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A REALIST REASSESSMENT OF TURKISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS, 2002-2012: FROM THE PEAK TO THE DIP?

Author:

Şener Aktürk

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Şener Aktürk is an Assistant Professor in the Department of International Relations at Koç University, and Foreign Policy Expert at the Caspian Strategy Institute. He received both his B.A. in Political Science and his M.A. from the Committee on International Relations from the University of Chicago. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley. In 2009-2010, he was a post-doctoral fellow in the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, and a visiting lecturer in the Department of Government, both at Harvard University. His book, Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey was published by Cambridge University Press in 2013. He has published more than thirty academic articles, including in World Politics, Post-Soviet Affairs, European Journal of Sociology, Middle Eastern Studies, Uluslararası İlişkiler, Nationalities Papers, Theoria, Ab Imperio, Insight Turkey, Doğu Batı, Turkish Studies, JAGNES, Central Eurasian Studies Review, ISEES Newsletter, Journal of Academic Studies, and Hemispheres. He has also published book chapters for nine edited books in English, Turkish, and Russian, in addition to articles in three encyclopedias, and numerous op-eds in Turkish and English for Radikal, Zaman, Sabah, Taraf, Yeni Şafak, Star, Today's Zaman, and Hurriyet Daily News. He was the recipient of several prizes and awards including, 2011 Baki Komsuoğlu Social Sciences Encouragement Award, 2010 Sakıp Sabancı International Research Award, 2009 Teaching Effectiveness Award, and 2006 Peter Odegard Memorial Award.

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Author:

Şener Aktürk

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Mailing Address:

Veko Giz Plaza, Maslak Meydan Sok., No:3 Kat:4
Daire:11-12 Maslak, 34298 Şişli-İstanbul-TÜRKİYE

Phone:

+90 212 999 66 00

Fax:

+90 212 999 66 01



REPORT

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A REALIST REASSESSMENT OF TURKISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS, 2002-2012: FROM THE PEAK TO THE DIP?

Russia remains the most important, and arguably the only, great power in Turkey's immediate neighborhood. Therefore, the determinants of peace and conflict between Russia and Turkey deserve our utmost attention.

The state of Turkish-Russian relations will be a key factor—if not the decisive factor—in determining whether Turkey will continue to grow in a peaceful environment or whether Turkey's future prospects will be mired in direct or proxy conflict with Russia.

In 2002, the Secretary General of Turkish National Security Council, General Tuncer Kılınç, proposed to form an alliance between Turkey, Russia, and Iran, against the members of the European Union, but without disregarding the interests of the United States.¹ Especially following Turkey's refusal to allow U.S. troop deployments in Turkey in preparation for the invasion of Iraq in 2003, even several prominent American policy analysts pointed out to an emerging Turkish-Russian axis based on their exclusion from and opposition to multiple facets of the American grand strategy.² Apart from foreign policy, in domestic politics and also in the media, there was an unprecedented rise of Turco-Russian "Eurasianism,"³ described by some as the original and current geopolitical vision of Kemalism, Turkey's founding ideology.⁴ Even at the official level, Turkish-Russian relations were already described as a "strategic partnership." Ten years later, in 2012, Turkey and Russia found themselves on different sides of the Syrian civil war.

The goal of this paper is to analyze the relative deterioration of Turkish-Russian relations in its second decade after the end of the Cold War. Especially the second half of this decade corresponding to the 2008-2012 period witnessed a number of latent and active conflicts bordering on proxy war between Russia and Turkey, the most obvious and notable of which has been the ongoing civil war in Syria that started in March 2011.⁵

What are the underlying causes of the negative changes in Turkish-Russian relations, manifest in increasing proxy conflicts in the Caucasus and the Middle East? In order to answer this question, this paper first reviews some of the key principles of post-Soviet Russian and Turkish foreign policy, accompanied by a brief chronology of key events that took place in Turkish-Russian relations in the last ten years, followed by an analysis of the relative changes in the general economic, demographic, and military foundations of Russian and Turkish power, as well as the changes in trade volume, bilateral institutionalization, domestic politics, democratization, and mutual perceptions, to test whether these factors influence or determine the nature of Turkish Russian relations over time.

1 March 9, 2002, all major Turkish newspapers including *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, and *Yeni Şafak*.

2 Hill, Fiona, and Omer Taspınar. "Turkey and Russia: axis of the excluded?." *Survival* 48, no. 1 (2006): 81-92.

3 Aktürk, Şener. "Counter-hegemonic visions and reconciliation through the past: the case of Turkish Eurasianism.", *Ab Imperio* 4 (2004): 207-238.

4 Akcalı, Emel, and Mehmet Perincek. "Kemalist Eurasianism: An Emerging Geopolitical Discourse in Turkey." *Geopolitics* 14, no. 3 (2009): 550-569.

5 Ellen Barry and Rick Gladstone, "Turkish Premier Says Russian Munitions Were Found on Syrian Jet," *New York Times*, October 11, 2012.

Great Eurasian Puzzle: Turkish and Russian Grand Strategy after the Cold War

The greatest puzzle of geopolitics in central Eurasia since the collapse of the Soviet Union is the grand strategy that post-Soviet Russia will follow and the bilateral alliances that it will pursue as a consequence of this grand strategy. *I define central Eurasia as the entire European and Asian landmass to the east of German-Austrian-Italian border in Europe and to the west of China and India. Measured in terms of GDP, Russia and Turkey have the two largest economies in central Eurasia as of 2012, and therefore the greatest latent military-economic power, from a Neorealist point of view.*⁶ *Therefore, the relationship between Russia and Turkey is a key component of the great central Eurasian puzzle: Will post-Soviet Russia pursue a grand strategy that antagonizes Turkey as in the Cold War and the previous three centuries, or will it pursue a different, new grand strategy that seeks to enlist Turkey as a strategic and military ally? Will post-Cold War Russian grand strategy be “more of the same” Cold War paradigm?*

Twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we are in a somewhat better position to answer these questions and assess the post-Soviet Russian grand strategy. Although we can ascertain certain principles of post-Soviet Russian grand strategy as the following paper will demonstrate, we are still far from definitively answering the question at the heart of the great Eurasian puzzle in terms of Turkish-Russian relations. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that the great Eurasian puzzle remains unresolved even twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but the outlines of a tentative answer have emerged, as detailed below.

Back to the Future: Did Russia revert back to the Cold War Alliance Structure?

As Roland Dannreuther states, “[t]here is a tendency to view diplomatic moves by Russia in the Middle East, particularly when supportive of revisionist anti-Western forces in the region, such as Iran, Syria, *Hamas* or *Hizbullah*, as evidence of a return to the zero-sum competition of the Cold War.”⁸ Indeed, when one takes note of the close relationship between Russia and Iraq until the fall of Saddam Hussein and the continuing close relationship with the Assad regime in Syria, as well as the close relationship between Russia and the Greek government of Cyprus; one is inclined to think that Russia still operates through the friend-enemy categories left over from the Cold War.

However, it is clear that the Cold War paradigm is incapable of explaining, for example, Russia’s increasing economic and political relationships with erstwhile pro-American states of Turkey, Israel, and Saudi Arabia.⁹ More importantly, such a Cold War paradigm cannot explain the variation in post-Soviet Russia’s relations with the other fourteen post-Soviet republics, all of which together with Russia formed the Soviet Union. For exam-

6 *CIA Factbook’s* 2011 estimate for the Russian GDP was \$1.821 trillion and the Turkish GDP was \$761.9 billion at the official exchange rate. The reason I use official exchange rate but not purchasing power parity is because for the basket of military goods that matters most from a Realist point of view, there is a global market with the cost of key military supplies fixed in U.S. dollars. In other words, the price of an F-16 fighter jet is not going to be adjusted according to the cost of living in Cameroon, Cambodia, Ireland, or Qatar. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>> and <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>>. Last accessed December 1, 2012.

7 Dannreuther, Roland. “Russia and the Middle East: A Cold War Paradigm?” *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 3 (2012): 543-560.

8 *Ibid.*, p.543. Here Dannreuther refers to several works as being representative of this tendency, including, Stephen Blank, “Russia and the Middle East: Policies and Contexts,” Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies Research Center, Middle East Series, June 2006, 06/27; and, Ariel Cohen, “Putin’s Middle East Visit: Russia is Back,” Washington, DC, Heritage Foundation, Heritage Web-Memo 1382, March 5, 2007.

9 Dannreuther, “Russia and the Middle East.”

ple, what would the Cold War paradigm predict about Russian-Kazakh, Russian-Moldovan, or Russian-Turkmen relations? On the basis of which Cold War parameter can one explain the terrible relations between Russia and Georgia compared to the extremely positive relations between Russia and Belarus? Or *what Cold War imperative led Russia to resolutely support one former Soviet state, Armenia, against another former Soviet state, Azerbaijan, in the war over Nagorno-Karabagh?* At the very least, one needs to develop explanatory frameworks that go beyond the legacies of the Cold War in approaching Russia's relations with the other post-Soviet states.

Finally, Cold War paradigm cannot possibly function well in the absence of an internationalized domestic ideology on the basis of which all Soviet interventions around the world were legitimized throughout the Cold War. Soviet Union was self-identified and was identified by others in the international system as the protector of Communism around the world. This attitude was most crystallized under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev in the period of so-called "Mature Socialism," and was formalized as the famous "Brezhnev Doctrine."¹⁰ However, post-Soviet Russia has no ideology or regime type that it seeks to promote and preserve around the world. In contrast, post-Soviet Russian foreign policy is emphatically non-ideological, thoroughly pragmatic and flexible, and ultimately in favor of non-intervention in domestic affairs of other countries, whether these affairs concern ideological, ethnic, religious or other differences.¹¹

What Do States Want? Neorealism, Principles of Foreign Policy, and the Origins of Alliances

The current work, as its title indicates, takes a Realist, or more accurately, a Neorealist approach to Russian-Turkish relations. Not only that the behavior of the states in the international system is mostly parallel to the expectations of the Realist theory of international relations, but also I further believe that the culture of foreign policy making in both Russia and Turkey are more in tune with the Realist approach than its alternatives, which will be discussed further below.

How can one study the foreign policy behavior of states from a Neorealist standpoint? What do states want according to Neorealism? According to John Mearsheimer, the leading scholar of Neorealism, "there are no status quo powers in the international system" and "great powers are primed for offense."¹² There are three fundamental features of the international system which leads all states to fear each other and strive to maximize their chances of survival: "1) the absence of a central authority that sits above states and can protect them from each other, 2) the fact that states always have some offensive military capability, 3) the fact that states can never be certain about other states' intentions."¹³

As a result of these features of the international system, "the best guarantee of survival is to be a hegemon, because no other state can seriously threaten such a mighty power."¹⁴ Since global hegemony is an unrealistic goal for any great power in the world due to

¹⁰ McAuley, Mary. *Soviet Politics 1917-1991*. Oxford University Press, 1992.

¹¹ Dannreuther, "Russia and the Middle East," but also Andrei P. Tsygankov, "Russia's foreign policy: change and continuity in national identity," in Stephen K. Wegren and Dale R. Herspring (eds.), *After Putin's Russia*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

¹² Mearsheimer, John J. *The tragedy of great power politics*. WW Norton & Company, 2001, p.2-3.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.3.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.3.

the difficulty of projecting power across oceans and seas, the best that the states can aspire for is regional hegemony, such that there is no military power in the regional landmass they are located in that can threaten their survival.¹⁵

The definition of a “region” is somewhat ambiguous in this context. For example, one encounters depictions of regions as small as the “Middle East”, “East Asia”, “Western Europe,” but also sometimes much larger territories such as the entire “Western Hemisphere” and “Eurasia” are described as regions. Theoretically, any landmass mostly circumscribed by the seas, such as a large peninsula or definitely an isthmus, can be described as a region. In that regard, for example, Africa to the east of the Suez Canal or America south of the Panama Canal can definitely be described as regions. But also potentially impenetrable mountain ranges and rivers may create a geographically definite region and in this regard perhaps the Himalayas and the Indus River may be said to delimit the Indian subcontinent as a separate region. More pertinent to our subject matter in this paper, Turkey and Russia may be said to both inhabit the same Eurasian region. But on the other hand, the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea are significant geographical barriers which, if not violated, can serve to locate Turkey and Russia in separate but adjacent regions. According to this logic, if Russia remains in the north of the Caucasus and the Black Sea, it needs not compete for regional hegemony with Turkey.

The attitude of fearful states in the face of the great powers is the key question and the ultimate determinant of alliances. In the past, some scholars, including even some Realists, thought that in addition to “balancing” against great powers by forming alliances, fearful states can also pursue “bandwagoning” or “appeasement” vis-à-vis great powers.¹⁶ According to Neorealists such as Mearsheimer, however, fearful states only have two alternatives against the great power(s) they fear: They can either form a balancing coalition against a great power or they can use the strategy of “buck-passing” by trying “to get another great power to check the aggressor while they remain on the sidelines.”¹⁷ States invariably prefer buck-passing to balancing, because in that way they do not have to absorb the costs of balancing, but in any case, they do not bandwagon or appease the great power they fear, because doing any of these latter two would strengthen the very great power that they fear.¹⁸

In a landmark refinement of Realist theory, by using examples from the 20th century Middle Eastern politics, Stephen Walt argued that the states do not simply balance against the greatest power but they balance against what they perceive to be the greatest threat in their region.¹⁹ Therefore, although it is essential for any Realist analysis to start with a review of the underlying fundamentals of power politics, such as the comparative GDP, population, GDP per capita, and military power of different states within a given region, it is also important to try to ascertain which of the great powers is perceived as the greatest threat to the territorial integrity and survival of any given state, in order to predict and analyze the geopolitical behavior of states. These Realist premises and theoretical refinements will guide the following overview and analysis of Turkish-Russian relations in the second decade after the Cold War.

15 See John Mearsheimer, “Realism and the Rise of China,” public lecture, Koc University, Istanbul, Turkey, October 2, 2012. Available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2e4OyNV8L8>>. Accessed December 1, 2012.

16 Waltz, Kenneth Neal. *Theory of international politics*. Vol. 5. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979; Powell, Robert. *In the shadow of power: States and strategies in international politics*. Princeton University Press, 1999.

17 Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p.139.

18 *Ibid*, pp.138-167.

19 Walt, Stephen M. *The origins of alliances*. Cornell University Press, 1987.

Principles of Russian Foreign Policy and Turkey

There have been many attempts to model and conceptualize post-Soviet Russian foreign policy. Some of these attempts sought to summarize Russian foreign policy in general,²⁰ while some attempts have also been made with a specific emphasis on Russia's relationship with Middle Eastern states,²¹ to which this study also pertains. Based on two decades of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy, we can detect at least seven different principles, both general and specific, which have been rather consistent over time.

First of all, ***Russia is seeking to preserve a sphere of influence and a privileged position in the former Soviet states of Central Asia, Caucasus, and the Black Sea region.*** Russia has had to accept the fact that it has lost its decisive influence over the former Soviet satellite states such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, as well as the three post-Soviet Baltic states, namely, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. In contrast, Russia has decisive political and economic influence over Belarus, and almost decisive influence over Armenia. Ukraine, on the other hand, is a more complicated case where the pro-Russian and anti-Russian forces have almost equal power in domestic politics and public opinion, but lately the pro-Russian forces have been ascendant with effective control over the executive and the legislature. As a result, for example, Russia has been successful in extending its use of the Sevastopol naval base.

In Georgia, Russia politically, economically, and militarily supports and diplomatically recognizes the two breakaway republics from Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, a stance that places Russia at the very center of Georgian domestic politics. Similarly, in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russia supported Armenian invasion of one-fifth of Azerbaijan's territory including but not limited to the region of Nagorno Karabagh, and hence Russia played and continues to play an active role in denying the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. As such, Russia occupies a central position in the conflicts of Azerbaijani domestic politics as well. In Moldova, Russia's military and political support keeps the breakaway Transnistrian republic alive, allowing Moscow to maintain an effective veto over the territorial integrity of Moldova.

In Tajikistan, Russian military intervention assured the victory of formerly Communist *nomenklatura* elite in the Tajik Civil War (1992-1996) against a coalition of Tajik liberals, democrats, nationalists, and Islamic conservatives, united in their support for Davlat Khudonazarov in the presidential elections on November 1991, where Khudonazarov received 35% of the vote against the candidate of the *nomenklatura*, Rahmon Nabiyev. Thus, Russia played a central role in determining the result of the Tajik Civil War and shaping Tajik domestic politics as well. Since 2003, Russia maintains a military base in Kyrgyzstan, and according to a new agreement the two countries signed in September 2012, "Russia will maintain a joint military base in Kyrgyzstan for 15 years starting from 2017."²² In Central Asia, only Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the two states with uninterrupted continuity in their Soviet era *nomenklatura* leadership and no record of free and fair elections, remained somewhat isolated from heavy Russian interference in their domestic affairs.

20 Tsygankov, Andrei P. "Russia's foreign policy: change and continuity in national identity," in Stephen K. Wegren and Dale R. Herspring (eds.), *After Putin's Russia*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2010, pp.223-242.

21 Dannreuther, Roland. "Russia and the Middle East: A Cold War Paradigm?," *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 3 (2012): 543-560.

22 "Russia, Kyrgyzstan seal military base agreement," *RT* (formerly known as *Russia Today*), September 20, 2012, <<http://rt.com/politics/common-help-operation-afghanistan-545/>>. Accessed December 4, 2012.

“The Collective Security Treaty Organization was formed in 1992 and consists of Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan with Uzbekistan now due to depart.”²³ Russia has a significant military-political leverage in influencing domestic political outcomes and it has even near decisive power over question of territorial integrity of several post-Soviet states, including Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Russia did not openly threaten the territorial integrity of Ukraine, but it has a significant influence over the future of Russian-speaking Eastern Ukraine and particularly the ethnic Russian-majority and heavily culturally Russified Crimean autonomous region, which is part of Ukraine.²⁴

Apart from the ethnically autonomous breakaway republics, there are also more specific military-strategic territories directly under Russian control. There are two very good examples of this type: First is the Russian naval base in Sevastopol, Crimea, Ukraine. The second is the Baykonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. These are officially “leased” to the Russian Federation by Ukraine and Kazakhstan, but in fact, they have never been under the effective control of Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

Second principle of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy has been the consistent opposition to the expansion of NATO, which Russia sees as an anti-Soviet, anti-Communist organization that should have been defunct with the collapse of the Soviet Union. From the Russian perspective, continuation of NATO implies an anti-Russian attitude persisting among NATO member states even after the Cold War.²⁵ Let us note here that most leading American Realist scholars also saw NATO expansion as a major strategic blunder with many unnecessary geopolitical costs for the United States and urged the U.S. government *not* to expand NATO.²⁶

Third, Russia has been consistently against the missile defense shield that the United States and NATO sought to place in Eastern Europe. Especially during the tenure of President George W. Bush, the United States advocated placing a missile defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, both former Communist states under the political and military control of the former Soviet Union. Russia perceived the plans for the placement of missile defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic directly as a hostile advance by NATO under the leadership of the United States into the formerly Russian sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. United States argued that the missile shield was against Iran, and not against Russia. However, the placement of the missile shield in Poland and in the Czech Republic, significantly far away from Iran, fed understandable suspicions on the Russian side that the missile was really against Russia. In order to test the honesty of the U.S. effort to protect Europe from Iranian missiles, President Putin of Russia suggested jointly using the Russian operated Azerbaijani radar station in Gabala, incomparably much closer to Iran than either Poland or the Czech Republic.

Fourth, Russia is in favor of being the origin and the transit route of the oil and natural gas that European countries receive. Natural gas and oil constitute by far the largest

23 “Uzbekistan quits Russia-led CSTO military bloc,” *RT* (formerly known as *Russia Today*), June 28, 2012, <<http://rt.com/politics/uzbekistan-quits-pro-russian-bloc-996/>>. Accessed December 4, 2012.

24 Sasse, Gwendolyn. *The Crimea question: identity, transition, and conflict*. Harvard University Press, 2007. For my extensive review of this book, see Aktürk, Sener. “Book Review: The Crimea Question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict, by G. Sasse.” *Comparative Political Studies* (2008), pp.464-467.

25 Aktürk, Şener, “NATO Neden Genişledi? Uluslararası İlişkiler Kuramları Işığında NATO’nun Genişlemesi ve ABD-Rusya İç Siyaseti”, *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 9, no. 34 (Summer 2012), pp. 73-97.

26 Gaddis, J. “History, grand strategy and NATO enlargement.” *Survival* 40, no. 1 (1998): 145-151; Kennan, George. “NATO Expansion Would Be a Fateful Blunder.” *International Herald Tribune*, 5 February 1997; Kennedy, Paul. “Let’s See the Pentagon’s Plan for Defending Poland” *Los Angeles Times* 16 May 1997.

share of Russian exports, and therefore, the continuous export of these natural resources is essential for the economic well being of the Russian Federation. However, Russia also uses its natural resources for geopolitical leverage, by exploiting the energy dependence of its customers in times of various international and domestic political crises, as it was evidenced in the case of Ukraine after the Orange Revolution.

Fifth, and similarly, Russia is trying to secure its access to various markets for Russian weapons, the second most important export category in Russia's global trade. In fact, the Russian military industrial complex is the only Russian industry that remains globally competitive after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and second only to the American military industrial complex in terms of its weapons sales worldwide. China and India, as well as various Middle Eastern states, are major customers of Russian weapons. Russia would like to maintain if not to expand and diversify further the number of its customers and to increase the volume of its military industrial exports.

Sixth, Russia is in favor of a multipolar world order, and is resolutely against a unipolar world order under the leadership of the United States. This was evidenced both by President Putin's speech in Munich in 2007 and especially with president Medvedev's speech in Berlin in 2008, where he proposed an "all-European security pact."²⁷ Not only Russia maintains and defends alternative security organizations such as Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) including as many of the post-Soviet states as possible, but Russia also co-founded major new multilateral security organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).²⁸

Seventh, Russia is resolutely against any effort, overt or covert, by any country in support of any kind of Chechen resistance and independence movement. Roland Dannreuther goes as far as stating that, "for Putin, it is not an exaggeration to say that a core defining feature of his leadership has been the determination to resolve the Chechen issue..."²⁹ Putin's original popularity in 2000 was based on his conduct of the Second Chechen War, "which was deemed by most Russians as both necessary and successful."³⁰ In fact, Dannreuther relates with reference to Russian sources, that, "Putin himself noted as he came to power that 'my mission, my historic mission—it sounds pompous but it is true—is to resolve the situation in the North Caucasus.'"³¹ Many leaders of the anti-Russian Chechen forces have been killed in exile in Turkey, Arab countries, Austria and elsewhere since the end of the Second Chechen War.³² Some scholars argue that major Russian gestures toward the Muslim world, from Russia's membership as an observer member state in the Organization of Islamic Conference to its support to various Muslim groups and states against non-Muslim or secular opponents in the Middle East are motivated by Russia's desire to deflect radical Islamic anger away from Chechnya and away from Russia's Muslims.³³ It is possible to judge this strategy as a qualified success.

27 Vladimir Socor, "Medvedev Proposes All-European Security Pact During Berlin Visit," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, June 9, 2008, <[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=33701](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=33701)>.

28 Ambrosio, Thomas. "Catching the 'Shanghai spirit': how the Shanghai Cooperation Organization promotes authoritarian norms in Central Asia." *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 8 (2008): 1321-1344.

29 Dannreuther, "Russia and the Middle East," p.546.

30 Ibid, p.546; and, Rutland, Peter. "Putin's Path to Power." *Post Soviet Affairs* 16, no. 4 (2000): 313-354.

31 Dannreuther, "Russia and the Middle East," p.546.

32 C. J. Chivers, "Critic of Chechen President Is Killed in Exile in Vienna," *New York Times*, January 13, 2009; Stefan Berg and Matthias Schepp, "Russia Hunts Down Chechen Terrorists Abroad," *Spiegel Online International*, September 27, 2011, <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/on-the-hit-list-russia-hunts-down-chechen-terrorists-abroad-a-788490.html>>.

33 Dannreuther, "Russia and the Middle East."

Turkish Foreign Policy in relation to the principles of Russian foreign policy

Ahmet Davutoglu, the current Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister holding this position since 2007, summarized Turkey's grand strategy as a "zero-problems foreign policy," which seeks good neighborly relations with all of Turkey's immediate neighbors.³⁴ Since the collapse of the USSR in 1992, Russia is no longer Turkey's immediate neighbor, but it certainly continues to be the most important and sizable great power in Turkey's neighborhood. Before turning to the fundamental changes in the underlying military-economic foundations of Turkish-Russian relations, Turkey's policy positions related to the key principles of Russian foreign policy, summarized in the previous section, will be briefly summarized and evaluated. Overall, we can say that Turkey's perceived geopolitical interests are in principle opposed to most of the seven principles of Russian foreign policy outlined above, but Turkey nonetheless cooperated with Russia for most of the post-Cold War period because of larger, overarching geopolitical shifts and more essential geopolitical objectives.

First, Turkey does not agree with the "Near Abroad" doctrine of Russia, whereby Russia sees itself as the arbiter and even decision-maker of ongoing conflicts in the former post-Soviet republics. ***It is not in Turkey's interest for the former post-Soviet republics to be permanently designated as Russia's backyard.*** Among the ongoing territorial disputes in the former Soviet territories, Turkey is in favor of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and against the Armenian occupation and possession of one-fifth of Azerbaijani territory including Nagorno-Karabagh, where Russia defends exactly the opposite position.³⁵ Turkey is also in favor of the territorial integrity of Georgia, whereas Russia recognizes and supports, militarily, politically, and economically, the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Turkey is in favor of the territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea's status as part of Ukraine, whereas Russia has given mixed signals and lukewarm support for the potential secession of a Russian-dominated Crimea from the rest of Ukraine.³⁶ Moldova does not occupy nearly as prominent a role in Turkish foreign policy as Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine, but Turkey's position is also in favor of the territorial integrity of Moldova, whereas Russia is the most important and vital active supporter of the breakaway republic of Transnistria.³⁷ Russia is in favor of maintaining a strong military, political, economic, and cultural presence in post-Soviet Central Asia, whereas Turkey in contrast supports the opposite policy in principle. As one can observe from the foregoing, Turkey's policies toward the post-Soviet "Near Abroad" appear to be the polar opposite of the Russian policies in principle, but Turkey actively tried to prevent a clash with Russia over these conflicts in the post-Soviet states, almost always retreating or conceding to Russia whenever a hot conflict appeared imminent.³⁸ To be more specific, Turkey gave up any kind of confrontational "Pan-Turkic" endeavors in Central Asia, which it briefly entertained in the early 1990s, and such a change of attitude drastically improved Turkish-Russian relations. Turkey has been even less confrontational and more accommodating of Russian viewpoint when it comes to Ukraine and Moldova, such that many international observers would not even notice Turkey as an actor in the discussions over the territorial integrity of Ukraine or Moldova.

The only post-Soviet region where Turkey risked some serious confrontation and took a clear stance against Russian foreign policy has been the Caucasus, where Turkey openly supported and sought to defend, however unsuccessfully, the territorial integrity of both Azerbaijan and Georgia

34 Davutoglu, Ahmet. "Turkey's zero-problems foreign policy." *Foreign Policy* 20 (2010).

35 Cornell, Svante E. "Turkey and the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh: a delicate balance." *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 1 (1998): 51-72.

36 Sasse, *The Crimea Question*; Sasse, Gwendolyn. "The 'new' Ukraine: A state of regions." *Regional & federal studies* 11, no. 3 (2001): 69-100; Marples, David R., and David F. Duke. "Ukraine, Russia, and the question of Crimea." *Nationalities Papers* 23, no. 2 (1995): 261-289;

37 King, Charles. "Moldova and the new Bessarabian questions." *The World Today* (1993): 135-139.

38 Aktürk, "Turkish-Russian Relations after the Cold War (1992-2002)."

against pro-Russian enemies. Russian military, political, cultural, and economic power in this region, too, overwhelmed what Turkey could offer to balance. Today Azerbaijan and Georgia, both allies of Turkey, have no effective control over large swaths of their territory. Turkey has been the leading country in support of Azerbaijan in international forums such as the United Nations, in its struggle to regain control over one-fifth of its territory occupied by Armenia. In a landmark U.N. resolution supported by Turkey and thirty-eight other states,³⁹ on March 14, 2008, U.N. General Assembly reaffirmed the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and demanded withdrawal of all Armenian forces from Azerbaijani territory that they occupied.⁴⁰ Only six countries other than Armenia voted against this resolution, but these included three members of the U.N. Security Council; United States, Russia, and France, as well as another significant power, India.⁴¹ Also notably, one hundred states abstained, including Egypt and Iran.

Secondly, also *in stark contrast to Russia, Turkey has been in favor of NATO's expansion to Eastern Europe. Given the* structure of NATO, these expansions could not have happened without Turkey's support, even though the United States was clearly the main engine of NATO's expansion.⁴² Thirdly, although Turkey was not the most prominent advocate of the missile defense shield, eventually Turkey not only supported the missile defense shield initiative but also accepted to have the interceptors of the missile defense shield in Turkish territory, more specifically, in Kürecik in Malatya province. In its essential role in the implementation of the missile defense shield project, Turkish foreign policy once again is opposed to the Russian foreign policy.

Fourth, Turkey's "energy strategy" is also opposed to the Russian energy strategy summarized in the preceding section. *In contrast to Russia, which aims to be the main source and the transit route of most if not all oil and natural gas going into Europe from the territories of the former Soviet Union, Turkey is aiming to develop alternative pipelines and routes for oil and gas from Central Asia and from the Caucasus to Europe through Turkey. Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Pipeline, which was finally and successfully completed in 2005-2006, is the best example of Turkey's energy strategy.*⁴³ BTC allowed the substantial Caspian oil to be transported and sold to European markets without passing through Russia. Turkey has also been supportive of the NABUCCO project, which would connect Central Asian, Caucasian, and Middle Eastern natural gas with European markets, running from Eastern Turkey to Austria.⁴⁴ On the other hand, Russia continues to be the main source of natural gas for Turkey, thanks to the Blue Stream pipeline.⁴⁵ Perhaps equally importantly in the long run, Russia will be building Turkey's first and only nuclear reactor in Akkuyu.⁴⁶

39 United Nations Resolution 62/243: The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

40 <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/ga10693.doc.htm>>.

41 The remaining two states voting against the resolution were Angola and Vanuatu.

42 Aktürk, "NATO Neden Genişledi?":

43 Babali, Tuncay. "Implications of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Main Oil Pipeline Project." *Perceptions*, Journal of International Affairs (Center for Strategic Research by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey) 10 (2005): 29-59.

44 Erdogan, Erkan. "Bypassing Russia: Nabucco project and its implications for the European gas security." *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews* 14, no. 9 (2010): 2936-2945.

45 Hill, Fiona. "Seismic shifts in Eurasia: the changing relationship between Turkey and Russia and its implications for the South Caucasus." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 3, no. 3 (2003): 55-75.

46 Eve Conant, "Nuclear Turkey with Russian Dressing," *Foreign Policy*, November 21, 2012. Available at <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/11/21/nuclear_turkey_with_russian_dressing>.

In partial conclusion, Turkey's policy preferences with regards to the Russian interventions in the Near Abroad, expansion of NATO, missile defense shield, and energy strategy, are in conflict with Russian foreign policy objectives in these four areas. Nonetheless, none of these conflicting preferences prevented the two states from cooperating in a number of other areas in the two decades since the end of the Cold War.

Fifth, Turkey is supportive of Russian policy of maintaining a weapons sales network competing with the United States. When some Western states were hesitant or unwilling to sell certain weapons to Turkey, especially in the 1990s, Russia was not only willing to sell weapons to Turkey but was also much more willing to enable technology transfers from Russia to Turkey in the field of military industry.⁴⁷ ***It is in Turkey's national interest to diversify the suppliers of its military imports as well as its weapons portfolio. As such, Russia can be expected to be a major player in support of Turkey's efforts to diversify its military hardware and develop its military industrial complex.***

Sixth, Turkey is also supportive of the grand strategic goal of Russian foreign policy, which is to construct and maintain a multipolar world order. Although one of the oldest and most active members of NATO, and a staunch U.S. ally, Turkey is nonetheless opposed to a unipolar world order and instead is in favor of a multipolar world order. The convergence of Turkish and Russian preferences for a multipolar world order became most evident before and during the second Iraq War in 2003 and beyond. Both Russia and Turkey were resolutely against the U.S. led war effort. Russia joined the effort to deny the legitimacy of the war in leading international forums such as the United Nations, whereas the Turkish parliament rejected U.S. troop deployments to Turkey for the invasion of Iraq.

Seventh, and finally, Turkey does not support separatism or terrorism in Chechnya, and it respects and supports the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. Although often overlooked, Turkey's support to Russia on the Chechen question is an extremely important gesture of goodwill and strategic partnership, both symbolically and materially. Turkey would be, and was in the 1990s, one of the few key countries, perhaps *the* key country, where the Chechen separatist movements could hope to marshal political, economic, and popular support and recruit militants for their struggle against Russia. By the late 1990s, Turkey ceased any kind of implicit or explicit support to Chechen separatism.⁴⁸

There is a history of Russian support for Kurdish separatism and independence movements, starting with the pro-Russian tribal leaders who were educated in Tsarist Russia in the late 19th and early 20th century.⁴⁹ There were also pro-Soviet Kurdish organizations throughout the Cold War. Kurdish separatist cause also found supporters in the post-Soviet parliaments as well. However, as part of a historic rapprochement between Turkey and Russia on the issue of ethnic separatism and terrorism, Russia refused to grant asylum to Abdullah Ocalan, the fugitive leader of the PKK, during his flight from Syria under Turkish diplomatic pressure.⁵⁰ This was an important turning point in Turkish-Russian relations.

In sum, there are remarkable conflicts but also perhaps even more remarkable

47 Aktürk, "Turkish-Russian Relations after the Cold War (1992-2002)."

48 Ibid.

49 Reynolds, Michael A. *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908-1918*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

50 Sezer, Duygu Bazoğlu. "Turkish-Russian relations: The challenges of reconciling geopolitical competition with economic partnership." *Turkish Studies* 1, no. 1 (2000): 59-82.

complementarities between some of the principles of Russian and Turkish foreign policy. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, the two states chose to increasingly emphasize the complementarities and downplay the conflicts in their relationships, in contrast to the early 1990s when the bilateral relationships were much more confrontational. By 2002, the two states started speaking about an “alliance,” leading some of the prominent commentators on Turkey and Russia to speculate about an “axis of the excluded” between Russia and Turkey. However, towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Turkish-Russian relations significantly soured once again. Both the “Five Day War” between Russia and Georgia in August 2008, and the Syrian civil war that started in 2011, brought the two countries to the brink of proxy war. Why? What accounts for the remarkable worsening of Turkish-Russian relations in the late 2000s and early 2010s?

Calculus of Power between Russia and Turkey, 2000-2012

The cause of the noteworthy worsening of Turkish-Russian relations in the 2000s is the change in the overall calculus of military-economic power⁵¹ between Russia and Turkey in Russia’s favor, as well as the perception of a resurgent Russian threat⁵² by Turkey. We can measure the change in the balance of military economic power between Turkey and Russia by a comparative study of Turkish and Russian Gross Domestic Product (GDP), GDP/capita, population, and active manpower in the army. We can measure the perception of a Russian threat by a review of Turkish news reports and a review of Russian military advances in Turkey’s immediate neighborhood during the period under investigation. These examinations demonstrate, in the current author’s view that the underlying causes of worsening in Turkish-Russian relations have to do with the changing military-economic balance between Turkey and Russia and the rising threat perception in Turkey vis-à-vis a resurgent Russia in the Caucasus and the Middle East.

In contrast, the changes in the Turkish-Russian trade volume do not parallel but rather contradict the worsening of Turkish-Russian relations in the late 2000s. Bilateral Turkish-Russian trade volume increased, rather than decreased. Turkish-Russian trade was *six times more* in 2011 than it was in 2002. In contrast, Turkish officials speculated about a military and political alliance with Russia in 2002, whereas the two countries came to the brink of a proxy war over Syria in 2011. Turkish-Russian relations also do not parallel any kind of democratization trends in the two countries’ domestic politics. Turkish and Russian political regime, and the Freedom House democracy scores for the two countries, did not change much between 2002 and 2012, whereas their relationships with each other did. Turkish-Russian relations do not reflect changes in their membership to international institutions either. The two countries’ membership in international institutions has been fairly stable since the turn of the 21st century, and yet bilateral relations witnessed significant variation.

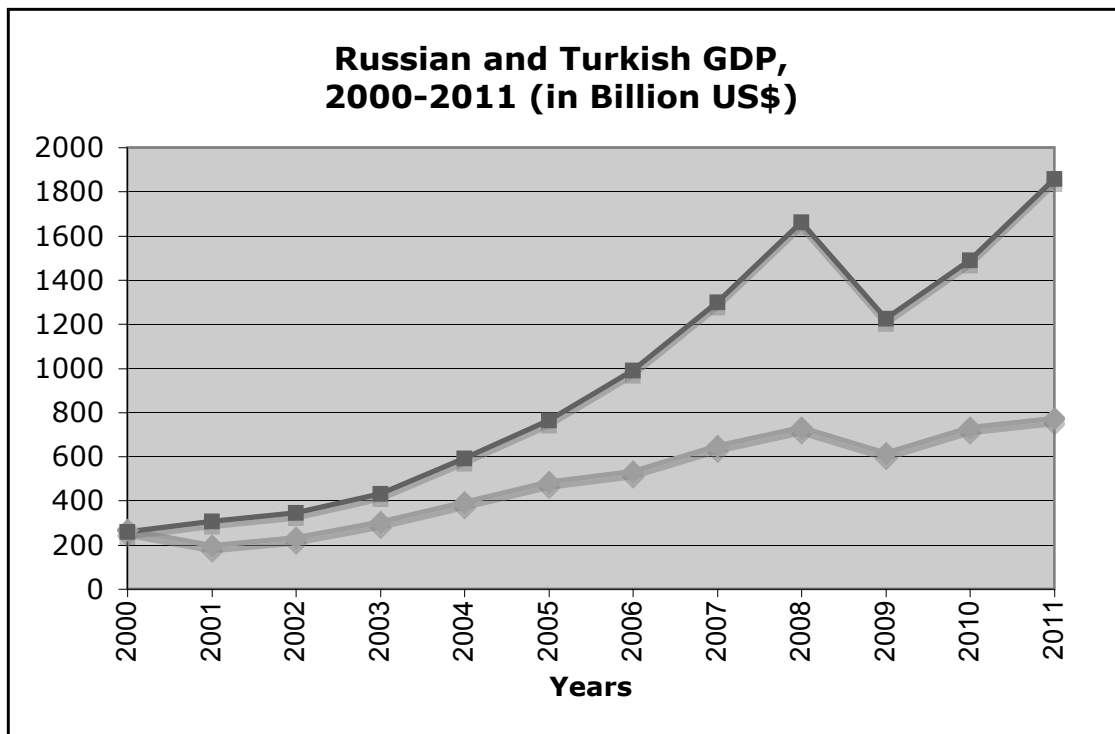
51 I adopted the metaphor of “calculus of power” from Peter Gowan’s review of John Mearsheimer’s book, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. Gowan, Peter. “A calculus of power.” *New Left Review* 16 (2002): 47-67.

52 Aggarwal, Vinod K., and Kristi Govella, eds. *Responding to a Resurgent Russia: Russian Policy and Responses from the European Union and the United States*. Springer, 2011.

Comparison of Turkish and Russian GDP, 2000-2012

Gross Domestic Product is the ultimate measure of states' latent military power.⁵³ Therefore, any significant change in the relative size of two countries' GDP would be expected to have consequences for their security environment and for their attitudes toward each other. A glance at the changes in the relative size of Turkish and Russian GDP since the turn of the 21st century demonstrates a striking reality that is the reversal of the trend throughout the 1990s: Russian GDP grew much faster in both absolute and relative terms than the Turkish GDP since 2000, such that although the Russian GDP was even slightly *smaller* than the Turkish GDP in 2000 (\$260 billion to \$267 billion), already by 2008 Russian GDP was *more than twice larger* than the Turkish GDP (\$1,661 billion to \$730 billion). Despite a fall in both Russian and Turkish GDP due to the global economic crisis in 2009, both countries quickly recovered within the next two years, and the Russian GDP continues to be more than twice larger than the Turkish GDP (Graph 1).

Graph 1. Russian (red) and Turkish (blue) GDP, 2000-2011



Source: Data compiled from the *World Bank*⁵⁴

The significance of the relative change in Turkish and Russian GDP since the turn of the century cannot be understated. From a Realist point of view, this means that Russia in 2011 had more than twice as much economic resources to marshal against Turkey in the case of a military conflict as it had in 2000. Whereas in 2000-2004 period, both countries had

⁵³ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

⁵⁴ World Bank, <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD/countries>>.

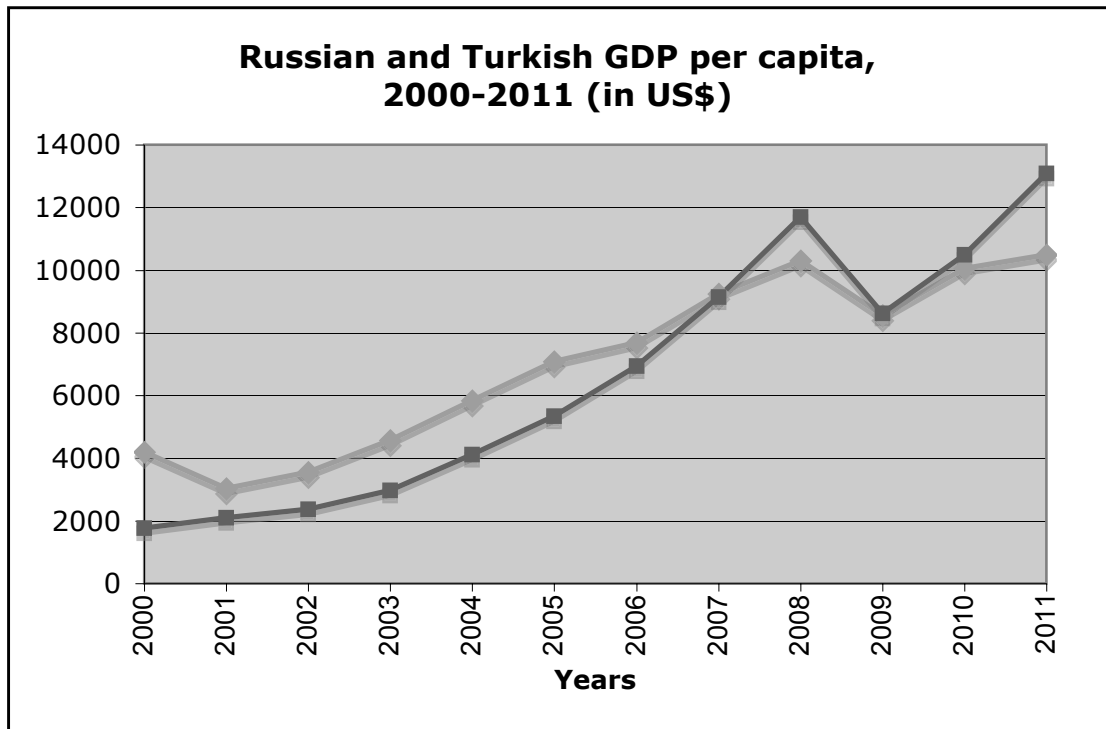
roughly comparable economies, this was no longer the case, especially by 2006-2007 when Russian economy reached twice the size of the Turkish economy. This is a reversal to the kind of economic disparity between the two countries that was last observed in the early 1990s.

It is unsurprising that Turkey would, once again, perceive a potential threat in such a resurgent Russia, especially if the following two conditions are also met: First, if Turkey is also resurgent and growing, but at a slower pace, than Russia, hence implying a potential clash of influence in the territories lying between the two countries. Second, if Russia engaged in some military and political advances in Turkey's immediate neighborhood that brought it into conflict with Turkey's allies and interests. Both of these further conditions were also present in the case of Turkish-Russian relations in the 2000s. First, Turkish economy was also growing fast, and Turkish policy makers took pride in a resurgent Turkey both economically and politically, further seeking to capitalize on the image of a rising Turkey vis-à-vis its immediate neighborhood, provoking accusations of "Neo-Ottomanism." Such a posture highly increased the risk of a Turkish-Russian clash, given that Russia was also resurgent, especially since the beginning of Putin's second term in 2005. Second, in August 2008, Russia militarily intervened against Georgia, which is an immediate neighbor and ally of Turkey. Turkey has crucial political and economic interests in Georgia, its stability, and its territorial integrity. If Georgia were to collapse and come under Russian rule once again, Turkish-Russian relations could even revert to the geopolitical dynamics of the 18th through 20th centuries, when Russia was Turkey's biggest neighbor and immediate military threat. These radical changes in the relative GDP between Turkey and Russia, combined with the simultaneous but unequal resurgence of Turkish and Russian economic power, and the Russian military interventions to conflicts in the Caucasus and the Middle East, both regions neighboring Turkey, heightened the sense of a Russian threat from Turkey's point of view. This parsimonious and straightforward Realist explanation is robust and able to account for the improvement and deterioration of Turkish-Russian relations.

Comparison of Turkish and Russian GDP per capita, 2000-2011

A derivative measure of disposable income for military expenses can be the country's GDP per capita. Although one has to emphasize that GDP is a much better measure, reviewed in the preceding text, than GDP per capita, because after all, it is the aggregate wealth of the country that the state draws upon in putting together its defense budget and its strategic calculations. Swiss GDP per capita is far higher than that of India, but India is an incomparably more powerful state in the international system because of its sheer size that generates a large GDP despite a low living standard. Nonetheless, given two countries with the same or similar GDP, that which has a higher GDP per capita can afford a larger defense expenditure. Bearing these considerations in mind, when one reviews the relative GDP per capita figures for Russia and Turkey since the turn of the 21st century, it is unmistakable that the Russian GDP per capita improved relative to the Turkish GDP per capita even more radically than the change in aggregate GDP figures. The reason for the even sharper Russian relative gains in this field is due to the population decline in Russia, which drives GDP per capita figures even higher than the annual GDP growth (Graph 2).

Graph 2. Russian (red) and Turkish (blue) GDP per capita, 2000-2011



Source: Data compiled from the *World Bank*⁵⁵

Similar to the critical juncture in the GDP figures, 2007-2008 appears to be a critical turning point for GDP per capita comparison as well, because it is in 2007 that the Russian GDP per capita catches up and by 2008 notably surpasses the Turkish GDP per capita, despite the fact that Turkey has a far more sophisticated liberal market economy⁵⁶ and a much smaller population. Based on these comparisons of Turkish and Russian GDP and GDP per capita, it is fair to conclude that Russia has vastly improved vis-à-vis Turkey in measures of latent power from a Realist point of view. How about measures of actual military power? Were changes in latent power reflected in changes in actual military power as well? The following section demonstrates that they were.

Comparison of Turkey and Russian Military: Changes in Manpower, 1997-2007

In 1999, Turkish army had 789,000 soldiers against the 900,000 soldiers of the Russian army. The ratio was roughly 8 to 9. In contrast, by 2005 Turkish army had 515,000 soldiers against the 1,037,000 soldiers in the Russian army, corresponding to a ration of 1 to 2 (Table 1). In other words, the ratio of manpower in the Turkish and Russian armies roughly corresponded to the ratio of the size of their economies, which was around one to two by 2010-2011. Actual manpower was approximately proportional to the relative latent

⁵⁵ World Bank, <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDPPCAPCD/countries>>.

⁵⁶ Hanson, Philip. "On Europe's Fringes: Russia, Turkey and the European Union." *Chatham House Briefing Paper* (2011).

(economic) power that Turkey and Russia possessed (Graph 3).

Table 1. Turkish and Russian Manpower in the Military

Turkish and Russian Military Compared, 1996-2007
(Manpower in Thousands)

Year	Turkey	Russia
1996	818	1300
1997	820	1300
1998	788	1000
1999	789	900
2000	610	1004
2001	515	977
2002	515	988
2003	515	961
2004	514	999
2005	514	1037
2006	515	1027
2007	515	1027

Source: Data compiled from the *Correlates of War Project*

Graph 3. Russian (red) and Turkish (blue) Manpower in the Military, 1996-2007



Source: Data compiled from the *Correlates of War Project*⁵⁷

What these raw manpower measures do suggest is only one dimension of the disparity between Turkish and Russian armed forces. This quantitative disparity, a gap that opened up in the first decade of the 21st century, masks a greater disparity in the subjective perception of military power based on recent failures and accomplishments. A comparison between 1999 and 2009 is once again very apt here. In 1999, Turkey was seen as having successfully defeated a massive terrorist guerilla insurgency led by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), having captured its leader and driven most of the militants into silence or outside of its borders. In contrast, in 1999, Russia appeared to have accepted de facto autonomy by the Chechen rebels in what was then an independent Chechen republic established by the Khasavyurt Accords. Russia appeared to have caved in when faced with armed rebellion whereas Turkey appeared to have succeeded against arguably more formidable and numerous guerrilla supported by multiple foreign governments with safe havens in a number of neighboring countries.

In 2009, the picture of success and failure against terrorism and guerrilla insurgency between Turkey and Russia is much more ambiguous, and appears to have been somewhat reversed. Since Putin's ascent to power, first as a Prime Minister in 1999 and then as acting and elected President in 2000, Russia launched and quickly succeeded in winning the Second Chechen War, and subdued the entirety of Chechnya. Despite isolated terrorist attacks in Russian urban centers, Chechen guerrilla insurgency seems to have been totally defeated. In contrast, by 2009 PKK seems to have made some kind of a violent comeback compared to the 1999-2004 "ceasefire" period, with numerous deadly attacks on Turkish soldiers and civilians mostly in southeastern Turkey. Therefore, compared to 1999-2002, when Turkish officials were contemplating an alliance with Russia, Turkey appears to be considerably weaker militarily.

Russia and Turkey: Brought Together By Weakness, Separated by Strength

The conclusion that can be drawn from the review of GDP, GDP per capita, and military balance figures is that Turkey and Russia were brought together by their weakness in the late 1990s and early 2000s, whereas they were later separated once again due to the significant and steady resurgence of their military and economic power. I would argue that this has been a historical structural pattern of Turkish-Russian relations. Turkish-Russian relations were exceptionally good in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when both countries were reeling from a massive political collapse and economic breakdown. In many senses, 1990s were a "lost decade" for both Russia and Turkey. Out of their weakness and collapse, having retreated from what would have been their natural spheres of influence, the two countries were drawn together into an intense cooperation and strategic partnership bordering on a military alliance with the founding of organizations such as the BLACK-SEAFOR.⁵⁸ The only other decade in the five hundred years of Turkish-Russian relations when the two countries were so close was the 1920s, which both countries entered amidst civil war and foreign invasion and encirclement. At that time the Bolshevik government in Russia and the Ankara government in Anatolia started to collaborate in a common struggle against British, French, and other Allied powers. Once both the Soviet Union and Turkey

decisively won their respective civil wars, defeated the foreign invaders, and Turkey reasserted control over Eastern Anatolia while the Soviet Union took control of the South Caucasus, fissures in the Soviet-Turkish alliances started to appear and eventually the alliance was de facto shattered with the Turkish-British rapprochement in 1936, and turned into open hostility and enmity at the end of the Second World War, with Stalin's territorial demands in Eastern Anatolia and bases in the Turkish Straits.

In terms of the changes in the actual and latent military-economic power of Turkey and Russia relative to each other and the rest of the world, the two decades since the end of the Cold War somewhat resemble the 1920s and the 1930s. In the 1920s, too, Russia and Turkey experienced a moment of extreme weakness and relative status loss vis-à-vis other powers in the international system. Even the core of former Ottoman Empire, Anatolia, was almost colonized, while Istanbul, the capital city, was occupied, and Russia had to relinquish its control over very large swaths of its imperial holdings, including Poland, Finland, Baltic states, Ukraine, and the Caucasus, and succumbed into a Civil War between Reds, Whites, Greens, and various national liberation movements. As in the early 1920s, in the early 1990s, too, Russia was suffering from territorial disintegration,⁵⁹ economic collapse, and impending anarchy even in domestic politics and economy, where the state even ceased to enforce business contracts, leading to the rise of "violent entrepreneurs" (various Mafioso) to step in.⁶⁰ Although Turkey did not suffer a territorial dissolution as the Soviet Union and to a certain extent the Russian Federation did, it was faced with a formidable challenge to its territorial integrity from the PKK insurgency. Moreover, the economic collapse of 1994 significantly damaged the social and economic fabric of Turkish society, creating a sense of economic "collapse" qualitatively similar to the one experienced in the post-Soviet Russian context, but of a much smaller magnitude quantitatively. Nonetheless, simply because the post-Soviet Russian collapse was much more momentous, Turkey appeared to have improved significantly relative to Russia in the 1990s. At this critical juncture of mutual weakness, Turkey and Russia ceased to perceive each other as threats, and instead chose to initiate an unprecedented multidimensional cooperation between the two countries. The challenge is to continue and strengthen Turkish-Russian cooperation at a time when both Russia and Turkey are rising in terms of their economic and military power. It is unclear whether Turkey and Russia will succeed in overcoming this challenge as they rise.

Futility of Alternative Explanations: Liberal Trade Theory, Democratic Peace, International Institutions, and the Social Construction of Peace and Conflict

This article presented a Realist assessment of Turkish-Russian relations, supported by empirical evidence based on the relative change in indicators of latent and actual power that Russia and Turkey possess. I believe my Realist assessment of Turkish-Russian relations to be parsimonious, robust, and convincing. Nonetheless, there are of course other theories of international relations as well, and it is worth briefly evaluating their potential for explaining the deterioration in Turkish-Russian relations. Chief among them are three

59 Walker, Edward W. *Dissolution: Sovereignty and the breakup of the Soviet Union*. Rowman & Littlefield Pub Incorporated, 2003.
60 Volkov, Vadim. *Violent entrepreneurs: The use of force in the making of Russian capitalism*. Cornell University Press, 2002.

strands of Liberalism, focusing on the allegedly decisive positive role that they attribute to trade, democracy as a regime type, and international institutions, in dampening interstate conflict and fostering interstate cooperation.

Did Turkish-Russian relations worsen because of a significant collapse in Turkish-Russian trade in the 2000s? An examination of bilateral Turkish-Russian trade figures in the 2000s demonstrates that such a claim would be patently false. On the contrary, Turkish-Russian trade volume skyrocketed since the turn of the 21st century. In 2002, when General Tuncer Kılınç proposed a Turkish-Russian alliance against the West, Turkish-Russian trade volume stood at around \$5 billion. In 2008, when Turkey and Russia came to be brink of proxy war over Georgia, Turkish-Russian trade surpassed \$37 billion (Graph 4). In 2011, when Turkey and Russia were arming opposite sides in the Syrian civil war, Turkish-Russian trade stood at \$30 billion. In other words, Turkish-Russian trade volume was six times larger when the bilateral relations were much *worse*. This is an obvious contradiction with the expectations of the liberal trade theory. Changes in Turkish-Russian trade volume cannot explain, but rather contradict, changes in Turkish-Russian relations.

Graph 4. Turkish-Russian Bilateral Trade Volume, 2001-2011



Did Turkish-Russian relations worsen because of a significant retreat from a democratic regime in these two countries since 2002, as Democratic Peace Theory would predict? When we look at the *Freedom House* ratings of Turkey and Russia, we notice that Turkey's democracy rating did not change much at all between 2002 and 2011, whereas Russia's democracy rating only slightly worsened. Moreover, Turkey and Russia had the same govern-

ment (Erdogan and Putin governments, respectively) both at the best and the worst time of their relations, which makes it impossible to argue that the worsening of Turkish-Russian relations in the late 2000s has to do with a change in domestic political regime type.

Did Turkish-Russian relations worsen because of a significant collapse in the capacity of the international institutions that both countries were members of? This is patently not the case because there is no significant change in the international institutional membership of Turkey and Russia. Neither was the good state of Turkish-Russian relations in the late 1990s and early 2000s the result of common international institutions. The improvement or deterioration of Turkish-Russian relations was also not the result of mutually changing societal perceptions for the worse. If anything, societal perceptions of ordinary Turks and Russians vis-à-vis each other improved in the 2000s, instead of worsening. This brief excursus into alternative theoretical paradigms of international relations demonstrates that different strands of Liberalism and Social Constructivism cannot adequately explain, but rather even contradict, the worsening of Turkish-Russian relations in the second half of the first decade of the 21st century. Realism still provides the most convincing explanation for the worsening Turkish-Russian relations in the late 2000s, just as it convincingly explained the radical improvement in Turkish-Russian relations in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Turkish Grand Strategy and the Prospects of a Turkish-Russian Alliance

There are too many costs and risks associated with potential open conflict between Turkey and Russia. History of the last four hundred years is replete with examples of these costs and mutual losses that the two countries suffered due to incessant interstate conflict. It is an undeniable fact that the centuries of Turkish-Russian rivalry and warfare has left deep scars and fed mutual suspicions in both states and societies against the other. However, the promising and productive example of historic Franco-German reconciliation after World War II can serve as a positive model toward which Turkey and Russian may strive as they try to balance some of their contradictory geopolitical imperatives with enormous benefits that would accrue from their mutual cooperation. *Turkey and Russia can choose to be embroiled in conflicts and even proxy wars over Georgia, Syria, Nagorno Karabagh, Crimea, Chechnya, and Cyprus. On the other hand, they can also choose to play a constructive role in all of the conflicts mentioned above and even many others in their neighborhood and beyond. If there is space for democratic idealism or justice in international relations, Turkey is on the side of democracy and justice in many of these conflicts, as it is confirmed by the United Nations: For example Georgia's territorial integrity has to be respected; Armenia should withdraw from one-fifth of Azerbaijan that it occupied including Nagorno Karabagh; and the Syrian regime should be replaced with a government more representative of the popular will.* If there is moral high ground in international politics, Turkey is currently on the morally right side in most if not all of these conflicts, whereas Russia is unfortunately defending some actors who habitually break international law and show utter disrespect for human rights. However, from a Realist standpoint, domestic moral imperatives do not dictate interstate relations, and nor should they be the only or primary motive of foreign policy making. It is the ultimate interest of Russia and Turkey, as the two

countries with the largest latent power in central Eurasia between Germany and Italy in the West and China and India in the East, to keep peace between each other, while containing and solving problems among each other through periodic consultations, never allowing for proxy wars or other types of armed conflicts where they would find themselves supporting opposite sides.

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