 157

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND KAZAKHSTAN REPUBLIC IN YELTSIN'S PERIOD: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS
Dinçer KOÇ, Kürşat YILDIRIM 183

CHAPTER 10
THE ASTANA PROCESS AS AN INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM FOR MIDDLE EASTERN REGIONAL SECURITY: THE RUSSIAN MISSION
Rinat NABIEV, Ilsur NAFIKOV 197

CHAPTER 11
UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT-COOPERATION NEXUS IN TURKEY-RUSSIA RELATIONS: 2011-2016
Burak TOPUZOGLU, Mehmet Akif OKUR 213

CHAPTER 12
THE EFFECT OF RUSSO-TURKISH WARS ON THE MARTIAL ARRANGEMENT OF RUSSIA (1696-1878)
Mustafa TANRIVERDI 239

PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 4

TURK AND RUSSIAN RELATIONS FROM DISTANT NEIGHBOURSHIP TO CLOSE NEIGHBOURSHIP

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ABSTRACT

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

1. Distant Neighborship in Turk and Russian Relations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

really controversial reflections (Rüma & Çelikpala, 2019).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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