

Russia's Middle East Policy in the context of Post-Cold War

Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Rusya'nın Ortadoğu Politikası

Abstract

At the beginning of the 1990s, the greatest change in the international political system was the state Soviet Union that was most affected. As one of the leaders of the bipolar system, the Soviet Union, which is directly and indirectly involved in the administration of many states, has taken its place in history and has left its inheritance to Russia in a smaller scale. Russia's early years, as well as economic and social crises, have led to a certain degree of loss of former activity in foreign policy. Especially in certain regions where the Middle East is also involved and has given great importance before, it is far from its former activity. The Cold War era, the global powers of the Soviet Union, and the US have found many political influences that will go far enough to divide or consolidate forces both in the region and in the region. At the end of the 1990s, the occupation of stones in Russia's economic, social and domestic politics resulted in more active foreign policy implementation in certain regions. If the September 11 attacks are a turning point against terrorism, recent developments called 'Arab Spring' can be considered as another turning point. As a result of the large masses of people falling into the streets, it has been seen that some of the powers in the region have changed and some have protected themselves. The active forces, in these changes, want to be involved in the process of different political movements, the most striking is to make the reminders of Russia's old power. In this study, after the Cold War, Russia tried to answer questions about the changes and developments in Middle East politics. For this purpose, the documents were examined and the data analyzed and interpreted.

Öz

1990'ların başında uluslararası siyasi sistemde meydana gelen büyük değişimin en fazla etkilediği devlet Sovyetler Birliği olmuştur. İki kutuplu sistemin, lider devletlerinden biri olarak, doğrudan ve dolaylı, birçok devletin yönetiminde söz sahibi olan Sovyetler Birliği, tarihteki yerini alarak, mirasını daha küçük ölçekteki Rusya'ya bırakmıştır. Rusya'nın ilk yılları, ekonomik ve sosyal krizler yanında, iç politik çekişmelerle geçmesi, dış politikada eski etkinliğini belirli ölçüde kaybetmesine neden olmuştur. Özellikle Ortadoğu'nun da içerisinde olduğu, daha önceden çok önem verdiği belirli bölgelerde, eski etkinliğinden uzaktır. Soğuk savaş döneminin, küresel güçler olan Sovyetler Birliği ve ABD hem bölgeyi hem de bölgedeki güçleri bölme ya da birleştirmeye kadar gidecek birçok politik etkide bulunmuştur. 1990'ların sonunda Rusya'da, ekonomik, sosyal ve iç politik zemininde taşların yerine oturması, belirli bölgelerde daha aktif dış politika uygulanması sonucunu doğurmuştur. 11 Eylül saldırısı nasıl teröre karşı bir dönüm noktası ise, 'Arap Baharı' olarak adlandırılan son dönemde yaşanan gelişmeler de, diğer bir dönüm noktası sayılabilir. Geniş halk kitlelerinin sokaklara dökülmesi sonucunda, bölgedeki bazı iktidarların değiştiği ve bazılarının kendini koruduğu görülmüştür. Etkin güçler, bu değişimlerde farklı politik hamlelerle sürece dâhil olmak istemişler, en fazla dikkati çeken ise Rusya'nın eski gücünü hatırlatan çıkışlar yapmasıdır. Bu çalışmada, Soğuk Savaş'ın ardından Rusya'nın Ortadoğu politikasında ne değişme ve gelişmeler olduğu sorularına cevap aranmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu amaçla doküman ve belgeler incelenmiş, veriler analiz edilerek yorumlanmaya çalışılmıştır.

Introduction

Russia, which is the largest state in the world with its large territories, has quite rich underground resources in parallel with its size. Again, in parallel with its size, it is a multilingual, multicultural state and has many autonomous regions with different characteristics because many people host it. The lands, which expanded steadily during the Russian Tsarist period and reached the highest level in the Soviet Union time, decreased at the beginning of the 1990s with the disintegration of the East Block. Although this disintegration resulted in a decrease in the soil and the number of the population, Russia, which is the center of dispersed states, continued its activity on the separated states in the following period. During the Soviet Union, leaders such as Haydar



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Aliyev in Azerbaijan and Saparmurat Niyazov (Turkmenbashi) in Turkmenistan, who have a say in the administrations or bureaucracy, have held positions of politics since the Soviet Union and have maintained close relations with Moscow. The Soviet influence and influence has fallen to a lower level in the indirectly isolated regions such as the Middle East, while it manifests itself in the states that have been separated in the first years and confused. Particularly, during the period when Nasser was influential in Egypt, during the Arab-Israeli Wars and at the end of the 1970s the Soviet Union's influence in the Middle East was considered very low. The international political system has also undergone changes and transformations, and different political centers have been involved in many areas of active competition. The Middle East is at the forefront of neglected territories, and the recent years have seen developments in the direction of increasing interest and efficiency, as interest and energy have been put into the effort to solve.

1. Soviet Policy and Middle East

In the second half of the 1950s the Soviet Union focuses on Middle East (Erenler, 2013). Soviet Foreign Policy in Middle East suffered many issues in the early and mid-1970s. Most importantly, Arab states blamed insufficient Soviet Support against Israel and they think that soviet foreign policy has no enough influence over Israel and they think that only Washington can influence Israel (Yan, 2012). In that case many Arab governments and radical Syria construct relationship with United States in order to find out solution to the Arab - Israel conflict. In this sense, Moscow is on the diplomatic position (Yan, 2012). It should be noted here in the Persian Gulf the Shah of Iran has important and strong link with United States. Actually many Arab states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates have strong link with West structure. Only in Iraq and South Yemen have Soviet Union influential. Nevertheless, in 1978 - 1979 Soviet Union gains power in Middle East because of American sponsored Camp David Accord between Egypt and Israel, in that case, many Arab governments condemn United States, and they think that United States protects Israel on the Palestinian issues. At the end of 1979, Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and the situation changed in Middle East also when Iraq was invaded Iran in 1980; Moscow gave direct military assistance to Baghdad and began helping Teheran. It is significant issue because USSR has a long coastline on the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean and Iran is much more important country than Iraq. When Gorbachev came to power in 1985, Soviet leaders try to improve their links with Major countries of the gulf. In line with this, Gorbachev's better establishment with Israel provides Soviet Jews to emigrate Israel and this act directly influence question Soviet Union's Middle East Proposals. (Gvosdes, 2003:17). To sum up, the Soviet Union political position in the Gulf and Middle East under Gorbachev willingness to talk and construct diplomatic issues with Israel, and Gorbachev tries to convince both Arab and Israeli moderates that Soviet Union can improve peace process in Middle East and in the Gulf (Trenin, 2012).

It should be noted here, religion, nationalism and petroleum play important role for shaping Middle East (Yan, 2012). In that case, there is a dividing category between Arab and Soviets. Arab nationality gains popular in the region in terms of Islamic moves and it is a unifier structure against Jews and the West. The concept of religion makes the Arab together as Christianity makes the West together in social and political terms. The invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet confused the Arabs and in that case they are not sure about Soviet intension. (Wallender, 2002). As it is known oil plays significant role in World politics and specially in this region so construction of OPEC is important movement because it provides Arabs' stability and they are moving them out of either Communist or Capitalist system and Arabs can play both sides of the fence and this action favors the Arabs because by means of creation of OPEC Arabs have economic power over West and Soviets and they lose nothing but they gain everything. (Cutler, 2004). The background relationship between the USSR and the Middle East focuses on Turks, mistrust of the Persians and the Afghanistan conflict.

To sum up, Soviet Foreign Policy on the Middle East focuses on Arabs and their relationship with the West (Gvosdes, 2002:17). As mentioned above, Middle East region is a significant point for Soviet Unions as well as it is an important and highlighted area for the major World powers (Trenin, 2012).

2. Foreign Policy and Middle East after 1990

2.1. Russian Foreign Policy in the Middle East from the Disintegration of the Eastern Bloc to the September 11

The Second World War revealed two great powers. These powers, perhaps for the first time in history, are not among the classically active states of Europe (Oren, 2002). The destruction of Britain, Germany, and France at the end of the war, the loss of Austria's old power and territory, is an indication that decisions will be taken from outside Europe. Although the decision mechanisms of the Soviet Union and the bigger part of the industry are Europe, a large part of their land is in Asia. The years 1945-1990 are a period of the first encounter with a different structure called the Cold War. The world is divided between the United States (USA) and the socialist states it represents, with its capitalist group and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Although some states are trying to stay out of this conflict or to feel least effective, the division is clearly felt in every phase of life (Sönmezoğlu, 2000). The cold war is a period when the military in the world is constantly competing with many super-powers and around the world (science, technology, ideology, weapons, space activities, sporting events, etc.) It is also the name of a tactic given to win new allies in an effort to break the influence of the other side and prevent a possible alliance. In particular, the early years of the Cold War have been in the last years in the perception that it can turn into a different World War at any moment. The main factor in the frightening of people in this period is the availability of the atomic bomb and the balance of horror (Sönmezoğlu, 2000).

The policy of Gorbachev government in 1986, 'Glasnost and Perestroika', entered into a new process, and when it came to 1991, it was unresolved (Milliyet Newspaper, 1991). In 1987, acts of independence and violence began to spread throughout the entire USSR, beginning with the Baltic States. Lithuania became the first state to declare independence. The proximity of the Baltic States to Europe and the short-lived influence of their independence are great. In March 1990, the declaration of independence was at parliament level. In the USSR, the pacification of the Baltic States continued to dissolve and many federal states declared independence in 1991. (US Foreign Policy, 2011). While the Soviet Union is history, Moscow is at the beginning of the twentieth century, and in the end, it is in an economic and political turmoil.

Apart from this issue, the most important proof of the effect of the utilitarian nationalist line on foreign policy since 1993 was the Foreign Policy Concept that was announced in April 1993. This document, also known as the "Near Environment", places CIS countries at the forefront of Russian foreign policy, and underscores the differences in interests between the West and Russia. (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2008) The acceleration of the government's implementation of liberal economic policies after the "Black Tuesday" incident of October 1994, the shift towards foreign borrowing in order to close the budget deficit, and the leadership of the second round privatization program and the formation of oligarchs have also led to the pro-Western tendency in foreign policy. In this framework, the process from the end of 1994 to the 1996 presidential election can be described as the transition to Atlantic foreign policy. Despite the accelerating liberalization of the economy during this period, the continuing influence of generals in Russian politics due to the Battle of Chechnya prevented the pursuit of a pro-Western policy. (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2008)

As a result, it is possible to say; Russia, which had experienced a sense of turmoil in every sense from the disintegration of the USSR in the early 1990s to the 2000s, began to recover with the impact of some cyclical developments such as Vladimir Putin's presidency in 2000 and the rise in oil prices. The most lucrative area reflected by this recovery has been the foreign policy area. Russia, which had previously followed a passive foreign policy on the development of its periphery, has begun to follow a growing foreign policy with Putin. He continues to use the elements of political, economic, military, and cultural power in his hands effectively against the neighboring countries and other countries. As Vladimir Putin, who was re-elected president of the Russian Federation on March 4, 2012, has a chance to be president for two more terms, and is very pleased with his work with

Medvedev, it can be said that this paralysis will continue to increase in the next ten to fifteen years (White, 2011:29).

3. Russian Foreign Policy after September 11

In this part the article deals with the Russian Foreign Policy after September 11, attacks of terrorists on the Twin Towers in New York effects directly Russian Foreign Policy and the Russian Foreign Policies' relationship between USA and Euro Atlantic Organizations are shaped in this context. (Trenin, 2012). The president of Putin was to first leader to telephone US president George W. Bush after September 11 in order to express his solidarity. In that case, Russia's security and Foreign Policy are shaped in terms of between West-East, Washington-Moscow in particular. The concept of September 11 re constructed the bipolar system, based on these statements USA and anti-terrorist coalition and Russia in one pole on the other hand USA's discourse of "axis evil" states and international terrorist organizations belong to other pole. In this process, there is a "honeymoon" in the relations between Washington and Moscow. Based on these statements. In May 2002, President Bush and the US President Bush signed a Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions called Start -3 and both parties try to reduce the warheads. Based on these statements Moscow tries to construct friendly relations with the Western states countries and states on the other hand Russia is gaining authority and its opinions is taken to consideration even though it has a regional state of limited possibilities (Trenin,2012). However, Russian foreign and security structures are afraid of American presence in the Middle East because of energy resources so actually Russian foreign policy and security items want to block American political, economic and military presence, it can be stated that Russia has economic and security interests in this special region (Theses of the Council of the Foreign and Defense Policy, 2003: 3-14). But in this critical period; major treats to Russia is no longer come from NATO, major threats are in the form of nuclear attack or conventional attack on Russian territory (Theses of the Council of the Foreign and Defense Policy, 2003: 3-14). In that case, terrorism, weapons, drugs and refugees are viewed new threats to for Russian Foreign Policy (Wallender, 2002). Based on these statements nuclear attacks, biological and chemical weapons in the hand of terrorists in the Middle East are new dangers and major threats for Russian Foreign Policy priorities (Wallender, 2002). Russian interests and concerns are modified after September 11 attacks and the Russia is not sufficient to deal with new threats and dangers in the region (Tarbakov, 2003: 2). It should be noted here, Russian Foreign Policy and Moscow's attitude are designed according to new concept of world order. They maintain that they should not take risk in terms of major rift with the United States and European Union (Gvosdes, 2002:17). Based on these statements Russian foreign policy under the title of Putin stablishes close and active relations with West. This traces of close and active friendship are seen in his September 24 2001 speech acts. (Nezavisima Gazeta, 25 September 2001:3). In this speech acts he focuses on Russian foreign policy, security and military priorities after the September 11 attacks. But we can mention that Putin's supporting message to US after the 9/11 attacks does not mean that Russia wants to loose interests and concerns in the region. Because Russia wants to hegemon of the regions central Asia and Middle East for years to come (Cutler, 2004). In this respect, Russian political, cultural, economic, and security influence the regions (Gvosdes, 2002:17). To put is simply, Russia wants to control and regulate military and economic instruments. Post 9/11 events influence Russian oil and gas companies and its military presence in this context. (Wallender, 2002).

4. Russia and Arab Spring

Arab Spring is significant issues in the Middle East and North Africa and it is an important global politics in 2011 (Trenin, 2012). Leaders of the countries of North Africa and the Middle East constitute the most basic pillars of the Arab Spring, the inability to meet the needs of their people and their living conditions in a fair and healthy manner (Buzan,2003). Arab authoritarian regimes and dictatorships are replaced by new political forces and new political structures. Arab spring event's speed is very great and outside players try to adopt the changing facts, realities, and domino effects of Arab spring covers through the region. (Russian Foreign Policy, 2013). In the West the

concept of Arab Spring is seen as democracy from below and dictatorship from above so outdated authoritarian regimes and their behaviors are being incapable of keeping up with the times (Russian Foreign Policy, 2013). In first stage Russia preferred distance itself from this dominant effects of Arab Spring; it should be noted here Moscow also think that this outdated regimes authoritarian regimes can be changed by the Spring but it does not choose the support loudly democratization like West. Based on these statements Moscow's attitude to the Arab Spring and modern Russian world views in general has a logic in external and domestic politics (Kressler, 2005). It should be noted here that this logic behind external and domestic policies are Russian's own historical background and experience. (Pukhov, 2012). Russian citizens and authorities sees this domestic and world events in Middle East through the angle and perspective of end of the 1980s and the 1990s (Marcus, 2014). According to Lukyanov (2013) Russian society does not believe in revolutions, revolutions are seen too much turmoil, illusory, and disappointments. The changes in the countries as the result of Arab spring do not offer optimism through the region. As it is understood from this explanation, the Russian approach is broader than the Arab Spring issue and the spring itself is not the significant and key issue. To sum up The Arab Spring is getting chaotic portrait of modern international environment. (Lukyanav, 2013).

Based on these arguments, Russia appears to have come up with two main goals in the Middle East Policy after the Arab Spring. First, protecting the economic, military, and political presence in the region as a global power is the first target (Erşen, 2014). Here, advantages and disadvantages can be addressed and sorted from different angles. First, Russia is not the only competitor of the block leader in the US, as it used to be in the region. After the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the United States stands out in a multi-polar political system. The European Union, China, and Japan have also increased their political and economic interests in the region. The fact that the European Union, China, and Japan have a share in technology and war materials makes competition more intense, making the ruling administrations and the Russian influence as controversial as the former. Secondly, it can be said that the Soviet Union and many Arab states with oil income are covert or competitive, and their co-operation continues to this axis. In this sense, some states are automatically developing and developing relations with the US and the EU. However, the issue of Israel, or even the radical Islam in the region, the presence of distant and even troubled states with the United States, attracts attention to Russian foreign policy. Secondly, it can be said that the Soviet Union and many Arab states with oil income are covert or competitive, and their co-operation continues to this axis. In this sense, some states are automatically developing and developing relations with the US and the EU. Nevertheless, the issue of Israel, or even the radical Islam in the region, the presence of distant and even troubled states with the United States, attracts attention to Russian foreign policy. Secondly, Russia has tried to increase its global power by taking advantage of regional crises. Russia, which has not taken much initiative in the overthrow of the Gaddafi administration in Libya, has been active in the Syrian crisis while abstaining from the UN base (Erşen, 2014: 80 -81). To put it simply; it has been seen that the Arab Spring has gradually participated in the process gradually from the beginning and has been leading events. It is seen that Russia, which went to the veto of the process continuously, gave open support to the Syrian government in order to increase the prestige in the region. Besides, Putin intensify its cooperation with states in the region have also established direct contact with NATO member Turkey. It can be said here that both states have experienced a transition to conflict, without conflict, and that they are in a position to win-to-win (Erşen, 2014).

Conclusion

The Middle East, especially in the late period of the Ottoman Empire, became the center of important problems and this problem was called 'the Eastern Question' by the European states. which may be referred to as a region of oil on the ocean, ethnic distinctions drawn on the map in a complex manner and without considering the people in the Middle East therefore remains within the different state, except Turkey and Iran are limited tradition. Exactly unity of the states of the Middle East, which have earned their independence very soon except these two most out-of-state states, on nation-consciousness has not been established. Artificial borders, water issues and

disagreements among neighbors based on different spots are seen as the most common disadvantages in the region, as the education level of the people of the region is generally very low. In addition to all these, many western companies and the state have an interest in the region because of the large number of groups with radical religious tendencies and the easy living area in this region, the democracy is far from the desired level, human rights violations and especially rich oil resources. has come to mean a constant conflict and turmoil.

These conflicts were not only confined to the states of the region, but also as a threat to the farthest states, as seen in the September 11, 2011 attacks, especially in the neighboring states. If a permanent state of war for the people of the region, next to the poverty of the deaths and the masses, led to experiencing mass migration of Palestinians in Lebanon and Jordan, Northern Iraqi Kurds and Syrians in particular in Turkey has led to migration to other parts of the state, including. Especially during the Cold War, the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union made the region feel overwhelmed. As we have seen in the Iran-Iraq and Arab-Israeli wars, two different poles have supported different states. The natural richness of the region has brought both regional and global forces since the early 1900s. The United Kingdom and France, the United States and the Soviet Union are global powers entering the region in different periods. In the Cold War, the conflict of the East and West Bloom, the Soviet Union lost power after the Cold War, developed in favor of the US, and the influence of the United States in the region has increased considerably.

In such a challenging and competitive geography, many of the powers supported by the West have spread conflicts and deaths in many parts of the region, although not as much as in Syria. The tension in the region soon sprang to states active in the international political system, and although not direct, political observation was a cold war, especially between Moscow and Washington. After Iran (2012), Russia (2015) began to actively support the Syrian government in the field on the grounds that Syrian territorial sovereignty had entered into danger as a result of the Arab uprisings that have deeply affected Middle East security and spread to Syria in 2011. This development paved the way for Russia to take a shaping role in regional security in the Middle East. This area of influence, which has been steadily increasing since 2011, sat on a floor with more practical and meaningful implications since Russia established new military bases in Syria in 2015 and increased its capacity in the existing military bases. From that date until today, Russia has followed a particular security policy increasingly more responsibility in the Iran-Syria-Turkey plane. (Walt,1987). Indispensable partner of Russia in the Middle East that Iran and Syria, and threatens the balance of interests can be claimed to be the focus of the public in Turkey and Egypt (Erenler,2013). In Line with this, When the defense agreements between Russia and Egypt since 2014 are examined; \$ 3.5 billion in 2014, \$ 2 billion in 2015, and then expanding to \$ 3 billion, reaching \$ 6-7 billion in defensive supply (Halit,2016). It should be underlined that while these figures are enough to show that there is a deepening security cooperation between Russia and Egypt, these treaties will turn into long-standing modernization, maintenance and training processes and functional ties that are difficult to break between countries (Buzan ,2003).

Arab Spring, like many states, has caught Russia in an unprepared way, but it has also placed a significant opportunity ahead of it. During the Cold War, Soviet foreign policy practitioners who practiced an effective foreign policy in the Middle East and benefited from the hostility of the region's states to Israel (and indirectly the United States), lost their former activity after the dissolution of 1990. The Arab Spring has come to the fore as an important event at this point. For some time, the internal turmoil in the states with intensive work with the Soviet Union, and even in the same leadership as the Libyan leader Gaddafi, has disturbed Russia. While the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt followed a cautious approach, a more active attitude was taken in Libya and Syria (Erşen, 2014). Especially the Syrian crisis is a crisis that Russia has been most active in the Arab Spring period and even after the Cold War, and that I am still here messages of Russia. To conclude, Russia follows proactive strategies in international organizations and international arena in order to indicate that it is becoming hegemonic country in the region.

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