

## **TURKISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS FROM THE COLD WAR TO 2002 AS THE BEGINNING OF CURRENT RELATIONS**

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### **Abstract**

*In this study, Turkish-Russian relations in the Cold War period and the Post-Cold War time till 2002 are discussed. Since 2002 is accepted as the beginning of current relations and a breakthrough year in relations, a separate analysis is required for the next period. It is seen that the relations between Türkiye and Russia were tense between the years 1945-1965, and then went through a soft period until the end of the Cold War period. It is clearly understood that Turkish-Russian relations gained a new dimension after the collapse of the USSR. Economic-commercial relations constituted the most important area of this period, in which competition also predominated. In the first part of this study, the historical development of Turkish-Soviet relations in the Cold War period is tried to be discussed. Economic and commercial relations assumed the locomotive role in the cooperation between the two countries, giving a different quality to the political, military and security issues and relations with third countries. In the second part, the new era for the affairs is analyzed and, in this regard, it should be noted that the leaders of the two countries have made great efforts since the beginning of the 1990s. In these years, many strategic projects were signed and implemented in the context of bilateral relations. It is obvious that the relations between the two countries reached a strategic dimension in areas such as economic-commercial and energy. It is also analyzed that the momentum gained in Turkish-Russian relations and the good level of relations also served regional stability and common interests. Finally, it may be assumed that the years examined by this paper is also a period that helped to create strong relations between two countries in the 21st century.*

**Keywords:** *Türkiye, USSR, Cold War, Russian Federation, Political History.*

## **SOĞUK SAVAŞ'TAN GÜNCEL İLİŞKİLERİN BAŞLANGICI OLARAK 2002 YILINA KADAR TÜRK-RUS İLİŞKİLERİ**

### **Öz**

*Bu çalışmada Soğuk Savaş ve sonrası dönemde 2002 yılına kadarki Türk-Rus ilişkileri ele alınmaktadır. 2002 yılı, güncel ilişkilerin başlangıcı ve ilişkilerde bir atılım yılı olarak kabul edildiğinden sonraki dönem için ayrı bir analiz gerekmektedir. 1945-1965 yılları arasında Türkiye ile Rusya arasındaki ilişkilerin gergin olduğu, ardından Soğuk Savaş döneminin sonuna kadar yumuşak bir dönem*

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geçirdiği görülmektedir. SSCB'nin dağılmasından sonra Türk-Rus ilişkilerinin yeni bir boyut kazandığı açıkça anlaşılmaktadır. Rekabetin de hâkim olduğu bu dönemin en önemli alanını ekonomik-ticari ilişkiler oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın birinci bölümünde Soğuk Savaş ve sonrası dönemde Türk-Sovyet ilişkilerinin tarihsel gelişimi ele alınmaya çalışılmıştır. Ekonomik ve ticari ilişkiler, iki ülke arasındaki işbirliğinde lokomotif rolü üstlenmiş, siyasi, askeri ve güvenlik konularına ve üçüncü ülkelerle ilişkilere farklı bir nitelik kazandırmıştır. İkinci bölümde ise ilişkilerde yeni dönem analiz edilmekte olup, bu konuda iki ülke liderlerinin 1990'lı yılların başından bu yana büyük çaba sarf ettiğini belirtmek gerekir. Bu yıllarda ikili ilişkiler bağlamında birçok stratejik projeye imza atılmış ve hayata geçirilmiştir. İki ülke ilişkilerinin ekonomik-ticari ve enerji gibi alanlarda stratejik bir boyuta ulaştığı aşikârdır. Türk-Rus ilişkilerinde kazanılan imenin ve iyi düzeydeki ilişkilerin bölgesel istikrara ve ortak çıkarlara da hizmet ettiği analiz edilmektedir. Son olarak bu yazının incelediği yılların aynı zamanda 21. yüzyılda iki ülke arasında güçlü ilişkilerin oluşmasına yardımcı olan bir dönem olduğu varsayılabilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye, SSCB, Soğuk Savaş, Rusya Federasyonu, Siyasi Tarih.

## Introduction

The Great States and Empires built by the Turks and Russians in the Eurasian geography have kept two different nations alive in the same political system and have had to establish positive or negative relations with each other. The two nations, usually faced and fought against each other, were sometimes able to form alliances against the common enemy.

It is seen that the policy of Tsarist Russia towards the Ottoman Empire underwent a dramatic change at the beginning of the twentieth century through participating in the plans to share the Ottoman Empire. While the World War-I brought with it defeat and then the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish National Struggle was added to the end of this destruction and formed the starting point of a new Turkish state. The end of the imperial period in Russia and the occurrence of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia coincides with the same period. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic in the post-Ottoman Anatolian lands, until 1940, a positive relationship graph is encountered between the two countries.

The period in which Turkish-Russian relations witnessed cooperation and good neighborly relations in political and economic fields; it is the period of time from the end of the First World War to the beginning of the Cold War. After October Revolution in 1917, the establishment of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in Russia, subsequent invasion of Anatolia, the start of the National Struggle in Türkiye and the establishment of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (GNAT) government are the fundamental historical events between the two countries for the beginning of the mutual relationship. During the National Struggle, the USSR supported Türkiye's war of independence against imperialism, and in return, the GNAT government made an effort to end its isolation in the international arena by improving its

relations with the USSR. After the proclamation of the republic in Türkiye in 1923, a Friendship Agreement was signed with the USSR in 1925 and Turkish-Russian relations progressed in this framework in the interwar period. At the same time, the USSR supported Türkiye's membership to the League of Nations (LoN) in 1932 and sole rulership of straits with Montreux Agreement in 1936 (De Luca, 1977, p. 503-512).

Turkish-Russian relations between 1920 and 1940 generally followed a positive course. Although there were developments that caused tensions from the signing of the Montreux Convention until the Second World War, these problems were not enough to disrupt the good relations between the two countries. It should also be noted here that some of the policies pursued by the Soviets before the Second World War, starting from the mid-1930s, caused Türkiye to keep its distance from the Soviet Union. In 1939, England and France tried to establish a peace bloc in response to the aggressive policies of Germany and Italy in Europe. Especially, the expansionist policies of Italy in the Mediterranean region disturbed Türkiye and caused it to be included in the peace bloc (Di Casola, 1997, p. 332-341).

At the beginning of the Cold War, the threat perception that emerged as a result of the USSR's demands for land and bases from Türkiye in return for the renewal of the Friendship Agreement signed in 1925, gradually moved Türkiye away from the USSR. And this situation pushed Türkiye to enter into an almost unconditional cooperation with the United States of America (USA) (Mark, 1997, p. 383-389).

This break in the Turkish-Russian relations with the beginning of the Cold War caused the relations between the two countries to progress with tides in the following period. This situation in the political sphere continued until the mid-1960s. In the economic field, the search for cooperation, which started especially at the end of the 1950s, accelerated from the second half of 1960s and lasted until the end of Cold War, so there was visible development in the economic relations between the two countries.

In the first part of this study, the historical development of Turkish-Soviet relations in the Cold War period is tried to be discussed. Economic and commercial relations assumed the locomotive role in the cooperation between the two countries, giving a different quality to the political, military and security issues and relations with third countries. In the second part, the new era for the affairs is analyzed and, in this regard, it should be noted that the leaders of the two countries have made great efforts since the beginning of the 1990s. In these years, many strategic projects were signed and implemented in the context of bilateral relations. It is obvious that the relations between the two countries reached a strategic dimension in areas such as economic-commercial and energy.

In this study, Turkish-Russian relations in the Cold War period and the Post-Cold War time till 2002 are discussed. Since 2002 is accepted as the beginning of current relations and a breakthrough year in relations, a separate

analysis is required for the next period. It is seen that the relations between Türkiye and Russia were tense between the years 1945-1965, and then went through a soft period until the end of the Cold War period. It is clearly understood that Turkish-Russian relations gained a new dimension after the collapse of the USSR. Economic-commercial relations constituted the most important area of this period, in which competition also predominated. Finally, it may be assumed that the years examined by this paper is also a period that helped to create strong relations between two countries in the 21st century.

In accordance with the approach of the paper, process tracing method is followed to emphasize the relation between common history of the two states and emerging issues as well as cooperations. Additionally, as a subfield, case-centric process tracing is selected to unravel the similarities and differences of the foreign policies of two states historically. The main research question of the study is whether the historical relations between two states have affected the current period from the scratch in a bad manner or the two leaders have found a way to develop a mutual understanding. As a hypothesis, although historical background of the relations has been always there, Türkiye and RF have been aware of the dynamic nature of the global power tendencies and this awareness will keep them in close relations which always create an environment to solve the issues between them. And finally, importance of the paper is depending on the same structure that emphasizes the historical realities as well as its repercussions on the years and relations. So, this perspective will help us to keep the events in mind while living in a positive atmosphere in terms of political and economic relations. That approach may create a result that historical relations of the states neither a thing that could be ignored in the current diplomacy nor a fundamental dimension to create an obstacle which may prevent possible win-win negotiation.

## **1. TÜRKİYE-SOVIET RELATIONS DURING COLD WAR PERIOD: TENSION (1945-1965) AND SOFTENING (1965-1991) PERIODS**

The Cold War, which emerged after the Second World War, created important political, economic, military, and socio-cultural effects in Türkiye as well as all over the world. The tension and rivalry between communist world (leader USSR) and the capitalist world (leader USA) forced Türkiye, which was able to maintain a relatively independent foreign policy in the interwar period (1918-1939) and had no choice but to choose one of the two poles. While the crisis that occurred between the allies of World War II after the withdrawal of fascist dictatorships from the world stage led to the emergence of a new system in the world, this period was also a period in which radical changes were experienced in Türkiye. Especially in the interwar period, the USSR's policy towards Türkiye, which was Türkiye's biggest ally and supporter in the international arena, was a factor pushing Türkiye to the capitalist Western alliance led by the USA, while the USA's new world order

started to be established. This role was also a factor that led to the development of American-Turkish relations and then Türkiye's voluntary entry into Western alliance. In other words, in addition to global developments, Türkiye's political, economic, and military interests and needs were the dynamics that shaped the country's domestic and foreign policy during Cold War (Merrill, 2006, p. 28-36).

After World War II, the aggressive policy of USSR under Joseph Stalin towards Türkiye led Turkish decision makers to seek a new direction for the protection of the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty. In return for the renewal of the Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression, which was signed in 1925 between USSR and Türkiye and renewed several times before, in 1945, the USSR requested land from Türkiye (Kars and Ardahan) and bases in the straits and sent a letter to the Moscow Ambassador Selim Sarper. This was a development that deeply affected Turkish-Soviet relations in the following period. This development should be considered on the fact that Türkiye joined the United Nations (UN) as a founding member in 1945 although it had not participated in the Second World War on the side of the allies. So, it was a shocking development for Türkiye, which felt lonely in this occasion, and in the following period Türkiye made an intense effort to get rid of this loneliness and join the Western alliance. Upon this development, the USA did not want to lose Türkiye, which had a critical role in the Middle East, to the USSR and started to follow a more active policy for Türkiye. The sending of the body of Ambassador Münir Ertegün, who lost his life in Washington, to Istanbul with the Missouri Battleship has been one of the developments that showed that the USA stood by Türkiye in the face of Soviet threats (Fisher, 1995, p. 130-134).

In the following period, the aid of the USA to Türkiye increased even more and the increasing American presence and influence in a neighboring country caused the reaction of the USSR. After the Missouri Incident, Türkiye was included in the Truman Doctrine, which was declared by the US President Harry S. Truman in 1947 and included financial aid to Türkiye and Greece, and as a result, 100 million dollars was donated to Türkiye by the USA. Similarly, Türkiye was included in the Marshall Aid, which was announced by US Secretary of State George Marshall a year after the Truman Doctrine, aimed at post-war economic development of Europe and making it a strong market for American goods. In the following years, by providing financial, economic, and military support to Türkiye within the scope of the US Marshall Aid, it tried to strengthen Türkiye's resistance against the USSR and to increase the American influence in Türkiye (Roberts, 2011, p. 60-69)

On the one hand, all these developments in the second half of the 1940s pushed Türkiye into the Western alliance, on the other hand, it caused the tension in Turkish-Soviet relations to peak. Türkiye's participation in the Western alliance further increased the threat perception in the USSR and the

two countries came face to face with many developments, especially in the 1950s.

The main development that strengthened Türkiye's relations with the Western alliance and deeply affected its relations with the USSR was Türkiye's membership in NATO. Since establishment of organization in 1949, Türkiye has applied for membership but was rejected. The biggest foreign policy goal of Turkish decision makers in this period was to make Türkiye a member of NATO as soon as possible and to take it under protection against the USSR. This process, which started during Republican People's Party period, continued during Democratic Party period, which came to power with the elections held on May 14, 1950, and Türkiye was accepted into NATO together with Greece in 1952 (Leffler, 1985, p. 807-25).

One of the most important reasons for Türkiye's acceptance into NATO was that United States discouraged Britain from stance against Türkiye's membership., and another was that Türkiye acted together with the Western alliance and especially the United States for the War in Korea that broke out in 1950. The Korean War, which started in the summer of 1950 when the USSR-supported North Korea crossed the thirty-eighth Parallel. And then North Korea attacked South Korea, supported by USA, continued for three years. Following the attack of North Korea, UN Secretary General Trygve Li called on the member states to support South Korea, and Türkiye, under the leadership of the Democratic Party, immediately accepted this call and sent a brigade of 4500 soldiers to Korea under the command of General Tahsin Yazıcı (Lippe, 2000, p. 92-102).

Türkiye's NATO membership disturbed the USSR even more after the death of Stalin in 1953, on the other hand the Soviet administrators, declared that they gave up their demands for lands and bases in the straits for Türkiye. Türkiye noted with satisfaction the statement of the USSR that it made no territorial claims against Türkiye. Türkiye declared the desire for continuation of good neighborly relations and the establishment of peace and security referred to in this statement fully corresponds to the desire that Türkiye has always fed and will continue to foster (Yaacov, 1974, p. 106–107).

Although mutual steps were taken to improve Turkish- Soviet relations after the death of Stalin, Türkiye's distrust of the USSR and its unconditional loyalty to the Western alliance and the USSR's discomfort with Türkiye's NATO membership were the most important obstacles to the development of relations. Although the USSR leader Khrushchev announced the principle of "Peaceful Coexistence" at the congress of Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1956 and tried to include Türkiye in this policy, both Türkiye's display of policies compatible with the Western alliance and the confrontation between the two countries as a result of the developments in the Middle East, prevented the development of Turkish-Russian relations in this period (Magnúsdóttir, 2006, p. 111-118).

After Türkiye became a member of NATO in 1952, the most important foreign policy goal of the Democrat Party (DP) government was to make Türkiye a strong actor in the Middle East acting together with the West. In this context, especially in the second half of the decade, with the developments in the Middle East Türkiye played more active role. However, this active policy implemented by Türkiye cannot be said successful. The most important reason for this was that Türkiye approached the region from the perspective of the West, especially with the US perspective, and failed to analyze the dynamics of the region. To put it more clearly, while Türkiye's Middle East policy was based on opposition to the USSR and communism, the main factors shaping the region were rising Arab nationalism, anti-Israel, and anti-Westernism in particular against England and France. As a result, Türkiye's Middle East policy, which put the USSR at its focal point, not only failed, but also made the relations between the two countries even more problematic. The strategy of the USSR to reach the warm seas by infiltrating the region, especially through Egypt and Syria, was one of the main factors that played a role in this development (Schoenberger and Reich, 1975, p. 7-16).

The first step of Türkiye's strategy to be a part of the developments in the Middle East in the 1950s was the Middle East Command Project, which was established in 1951-1952 but ended in failure. This project aimed to create a line of defense against the USSR and the spread of communism and especially the endangerment of the flow of Middle Eastern oil to the West by bringing Türkiye and Egypt together under the leadership of Britain. However, the establishment of an anti-Western and pro-Arab nationalist government after the Free Officers Coup in Egypt in this period, and Türkiye's main foreign policy target being NATO membership, so that the project failed to show much interest in this alliance (Onozawa, 2005, p. 120-129).

Although the Middle East Command Project was unsuccessful, the idea of an organization to be established against the spread of the USSR and communism in the region was met with the reaction of the USSR from the very beginning. After the Western states' offer of organization to Egypt, the USSR condemned and protested this proposal by giving a note to both Egypt and regional countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, and Saudi Arabia on 21-22 November 1951. Similarly, on November 24, 1951, it gave a note to the USA, England, France and Türkiye, stating that this project was a part of the aggressive policies of the Allies against the USSR. Continuing its anti-organizational policy in the next period, the USSR emphasized that this project could cause a new world war and that it would mean not only itself but also the "democracy of the peoples" to be surrounded. In response to this note, the Western allies and Türkiye each issued a reply note, stating that the Soviet claims did not reflect the truth and condemned the Soviet policies. As a result, the Middle East Command Project did not materialize, but the Western allies

and Türkiye continued their efforts and ensured the establishment of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 (Hahn, 1987, p. 26-33).

After the failure of the Middle East Command Project, the USA changed its strategy and Foreign Minister John Foster Dulles stated that the Northern Belt Project would be more successful if the member states in the region established an organization on their own initiative. In this context, diplomatic negotiations started between Türkiye and Iraq at the end of 1954 and the Baghdad Pact was signed in February 1955. First of all, Türkiye and Iraq joined the pact, and later on, England, Iran and Pakistan also joined. The Baghdad Pact continued to exist until the coup in Iraq in July 1958, but when the government established in Iraq after the coup withdrew from the pact, it continued to exist under the name of the Central Agreement Organization (CENTO), which was an ineffective organization (Gaddis, 1990, p. 52-66).

Like the Middle East Command Project, the Baghdad Pact was also under the observation of USSR since the very beginning. According to the USSR, the Baghdad Pact is a product of capitalist imperialism and poses a threat to the southern borders of the USSR through Türkiye and Iran. According to Bohlen, the US Ambassador in Moscow, the USSR was able to reach regions that it had never reached before, especially in the Middle East, during the Cold War, and the USSR needed countries that would cooperate with it rather than communist regimes in the region. The countries meant here are Egypt and Syria, which were not communists but anti-Western and Arab nationalist. The USSR provided economic and military support to these two countries and thus strengthened its presence in the region. The fact that Iran later joined the Baghdad Pact further increased the concerns of the USSR (Ruddy, 1986, p. 400-407).

The signing of the Baghdad Pact further increased the division and tension in the Middle East. While the struggle between the USA and the USSR accelerated on the one hand, the relations between countries such as Türkiye, Iran and Pakistan, which were members of the pact, and Syria and Egypt, which were against the pact, worsened after the establishment of the pact. One of the best examples of this division is the border tension between Türkiye and Syria in 1957. The increasing Soviet presence in Syria and the concern that Syria will turn into a communist state, which is a Soviet satellite, caused Türkiye to give a strong reaction against Syria. As a result, Türkiye conducted an exercise with the participation of many military forces in a region close to the Syrian border, and this event was met with a reaction by Syria. While Syria accused Türkiye of threatening its border security and territorial integrity, Türkiye also accused Syria of acting jointly with the USSR and serving communism. The autumn months of 1957 continued with mutual accusations and the involvement of the USSR and the USA. On September 10, 1957, the USSR Prime Minister Nikolai Bulganin sent a letter to the Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, accusing that Türkiye was planning to attack Syria with the support of the USA (Quainton, 2022, p. 64-72).



After this mutual correspondence, the USSR leader Khrushchev accused the US Secretary of State Dulles of inciting Türkiye against Syria in an interview he gave to the New York Times (Reston, 1957). Dulles denied this accusation at the press conference he held on October 16, 1957, and stated that the USA would come to Türkiye's aid if the USSR attacked Türkiye (US Office of the Historian, 1957)

Mutual accusations continued in the next period and the crisis between Türkiye and Syria turned into a show of strength between the two blocks. This crisis, which was brought to the UN General Assembly to be discussed by Syria, and the tension between the two countries ended in the following period. The Syrian Crisis is one of the most important developments showing the tension between Türkiye and the USSR. This tension decreased somewhat due to the efforts to develop economic relations between USSR and Türkiye, especially as a result of the crisis in Turkish economy at the end of the 1950s. Despite the tension and problems in political and military relations, with the effect of the economic crisis, the DP government made an effort to increase economic relations with the USSR, especially at the end of the 1950s, and this effort was also met by the USSR. As a result, Turkish- Soviet economic relations began to develop in this period, especially through swap agreements and credit supports. On the other hand, this situation was tried to be used as a trump card against the Western alliance and the USA, which was thought not to provide sufficient support by the DP. The USA also realized this situation and was uncomfortable with Türkiye's rapprochement with the USSR, even in the economic field. Turkish- Soviet economic relations have shown a greater development since the second half of the 1960s, when Türkiye began to question its relations with US and pursue more balanced policy between two superpowers, especially due to the softening in the Cold War and the Cuban Crisis and the Cyprus Problem (Reiman, 2016, p. 169-176).

Afterwards, the coup d'état took place on 27 May 1960 and the DP government was overthrown and replaced by the National Unity Committee (MBK) government, and after the 1961 elections, a coalition government was established under the prime minister of İsmet İnönü. In this case, developments in Türkiye's domestic and foreign policy played important role as well as impact of global varieties.

The most important developments that created tension in the relations between the two countries at the beginning of the 1960s were the U-2 Crisis in 1960 and the Cuban Crisis in 1962. Turkish- Soviet relations once again entered a tense period after a U-2 spy plane, which took off from Adana on 1960, was caught on the radars of USSR. The tension that emerged as a result of the USSR's attempt to place a nuclear missile in Cuba in response to the Jupiter missiles placed in Türkiye by the USA in the 1950s was replaced by the diplomatic traffic between the then US President J.F. Kennedy and the USSR leader N. Khrushchev. In order to withdraw the missiles sent to Cuba, it was requested that the Jupiter missiles in Türkiye be removed first, and this

decision was effective in solving the crisis. What should be emphasized for Türkiye in this crisis was that the USA took this decision without consulting Türkiye. The Cuban Missile Crisis was the first event that caused Turkish decision makers to question the US-oriented foreign policy (Ziegler, 2009, p. 105-106).

After the end of the Cuban Crisis that solved with the dismantling of Jupiter missiles, placed in Türkiye by the USA in the 1950s, relations entered a period of normalization and softening. Detent term between the USA and the USSR, which started after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and ended with the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR in 1979, was also another factor that affected Turkish foreign policy. (Marples, 2002, p. 227-229).

The development of Turkish-Russian relations, especially in the field of economy, was due to the threatening letter from US President Lyndon B. Johnson to Prime Minister İnönü before Cyprus intervention in 1964. As a result of this, decision makers in Türkiye started to seek a more balanced policy between the two superpowers by taking advantage of the softening between USSR and USA during the Cold War (CIA, 1964).

Another event that created a break in Turkish-American relations and had positive reflections on Turkish-Russian interests in the following period was the Cyprus Problem, which was the most important agenda item of Turkish foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s. Independent Republic of Cyprus, which was founded in 1960, was established as a state where Turks and Greeks lived together, with the presidency of Archbishop Makarios (leader of the Greek community on the island), and his deputy, Fazıl Küçük (the leader of Turkish community). The problems that arose between the two communities in the following period, and especially the Bloody Christmas event in December 1963, in which the Greeks' underground organization EOKA massacred the Turks on the island, required Türkiye to take a more active role in its position towards the island. In this context, the letter that went down in history as the Johnson Letter from US President L.Johnson to Turkish Prime Minister İnönü in 1964, when Türkiye was planning to intervene in the island by using its right of guarantor, caused the deterioration of Turkish-American relation. Additionally, previous Turkish- Soviet relations paved the way for further development compared to the previous period. The threatening letter from the President of the USA was influential in Türkiye's efforts to establish more balanced relations between the two superpowers, although it did not leave the NATO alliance in the following years. The most important point to be emphasized here is that the governments in Türkiye were trying to maintain this policy regardless of ideology (Harris, 1982, p. 127-134).

Türkiye's relations with USSR and USA resemble a pendulum, its relations with USSR declined while it had good affairs with the USA between 1945-1964, and vice versa after the middle of 1960s. As the USSR aimed to improve relations with Türkiye, Turkish- Soviet relations developed rapidly, especially after 1965. Despite all these developments, the possibility of a

Turkish state to be established in Cyprus to cooperate with NATO led the USSR to oppose Türkiye's active role in the Cyprus issue and to continue its political pressure on Türkiye.

During the softening process after 1965, the leader of the Justice Party (AP) and then prime minister Süleyman Demirel first visited the USSR in 1967, and President Cevdet Sunay followed him in 1969. The most important purpose of these visits was to improve the economic relations between the two countries. In the 1970s, the two countries faced each other again because of the Cyprus problem, and especially in 1974, Türkiye's operation on the island drew the reaction of the USSR. The USSR, which opposed Türkiye's being the only power on the island, signed a declaration for Türkiye to withdraw its soldiers from the island after the operation. In the period following the operation, after Greece left the military wing of NATO, a rapprochement occurred between the USSR and Greece and the USSR administration supported the activities against Türkiye. After the Cyprus operation, the embargo imposed by the USA on Türkiye between 1975-1978 caused the USSR to change its strategy again and to develop its relations with Türkiye (Cutler, 1985, p. 61-69).

After the military coup of September 12, 1980, Türkiye abandoned its policy of seeking balance between the two superpowers and reconstructed and implemented a foreign policy focused on the West and the USA. As a result, Turkish-Russian relations became distant again. Between 1980 and 1991, the most fundamental factor determining Turkish- Soviet political relations was the Arab-Israeli problem in the Middle East and the Iraq-Iran wars. This period, when the USA increased its influence in the region, the support of the USSR to the Baathist regimes caused problems in Turkish-Russian relations. In 1991, with the disintegration of USSR and end of the Cold War, although American-Russian rivalry continued in the region, Türkiye was in an effort to further develop its relations with the West (Magen, 2013, p. 32-38).

Although Türkiye entered into closer relations with the West in the 1980s, positive developments were seen in relations with the USSR from time to time. For example, during the UN General Assembly meeting held in New York in 1981, the foreign ministers of the two countries came together. In the following period, the USSR took more constructive steps against Türkiye. Black Sea Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) was determined between Türkiye and USSR in 1986 (UN, 2002, p. 1-2) and then USSR abandoned the international conference solution referring Cyprus although lastly it was reiterated by Gorbachev (Stergiou, 2007, p. 18-24).

Despite these tides in the political relations between the two countries between 1965 and 1991, it can be said that there was a more consistent development in economic relations. It is interpretable that the situation of the Turkish economy and the necessities of the country played a role in this development as well as the impact of global developments. The economic

relations that developed from the middle of the 1960s continued until end of Cold War period.

## **2. TÜRKIYE-RUSSIAN FEDERATION RELATIONS DURING POST COLD WAR PERIOD TILL 2002**

The USSR, established on December 30, 1922, by the merger of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic with Belarus, Ukraine, Central Asia and the Caucasus Republics, officially disappeared with the Belovezha Accords on December 8, 1991, after 70 years. Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia were the first to leave the union and declare their independence. Finally, on December 21, 1991, Ukraine left the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. USSR flag was lowered from the Kremlin on December 26, 1991, and tricolor flag representing the new Russian Federation (RF) was hoisted, and the USSR officially went out of existence (Filitov and Williams, 2011, p. 299-306).

The RF, which was accepted as the legal heir of this state with the collapse of the Soviet Union, has not wanted the views of Turkish world begin to be voiced that would be influential from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China. With the disintegration of the USSR, Russia's decrease in its military power in the South Caucasus and the withdrawal of some troops created a positive atmosphere in Türkiye. Again, Ankara is in favor of replacing the Soviet/Russian traces without any trouble, especially in the newly independent countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Prime Minister of the Republic of Türkiye at the time, Süleyman Demirel, during his official visit to the Central Asian Turkic Republics in 1992, underlined that it would be in the interest of newly independent countries to follow up the integration within the other relative countries and after that the “Turkish Summit” or “The Summit of Heads of Turkish-Speaking States” was held in Ankara on 30-31 October 1992 with six countries. (Turkic States, 2023).

After the collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s, the coldness in Turkish-Russian relations that marked the Cold War period left its place to soften. The main reason for this was that with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, RF had to deal with the difficult problems that occurred within itself. On the one hand, the effort to preserve its former unity as much as possible, and on the other hand, the ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus and Central Asia regions, inevitably draw the attention and energy of the new RF to its internal problems. In addition, Western-oriented reformers under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin, who came to power after Mikhail Gorbachev as the last leader of the USSR, generally strived to follow a policy closer to more democratic values. This approach brought more moderate attitude towards Türkiye and in this context, the Turkish-Russian Friendship, Good Neighborhood and Cooperation Agreement was signed between the two countries in 1992 (MFA, 2009).

When the Azerbaijani-Armenian war spread to Nakhchivan in May 1992, Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin warned against Armenia and

made statements that if Armenia did not stop its attacks, it would suffer the consequences of its activities. On the same day, the President of Türkiye, Turgut Özal, made a call to send troops to Nakhchivan and demanded that Shusha and Lâçin, which were occupied by the Armenians, be returned to Azerbaijan. The Tashkent Treaty necessitated a request for assistance from Russia in case the security of Armenia was threatened. Despite Türkiye's harsh stance, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Forces Commander Yevgeny Shaposhnikov warned on 20 May that a "Third World War" could break out in case of Türkiye's possible intervention. During these times when Turkish-Russian relations were extremely strained, Prime Minister of the Republic of Türkiye Süleyman Demirel paid a 2-day visit to Russia. The crisis is ended before it grows (Olcott, 1993, p. 314-319).

Towards the middle of the 1990s, with the strengthening of the group known as "New Eurasianists", Russia's interest in the West decreased and it focused on the Caucasus and South Asian regions with all its possibilities. In this context, the "Near Environment" doctrine, published on April 23, 1993, left its mark on Russian foreign policy. This development is taken one step further with the Military Doctrine published in November of the same year (Kerr, 1995, p. 977-988).

Russia intervened in these conflicts by using the ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus and South Asia as an excuse in order to realize the Near Abroad doctrine, and even secretly encouraged some new conflicts. Within the scope of this doctrine, starting from 1993, Russian soldiers entered various regions, primarily Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. These developments disturbed Türkiye, which has ethnic and religious ties in the Caucasus. However, not having a direct border with Russia after the collapse of the USSR, Türkiye became indirectly "bordered" with Russia again thanks to the Russian military forces placed in the Caucasus region. This was not a situation that Türkiye will be satisfied with in terms of security (Matsaberidze, 2015, p. 77-86).

As can be seen, Turkish-Russian relations mutually followed a fluctuating course in this period. On the one hand, various events concerning both countries took place in these regions, on the other hand, high-level mutual visits were realized between the two countries in these years. For example, President of the RF Boris Yeltsin came to Istanbul for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation meeting held on 25.06.1992. In September 1993, a Turkish delegation headed by then-Prime Minister Tansu Çiller visited Russia. During the said visit, the contract envisaging the establishment of Turkish-Russian Joint Working Groups in the fields of high technology, industry, energy, and logistics was signed. Again in 1996-1997, high-level visits were made from Türkiye to Russia at the level of the President, the Speaker of the Parliament and the Deputy Prime Minister. In 1997, then-Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomirdin visited Türkiye, and in 1999, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit made an official visit to Moscow. During this visit, the leaders discussed the important issue of terrorism between the two countries and signed a joint

agreement to cooperate against terrorism. In this period, the Chechnya problem in Russia and the PKK problem in Türkiye were the issues that disturbed both countries. These two issues were agreed to be discussed and mutually reassured (Larrabee and Lesser, 2003, p. 106-117).

Between the years 1995-2000, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline project and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), especially the PKK, Chechnya, Abkhazia and S-300 problems, had an important place in Russian-Turkish relations.

The idea of the Russians to sell the S-300 air defense system to the Greek Cypriot Administration in 1997 and the decision of Southern Cyprus to purchase these missiles in 1998 caused great discomfort in Ankara. Türkiye showed its reaction to Russia's missile sale to the Greek part by announcing that it would take every precaution to prevent the passage of this missile system through the Straits. In addition, the event that Türkiye voiced the possible integration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) to Türkiye, was influential in Greek Cypriot's decision to abandon the deployment of missiles on the island in 1998. The S-300 defense missile system, which could not be sent to South Cyprus in line with Türkiye's determined objections, was deployed in Crete with the intervention of the USA later on (Lesser, 2000, p. 184-192).

In these years, the BTC oil pipeline issue also constituted an important agenda in the relations between the two countries. This project was an alternative line that carries Caspian Sea energy resources to Western markets via the Mediterranean. Russia opposed this project because it wants to be the only country in the region to have a say in the field of energy. However, it couldn't prevent the project from being accepted. It can be said that the route of the oil and gas pipelines in these years was a reflection of the intertwining of Turkish-Russian relations with global policies and mutual distrust. The ups and downs between the two countries in this regard, the transformation of natural gas into the main energy source for Türkiye and the emergence of Russia as the main reliable partner to provide this source, finally the competition between the two countries gave the way to cooperation and a balance in relations (Iqbal and Shah, 2015, p. 71-79).

Another problematic issue in Turkish-Russian relations in the mentioned years was that Türkiye adopted a draft regulation in 1993 regarding the redefinition of the right of free passage in order to ensure the security of Istanbul and to regulate the passage of ships through the Turkish Straits. The Turkish Straits and Marmara Sea Regulations came into force in 1994 and the objections of the Russians on this issue were officially conveyed to Ankara as of April 1994. Despite the negativities that the Russians think for themselves in the statute, the relevant articles of the statute remain valid until 1998. The said regulation is published with the name Maritime Traffic Regulations for Turkish Straits on November 6, 1998, with some stretches introduced. This regulation provides more flexibility and more freedom of transition compared

to the old one. With this arrangement, it is seen that the objections of Russia and other Black Sea littoral states have decreased significantly (Turkish Straits, 1998).

Yet another important problem in Turkish-Russian relations after the Cold War period arose as a result of Russia's non-compliance with the limitations envisaged by the CFE. Citing the Russian-Chechen war that started at the end of 1995, the RF declared that it wouldn't comply with the provisions of the CFE. This step of Russia was discussed at the CFE meeting in 1996 and CFE limits were increased in some regions of the Caucasus in line with the proposal of the Russians. However, RF was not satisfied with this and demands the abolition of all limits in the Caucasus region at the beginning of 1998. Despite Türkiye's objection, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) accepted system of territorial limits put forward by Russia. Thus, while Russia was making Western countries accept its demands, a security problem that closely concerned Türkiye would arise. As a result, RF's increase in the number of soldiers on Türkiye's northeastern borders disturbed Türkiye. This security concern experienced by Türkiye for some time and continued until the end of Chechnya war in Russian-Turkish relations (Moroney et al., 2007, p. 227-234).

On other hand, it is seen that there was a gradual improvement in the commercial-economic relations between Türkiye and RF. For example, the commercial relations between the two countries, which started with the luggage trade in the early 1990s, developed rapidly and increased 7 times in terms of trade volume in the 2000s (Trading Economics, 2023).

As a result, with the end of Cold War period and disintegration of USSR, the competitive environment between Türkiye and the RF and the conflicts that this rivalry sometimes caused, it is seen that the foundation of the structure that led to the emergence of multidimensional partnership. As a matter of fact, Turkish-Russian relations gained a different dimension at the beginning of the 21st century through the understanding of bilateral cooperation.

The fact that Turkish-Russian relations were mostly formalized and started to walk in a healthy way coincided with the period when Putin came to the head of Russia in 2000. Especially starting from 2000, new cooperation opportunities and perspectives have emerged between the two countries in the new century. Because Turkish-Russian relations have entered a new era with the beginning of the 21st century, especially with the close dialogue established between the leaderships of the two countries (Erdogan-Putin). This is a turning point in Turkish-Russian relations and if we look at this relation since the early 2000s, we come across many points. We can express these years as the period when both countries have sought to increase their relations in the field of security with the experiences they gained from the recent past. In general, since the beginning of the 2000s, it is seen that the field of bilateral relations has expanded, political and diplomatic relations have

increased, social relations have become widespread, and friendship and trust between countries have been tried to be mutually strengthened. It is noted that in these years, both states have made good use of the opportunities they had. The determination of the administrations of both countries have been important for the development of bilateral relations (Walker, 2005, p. 14-18).

With the coming to power of Justice and Development Party in Türkiye, while Putin have got the roles of Prime Minister and President of Russia in 1999 and 2000 relatively, it is witnessed that the relations between Türkiye and Russia have gained momentum. The first move to improve relations between Russia and Türkiye have begun with the Action Plan Between the Republic of Türkiye and the Russian Federation on Cooperation in Eurasia approved by the senior decision makers of the two countries in 2001. The action plan in question forms the basis of cooperation and mutual benefits between the two countries in the coming years (Press Briefing of Turkish President, 2004).

In this period, the political and diplomatic relations between the two countries have been shaped by the events in the Black Sea, the Balkans, the Mediterranean region, the South Caucasus, Turkestan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Middle East, and Cyprus. In addition to these, it has been also important to address and develop issues related to the fight against terrorism, trade, energy, logistics and ecology in bilateral relations in the process. Furthermore, increase in diplomacy and political relations, the diversification and strengthening of cooperation and relations in the fields of economy, trade, tourism, energy, and regional security have created an increasing depth in the relations between the two countries. The events taking place in the said regions that shape the relations between the two countries have been also parallel to the agendas in the world. Again, the fact that the two countries have come together from time to time to find solutions to the agendas in this region and have taken various joint steps that changed the course of some agendas. On the other hand, this cooperation has revealed that what can change even if it disturbs some powers in the world with the two countries acting together.

The event of September 11, 2001, affected the course of many events in the world, including Turkish-Russian relations. Immediately after the events of September 11, the US administration announced that drastic measures would be taken against terrorism and radical groups in the world and asked the countries of the world to stand by it. The effect of hitting the USA for the first time in its own borders with conventional means created a situation that legitimizes the USA as the leader of the fight against terrorism at the world level. As a result of this determination, some countries openly declare that they will side with the USA, while others remain silent. This US-led policy caused organizations and groups that are considered radical to become more radical in certain regions. For example, the new administration of RF took a stake in these policies and decided to increase its pressure on Chechnya, and Russian military units enter Grozny (Malek, 2009, p. 90-97).



Although issues between the two states have always been a part of promising steps, the discourses have changed either with the coming to power of Putin in Russia and Erdoğan in Türkiye in this period. In relations, it has begun to be thought that the Western identity is not the only option and there is no obligation to choose an identity, finally both states should focus on the Eastern identity as an alternative.

## **Conclusion**

With the end of World War II, a process called the Cold War took place in the new world order, which was divided into two poles as NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In this process, tensions were experienced from time to time in relations, sometimes directly due to the NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict. The military bases established in different regions of Türkiye and the military exercises carried out within the scope of NATO that led to the reaction of the Soviets. The USSR reported its disturbances in notes given on different dates.

In the shaping of the new era, the World War II played a decisive role. In the Cold War era, Turkish-Soviet relations were also dragged into a tense course. For example, the first serious crisis in this relation was the Soviet demand on the straits that and further disagreements between the two countries on the issue. As it can be understood from the notes given mutually by the two countries, this persistent approach of the USSR on the straits showed that it still maintained its past stance.

The years between 1950 and 1960 are known as an important turning point in the international arena. It is seen that the Cold War turned into a settled structure and the struggle between the poles, which started to consolidate, was the scene of intense competition by being carried out within certain borders. These years also can be defined as years of change and transformation in domestic and foreign policy for Türkiye and USSR.

By the 1970s, the optimistic atmosphere in Turkish-Soviet relations began to end and the warmth in relations left its place to a period of tension and coldness. The main reason for the deterioration of Turkish-Soviet relations in the 1970s was the reaction of the USSR to the Cyprus peace operation carried out by Türkiye in 1974 and the desire of the Turkish Armed Forces to leave Cyprus with August 1974 Declaration. The fact that Turkish soldiers took control of one-third of the island was naturally not something the USSR would like.

In the new process that developed between the two countries since the early 1980s, bringing economic tools to the fore in bilateral relations contributed to minimizing the size of the problems that were mostly concentrated in political fields. With the policy of Glasnost and Perestroika (Openness and Restructuring), which started and developed in the mid-1980s, the relations between the two states moved to a new dimension. With the disintegration of USSR and the end of Cold War, Turkish-Russian relations

evolved in a very different direction and in this period, economic and commercial relations between the two countries were crucial and became a balancing factor in mutual relations.

But the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the last quarter of the century also marked the beginning of the deterioration of the bipolar world order. The mentioned beginning also marked a new era in terms of Turkish-Russian relations.

The new Turkic Republics that left the Soviet administration in the 1990s and the rapprochement between these republics and Türkiye took the place in history as the most prominent events. The attitude of the RF in the relations between Türkiye and Central Asia Turkic Republics (Turkestan) was a sign of a softening policy. One of the events that created tension in the political relations of this period was the policy followed by the RF in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and the other was the Chechen Problem.

As a result, we can state that the end of Cold War period, disintegration of USSR, competitive environment between Türkiye and the RF and the conflicts that this rivalry has caused from time to time, have led to the emergence of multidimensional partnership. The understanding of bilateral cooperation in Turkish-Russian relations since the early 2000s provided the foundation for the building of strategic partnership nowadays.

It is seen that one of the important developments in the Eurasian geography since 2000 was the developments in Turkish-Russian relations. The arrival of Putin as the President of RF and election of Erdoğan as the Prime Minister of Türkiye opened a new page in the relations between Russia and Türkiye. It would not be wrong to say that the policy of moving from competition to “strategic partnership” in the Eurasian geography is the distinctive feature of this period.

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