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CONTEMPORARY TURKISH - RUSSIAN RELATIONS *FROM PAST TO FUTURE*

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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 an intertwinement of a large number of sensitive issues and difficult compromise solutions.

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

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

The 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 strategic importance.

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

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

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