

# THE DYNAMICS OF INTERSTATE RELATIONS IN THE CAUCASUS A: RUSSIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS IN THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The paper examines the development of Russian-Turkish relations over the past 30 years, in the context of geopolitical relations and, in particular, the conflicts in the South Caucasus and adjacent regions. The authors consider that the two Karabakh wars, the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict and the five-day Georgian-South Ossetian war, as well as the Ukrainian crisis and the Libyan and Syrian conflicts, in which Moscow and Ankara have different interests, are the key elements in these relations. The new configuration of forces in the South Caucasus will largely depend on the outcome of these conflicts. The authors identify the main patterns in the development of Russian-Turkish bilateral relations, which are characterized by a combination of confrontation, competition and cooperation.

## PREFACE

Transformations that took place after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the Greater Eurasia space brought new elements into the relations between the countries of the entire region. The collapse of the USSR led to the independence of the former Soviet republics and their transformation into new actors in international relations, each with its own interests and approaches. Over the past 30 years the contours of interests of such newly established states have been shaped and have become clearer and more predictable. Furthermore, their political role in regional and international issues has intensified.

Under these conditions Russia-Türkiye relations have undergone a significant development. Having in mind the legacy of the past centuries, these relations have nevertheless shaped some new realities that have attracted the attention of specialists all over the world. Therefore, this article aims to examine, analyze and evaluate the dynamics and logic of the development of Russia-Türkiye relations during these post-Soviet thirty years. Such an analysis

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<sup>1</sup> The paper is the first part of a two-section study on interstate relations in the Caucasus. The second part will examine Russian-Armenian relations. It will be published in the next issue of the *Haigazian Armenological Review*, 44/1.

is important for understanding the future prospects of these relations and for seeing what new realities may emerge in regions where these relations meet.

After 1991 independent Russia was at the stage of dramatic political and economic changes that were to determine its place in the modern world. Having ceased to be a superpower, Russia tried to strengthen its positions and formulate and promote its national interests primarily among the neighboring states.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, it is reasonable to study the current results of these 30-year development processes through which Russia has been promoting its interests through building relations with traditionally rival states, such as Turkey in the south. The West gave the go-ahead for Türkiye's claims regarding its expansion towards the former Soviet South Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>3</sup> There, the regional Turkic republics, on the one hand, wished to develop friendly relations based on linguistic and ethno-cultural commonality.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Türkiye, which had become the 16<sup>th</sup> economy in the world, was looking for opportunities to extend its influence towards the East, as the European Union imposed a ban on its expansionist aspirations to the West. Under these conditions relations between Türkiye and Russia became more comprehensive and multi-valued.

#### CONFRONTATION OVER CONFLICTS AND THEIR RESOLUTION

The divergence in Russian and Turkish interests on the issues of the Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia-Abkhazia and Georgia-Ossetia conflicts was clearly manifested in 1991-92. Türkiye obviously wished to increase its presence in the South Caucasus, trying to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> Yet Russia had sufficient resources to prevent Turkish interference in the said conflicts.

a) When Türkiye tried to deploy its troops on the border with Armenia and punish it for advancing in the Artsakh confrontation zone, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the President of the Russian Federation, Burbulis, and Commander-in-Chief of the CIS Forces, Marshal Shaposhnikov,

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<sup>2</sup> R. Allison, "Military forces in the Soviet successor states," *The Adelphi Paper*, 33(280):1993, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> K.S. Gadzhiev, *Geopolitics of the Caucasus*, Moscow, 2001 (in Russian), p. 347; I. Bal, "The Turkish model and the Turkic republics," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, September-November, 1998, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> M. G. Winrow, "Türkiye and newly independent states of central Asia and Transcaucasus," *Middle East Review of International Affairs Journal (MERIA)*, 1(2-July):1997, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> H. Kramer, "Will Central Asia become Türkiye's sphere of influence?" *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, March-May, 1996, p. 2.

clearly explained to Türkiye that its actions could lead to a third world war.<sup>6</sup> The warning had a chilling effect and forced official Ankara to refrain from taking punitive measures against Armenia.

b) Starting with the formation of the OSCE Minsk Group in March 1992, Turkish diplomacy tried at all costs to strengthen its presence in the process of creating a political settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, with the goal of expanding its presence in the South Caucasus through all kinds of support to Azerbaijan.<sup>7</sup> Since the 1990s and until 2020 its efforts failed, as Armenian diplomacy insisted that Türkiye could not be an impartial mediator, as it was biased in defending and promoting Azerbaijan's interests.

c) In the Abkhazia conflict Türkiye tried to support Georgian interests, as its policy was based on the position of large Abkhaz communities living in Türkiye with relatives in Abkhazia.<sup>8</sup> In this conflict Türkiye did not resort to military intervention, considering Russian's influence, yet through active neutrality tried to take a more effective part in regional affairs.

d) The position of Türkiye in the Georgian-Ossetian war of August 2008 was quite instructive. It differed from all others, as it did not support the position of the West regarding this war.<sup>9</sup> Obviously, Georgia started the war in order to oust the Russians from Ossetia, but the course of events went in the opposite direction and roused great international tension with an attempt by the West to actively intervene to cope with the consequences of this war. Through its neutrality and active use of all political, diplomatic and military instruments with the countries of the region, Türkiye managed to receive dividends in relations with Russia and at the same time further strengthen its presence in Georgia (and throughout the South Caucasus). Specifically, the

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<sup>6</sup> W. Hale, "Türkiye, the Black Sea and Transcaucasia," *Transcaucasia Boundaries*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1996, p. 64; Thomas De Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through peace and war*, NYU Press, New York and London, 2003, p. 203.

<sup>7</sup> G.D. Khachatryan, "The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through the prism of relations between Armenia and Türkiye," *Post-Soviet Studies*. 1(2):2018, p. 21 (in Russian).

<sup>8</sup> B. Aras, P. Akpınar, "The Relations between Türkiye and the Caucasus," *Perceptions*, Autumn XVI(3):2011, pp. 53-68; M. Celikpala, "From immigrants to diaspora: Influence of the North Caucasian diaspora in Türkiye," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 42(3):2016, pp. 423-46; E.R. Eissler, "Can Türkiye de-isolate Abkhazia?" *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 12(3):2013, pp. 125-35.

<sup>9</sup> Z. Oniş, S. Yılmaz, "Türkiye and Russia in a shifting global order: Cooperation, conflict and asymmetric interdependence in a turbulent region," *Third World Quarterly*, 37(1):2016, pp. 71-95; A. Weiss, Y. Zabanova, "Georgia and Abkhazia caught between Türkiye and Russia: Turkey's changing relations with Russia and the West in 2015-2016 and their impact on Georgia and Abkhazia," SWP Comment, 54(2016), Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, pp. 2-3.

Free Trade Agreement between Türkiye and Georgia that entered into force in 2007 enabled Türkiye to become the largest trade partner of Georgia.<sup>10</sup> Between 2000 and 2011 Türkiye invested over \$1.4 billion in Georgia, which made 16% of all direct foreign investments in Georgia<sup>11</sup>. Georgia became the first post-Soviet republic where Türkiye succeeded in surpassing Russia as the main economic partner.<sup>12</sup> Thus Georgia-Türkiye relations developed significantly during the rule of President M. Saakashvili, who named that period of his authority “the Golden Age” of bilateral Turkish-Georgian relations.<sup>13</sup> Ankara's policy was clearly stated by Turkish President R. T. Erdogan: “America is our ally, and the Russian Federation is an important neighbor. Russia is our number one trading partner. We receive 2/3 of our energy from the Russian Federation. We act in accordance with our national interests. We cannot ignore the RF.”<sup>14</sup>

e) At the heart of the current conflict in Libya is the confrontation between the Government of National Accord (GNA) located in Tripoli, and the Libyan House of Representatives located in Tobruk, supported by the Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar-led Libyan National Army (LNA).<sup>15</sup>

The approaches of Russia and Türkiye did not coincide in the Libyan crisis of 2014 either. They supported different sides of the conflict, providing them with military-technical and diplomatic support. With the escalation of the conflict Russia sought to strengthen its geopolitical influence in the regions controlled by the LNA. Russia both provided informal support to the forces of Haftar<sup>16</sup> and continued a dialogue with the GNA, still wishing not to lose

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<sup>10</sup> In 2011 the trade turnover between the two countries exceeded \$1.5 billion. There was no such trade turnover in Georgia's economic relations with any other state (M. Cecire, “Zero Problems 2.0: Türkiye as a Caucasus power,” *World Politics Review*, 20.09.2012) URL:<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/12354/zero-problems-2-0-türkiye-as-a-caucasus-power> ).

<sup>11</sup> И. Арчвадзе, “Грузинский рынок в тени турецкой экономики” (The Georgian market under the shadow of Turkish economy), 13.02.2012. URL: [http://georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=334&sphrase\\_id=245212](http://georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=334&sphrase_id=245212).

<sup>12</sup> M. Celikpala, “Türkiye as a regional power and the Caucasus,” *Insight Türkiye*, 2007:9(2), p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> “Interview with Mikheil Saakashvili: Georgia's westward march,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 12(1):2013, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> B. Aras, “Davutoglu era in Turkish foreign policy,” *Insight Türkiye*, 11(3):2009, p. 137.

<sup>15</sup> K. Robinson, “Who's who in Libya's war?” 18.06.2020. URL: <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/whos-who-libyas-war>.

<sup>16</sup> S. Ramani, “Russia's strategy in Libya,” 07.04.2020. URL: <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/russias-strategy-libya>; Ergodan says 2,000 Russian mercenaries deployed in Libya, 25.12.2019, URL:

cooperation with it and to sign large-scale agreements with an eye on Libya's reconstruction plans in the future. At the same time, Moscow claimed to play an important role in the possible settlement of the Libyan conflict. The Republic of Türkiye, which claimed the leading role in the region and sought to revive the "former glamour" of the Ottoman Empire, actively supported the GNA (1, p. 24), and at the end of November 2019 President Erdogan and the head of the UN-recognized GNA, Faiz Saraj, signed a memorandum of cooperation in the military sphere and an understanding over maritime zones.<sup>17</sup> However, here too, Russia and Türkiye did not clash directly. It is highly likely that confidential diplomatic channels were used to keep the process under control.

f) Another important challenge in Russian-Turkish relations was the Syrian conflict. Russia defended president Bashar AlAssad and his regime.<sup>18</sup> Moscow's interests in Syria and in the Middle East as a whole are of strategic importance, since instability in this region may be a threat to another region no less important in terms of strategy and security for Russia, the South Caucasus, wherefrom that threat might easily penetrate into one of the areas of Islamic radicalism in Russia, the North Caucasus.<sup>19</sup> Türkiye has been, and is still, supporting opposition political organizations, to which it provides political, financial and military assistance.<sup>20</sup> Offices of such organizations (Syrian

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<https://www.unian.info/world/10809470-ergodan-says-2-000-russian-mercenaries-deployed-in-libya.html>.

<sup>17</sup> "Libya, Turkey sign deals on security and maritime jurisdictions," 28.11.2019. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/28/libya-turkey-sign-deals-on-security-and-maritime-jurisdictions>.

<sup>18</sup> "Встреча с военнослужащими Вооружённых Сил России" (Meeting with the Russian Federation's armed servicemen), 17.03.2016, URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51526>; C. Miller, "After five years of fighting in Syria, Putin has gotten what he wants," 08.10.2020, URL: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/10/08/after-five-years-of-fighting-in-syria-putin-has-gotten-what-he-wants/>.

<sup>19</sup> S. Bagdasaryan, S. Petrova, "Geopolitical positions of Russia and the USA in the Syrian conflict, state and municipal administration," *Uchenye zapiski SKAGS*, 2:2018, p. 112, (in Russian).

<sup>20</sup> "Syria rebels said to receive missiles via Türkiye," *Hurriyet*, 01.08.2012. URL: <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/syria-rebels-said-to-receive-missiles-via-Türkiye-26899>; Erdogan: Türkiye, FSA close to capturing Syria's Al-Bab, 12.02.2017. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/erdogan-Türkiye-fsa-close-to-capturing-syria-s-al-bab/748823>; *Greater Eurasia: Development, Security, Cooperation. Yearbook*. Issue. 2. Part 2 / RAN. INION. Department of Scientific Cooperation; ed. Gerasimov. Moscow, 2019, p. 1040 (in Russian).

organizations or north Caucasus organizations) are open in Türkiye,<sup>21</sup> which proclaims itself the protector of its Muslim brethren, hosting over 2 million Syrian refugees<sup>22</sup>. Türkiye is concerned about the intensification of the Kurdish problem as a result of the Syrian crisis, which is considered both a serious internal and external threat to Ankara.<sup>23</sup> Ankara has pursued an anti-Assad policy, extensively supporting the opposition forces, including the terrorist group "Islamic State" (ISIS), as well as providing a diplomatic and propaganda shield against official Damascus.<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting, however, that Russia, Türkiye and the Islamic Republic of Iran showed common approaches to the issue of fighting against ISIS, which constituted a common platform for the development of a trilateral Russia-Türkiye-Iran format to resolve the conflicts at the level of presidents<sup>25</sup>.

This format proved to be the most viable of all for advancing the process of stabilization in Syria.<sup>26</sup> In fact, with all the controversies in approaches, Russia, Türkiye and Iran have assumed responsibility for the cessation of hostilities and strengthening of the peace process in Syria. The armed forces of Russia and Türkiye did not enter into direct confrontation, except for the downing of a Russian military aircraft by Türkiye,<sup>27</sup> as well as the assassination of the Russian

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<sup>21</sup> "Основные группы сирийской оппозиции. Досье" (The basic groups of the Syrian opposition: A file), 06.01.2015. URL: <https://tass.ru/info/848044>; E. Yuksel, Strategies of Turkish proxy warfare in northern Syria. CRU Report, November 2019, pp. 1-24.

<sup>22</sup> "Our country has been home to the highest number of refugees for the past 7 years", said Erdoğan, 20.06.2022. URL: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/138450/-our-country-has-been-home-to-the-highest-number-of-refugees-for-the-past-7-years->; "Средиземное море должностать символом надежды для беженцев и мигрантов" (The Mediterranean Sea should be a symbol of hope for refugees and displaced people), 07.04.2017. URL: <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2017/04/1302881>.

<sup>23</sup> С. Маркедонов, "Российско-турецкие отношения и проблемы безопасности Кавказского региона" (Russian-Turkish relations and the security concerns in in the Caucasus), 30.05.2016. URL: <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/valday/Rossiiskoturetskie-otnosheniya-i-problemy-bezopasnosti-Kavkazskogo-regiona-18188>.

<sup>24</sup> P.S. Brooker, "Russia vs. Türkiye: Competition for influence," 12.12.2015. URL: <http://www.valuewalk.com/2015/12/russia-vs-Turkiye-competition-for-influence/>.

<sup>25</sup> "Putin, Erdogan and Iran's Raisi pledge cooperation against 'terrorists' in Syria," 19.07.2022. URL: <https://www.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20220719-putin-to-meet-turkey-s-erdogan-and-iranian-president-raisi-in-tehran>.

<sup>26</sup> Indeed, both the Geneva and the Astana format were discontinued (the first, due to the absence of significant results, while the second had some success).

<sup>27</sup> M. Koren, "Turkey takes down a Russian warplane," 24.11.2015. URL: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/11/turkey-russia-syria-nato/417450/>; K. Shaheen, S. Walker, "Putin condemns Türkiye after Russian warplane downed near Syria border," *The Guardian*, 24.11.2015. URL:

ambassador to Türkiye,<sup>28</sup> which, however, did not lead to any sharp deterioration in relations.

g) In the Ukrainian case Türkiye has not recognized the reunification of Crimea with Russia.<sup>29</sup> Türkiye believes that it is entitled to patronize the Crimean Tatars as their compatriots. Besides, Türkiye has been and is still supporting Ukraine on the international arena.<sup>30</sup> Russian-Turkish interests clashed in February 2022 in the course of the Special Military Operation in Ukraine. This year Türkiye has even increased the supply of UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) to Ukraine and provides comprehensive support,<sup>31</sup> and though Türkiye has condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine, at the same time it did not join western sanctions.<sup>32</sup> The authors assume that Russia took note of Türkiye's approach to the Ukrainian crisis. At the same time they suppose that Türkiye's nonalignment on sanctions and refusal to open another front against Russia was perceived as a success since it could serve as a kind of a channel for various economic and political communications.<sup>33</sup>

## TÜRKIYE'S COMPETING STRATEGIES

Impeding Türkiye becoming a full-fledged member of the European Union, the West actually compelled Türkiye to go eastwards, where it could increase its influence and presence. Neo-Ottomanism, which served as an ideological basis of the new Turkish advance, stimulated official Ankara to spread into all

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/24/Türkiye-shoots-down-jet-near-border-with-syria> .

<sup>28</sup> J. Malsin, "Russian ambassador to Turkey shot dead in Ankara," 19.12.2016. URL: <https://time.com/4606600/russian-ambassador-turkey-ankara/> .

<sup>29</sup> "The UN Resolution against Russia's Ukraine annexations: How did the Middle East vote?" 18.10.2022. URL: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/un-resolution-againstrussias-ukraine-annexations-how-did-middle-east-vote> ; S. Demir, *Türkiye's foreign policy and security perspectives in the 21st century: Prospects and challenges*, Brown Walker Press, Florida, 2016, p. 169.

<sup>30</sup> F. Ereker, U. Ozert, "Crimea in Turkish-Russian relations: Identity, discourse, or interdependence," *Athens Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(4):2018, pp. 371-88.

<sup>31</sup> Э. Топджу, "Bayraktar: какова роль турецких дронов в войне в Украине" (Bayraktar: What is the role of the Turkish drones in the Ukrainian war?), 09.03.2022. URL: <https://www.dw.com/ru/bayraktar-kakova-rol-tureckih-besipilotnikov-v-vojne-v-ukraine/a-61054407> .

<sup>32</sup> Türkiye's approaches to this issue found some understanding in the West, (B. Banerjee, "Türkiye on Russia-Ukraine crisis," 31.05.2022.) URL: <https://thekootneeti.in/2022/05/31/Türkiye-on-russia-ukraine-crisis/> .

<sup>33</sup> "Путин отметил успешное сотрудничество России с Турцией по Сирии и Ливии" (Putin stated the successful cooperation with Turkey concerning Syria and Lebanon), 29.09.2021. URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/12534529> .

countries among the peoples who had once been part of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Türkiye realized its capacity to integrate with Azerbaijan and the Turkic states of Central Asia within the framework of the Great Turan ideology. This is where the competitive interests of Türkiye and Russia objectively converge. Back in the early 1990s, Türkiye (on US recommendation) began developing its Eurasian project, meaning rapprochement with the countries of the South Caucasus, the Turkic peoples of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation in the North Caucasus and the Volga region, and the Turkic states of Central Asia.<sup>35</sup> The Turkish ideology of Eurasianism entailed consolidation of all parts in the large expanses of Eurasia under Turkish leadership. It was believed then that Russia, which lost the Cold War, did not have the resources to prevent, moreover, resist this process.<sup>36</sup>

Turkish activity in the zones of traditional Russian influence was by its nature a step-by-step advancement. Thus, official Ankara considered it possible to collaborate with Russia in the direction of creating a format for comprehensive cooperation in the South Caucasus. Back in 2008, Türkiye proposed creating a “Platform for Stability and Cooperation in the Caucasus” with the participation of the three recognized republics of the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), as well as Türkiye and Russia.<sup>37</sup> It is hard to believe that Ankara did not understand this. At the time the format did not receive any significant response. However, after the defeat of Armenia in the “44-day War” of 2020 and the announcement of a truce through the mediation of President Vladimir Putin, the chances of establishing new relationships became more realistic. An agreement between Russia and Türkiye enabled the deployment of a Monitoring Center in the immediate vicinity of the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in the city of Aghdam, where Russian and Turkish military

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<sup>34</sup> A. Davutoğlu, *Stratejik derinlik: Turkiyenin uluslararası konumu*, İstanbul, 2001, p. 118.

<sup>35</sup> R. Safrastyan, “On the ideological justification of the regional policy of Türkiye: the concept of Eurasia-South Caucasus: regional security and stability,” *Materials of the conference*, G. Novikova. Ed. A. Melyan, S. Sargsyan (eds.), transl. by A. Melyan. Yerevan, 2004, pp. 70-72 (in Russian).

<sup>36</sup> G. Fuller, *Türkiye faces East: New orientations toward the Middle East and the old Soviet Union*, Rand, Santa Monica, CA, 1997, pp. 37-39.

<sup>37</sup> D. Devrim and E. Schulz, “The Caucasus: Which role for Türkiye in the European neighborhood?” *Insight Türkiye*, 11(3):2009, pp. 177-93; M. Celikpala, “Türkiye ve Kafkasya: Reaksiyoner dış politikadan proaktif ritmik diplomasiye geçiş,” *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Cilt 7, Sayı 25, Bahar 2010, pp. 93-126.



personnel were represented in equal numbers.<sup>38</sup> In the authors' opinion this new element symbolized that given the new realities Russia agreed to accept Türkiye's expansion in the South Caucasus. It is noteworthy, however, that Azerbaijan, with its strategic allied relations with Russia and excellent relations with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, is in no hurry to become a member of the CSTO. Instead the Shusha Declaration announced the prospect of full integration with Türkiye.<sup>39</sup> Under these conditions, having excellent relations with Georgia and relying on the idea of "one nation - two states" (with Azerbaijan), Türkiye is cautiously but consistently taking steps to finally normalize its relations with Armenia so that Armenia will not be able, whether objectively or subjectively, to interfere in its integration with Azerbaijan.

The Turkic republics of Central Asia are steadily, though step by step, moving towards expanding and deepening multifaceted cooperation with Türkiye. Beyond linguistic and cultural cooperation they now cooperate on a wide range of issues, including defense and security.<sup>40</sup> One may only wonder how the first president of Kazakhstan (perhaps also other leaders of the Central Asian states) managed (in an official or informal setting) to persuade prominent figures of the Russian political elite to extend a hand of cooperation to the leaders of Türkiye as well as to involve the Turkic republics in such cooperation. Under these conditions, Russia, especially during the presidency of Putin, faces the need to find an acceptable formula for peaceful coexistence.

## COOPERATION FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

During the entire post-Soviet period, in particular the last 10–20 years, Russia has been positioning itself as a Eurasian power. It took the lead in the process of Eurasian integration, being sure that its potential for influence and attraction was absolutely sufficient to consolidate some of the countries of the post-Soviet space around itself. Supporters of Eurasian integration confirm that from the very beginning of the confrontation between the West and Russia the

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<sup>38</sup> "В Карабахе открылся российско-турецкий мониторинговый центр" (A monitoring center has been established in Gharapagh), 30.01.2021. URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/10584995>.

<sup>39</sup> Y. Tashjian, "'Shushi Declaration' and its Implications on the South Caucasus and beyond," 29.06.2021. URL: <https://armenianweekly.com/2021/06/29/shushi-declaration-and-its-implicationson-the-south-caucasus-and-beyond>.

<sup>40</sup> "Turkic states should develop common security concept, Erdoğan says," *Daily Sabah*, 11.11.2022. URL: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkic-states-should-develop-commonsecurity-concept-erdogan-says>; И. Субботин, "Эрдогана призывают создать тюркский военный блок" (Erdoğan is being called to establish a military block), 12.01.2022. URL: [https://www.ng.ru/world/2022-01-12/1\\_8343\\_Turkiye.html](https://www.ng.ru/world/2022-01-12/1_8343_Turkiye.html).

latter has been seriously thinking that the advancement of economic integration processes would enable it to find a chain of new opportunities for ensuring economic development and, on the other hand, might ensure a mode of peaceful coexistence and security in the region of Greater Eurasia.<sup>41</sup> Since Russia was confident that it could become the axis and locomotive of a new phase of Eurasian integration, it continued developing relations with Azerbaijan and with the countries of Central Asia with the hope that they would be attracted to being involved in a greater Eurasian partnership. And here, again, taking into account the prospect of cooperation with China, Iran, Türkiye, Egypt and other countries, Russia was most seriously looking at Türkiye.

Türkiye's not joining the Western sanctions against it was considered a political success in Russia. In 2021, the volume of economic cooperation between Russia and Türkiye exceeded \$33 billion.<sup>42</sup> Russia is building a nuclear power plant in Türkiye at its own expense.<sup>43</sup> It is important to note that Türkiye is developing a project to build another nuclear power plant near Sinop<sup>44</sup> with Russian assistance as well as a giant gas hub, claiming to be the main supplier of gas to Southern Europe. This is a strategic issue for a large group of EU countries. The role of Türkiye in this matter is most important in view of well-known difficulties<sup>45</sup> in direct communication between Russia and the EU. Maintaining partnership relations with Ukraine and military-political, allied relations with the US and the EU, Türkiye is consistently promoting its mediation on various issues arising between Russia and Ukraine.

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<sup>41</sup> *Greater Eurasia*, p. 1040.

<sup>42</sup> Alexander Novak, "New opportunities to expand Russia-Turkey cooperation are opening up," 16.06.2022. URL: <http://government.ru/en/news/45738/>.

<sup>43</sup> R. N. Masumova, "Russia and Türkiye: Resetting economic partnership," *Perceptions*, Summer, XXIII (2):2018, p. 42.

<sup>44</sup> Z. Karabay, "Rosatom starts negotiations with Türkiye for second nuclear plant," 19.10.2022. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/nuclear/rosatom-starts-negotiations-with-turkiye-for-second-nuclear-plant/36665>; B. Şimşek, "Türkiye to attract \$40B investment for 2nd nuclear plant," 05.03.2023. URL: <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/energy/turkiye-to-attract-40b-investment-for-2nd-nuclear-plant>.

<sup>45</sup> "Телефонный разговор с Президентом Турции Реджепом Тайипом Эрдоганом" (Telephone conversation with Recep Tayyip Erdogan), 11.12.2022. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70064>; "Путин заявил, что газовый хаб в Турции – реалистичный и быстро реализуемый проект" (Putin claims Turkey's gas hub is a realistic and quickly realized project), URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/business/870424>.

## THE CASE OF ARMENIA AND NAGORNO KARABAGH

The Declaration of November 9, 2020 between Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia announced the end of the Second Karabakh War.

Russia agreed to a Turkish military presence in Azerbaijan in parallel with its own. It is worth noting that to promote the economic development of the South Caucasus Russia is cooperating with Türkiye and the Islamic Republic of Iran in a “3+3 Format”.<sup>46</sup> Despite the fact of Georgia’s refusal to accept cooperation proposals within that format, it still seems acceptable in terms of using multilateral cooperation to strengthen regional security and stability. In the South Caucasus, as well as in Syria, the trilateral format of the presidents of Russia, Türkiye and Iran has proved to be very effective and justifies itself even now.

As for the Turkic world, in an effort to maintain its own security and internal stability and not to isolate Türkiye from these processes, Russia is looking for new forms of cooperation with the Turkic world. Both the confrontation with the West and the deepening cooperation of Russia and Türkiye within the framework of the idea of a great Eurasian partnership may encourage them to maintain in the foreseeable future the existing level of relations and to find mutually acceptable solutions in all of the above areas.

The authors believe that manifestations of confrontation, competition and cooperation in the politics of Russia and Türkiye will still be felt. Therefore, the political course of large and small countries of the region in processes involving the two major actors should be carried on in the absolute logic of taking consideration of these realities.

## CONCLUSIONS

During the post-Soviet period Russia and Türkiye gained a lot of experience in developing a common attitude towards political and ethnic conflicts. It is noteworthy that during these conflicts relations between Russia and Türkiye, even in the event of confrontation, did not deteriorate below a certain acceptable level. In all cases military-political and diplomatic channels of communication operated, forcing the parties to take into account the cardinal interests of each other.

We have to agree with the opinion of Armenian orientalists who, like many other authors, argue that throughout history Russian-Turkish relations have

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<sup>46</sup> “Дипломаты стран формата «3+3» обсудили противодействие общим вызовам в регионе” (3+3 format states’ diplomats examined how to face the region’s general challenges), 10.12.2021. URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/13171839> .

gone through “ebb and flow” periods,<sup>47</sup> which in all cases left their imprint on political and economic processes in the region.

The Turkic countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia are interested in cooperation between Russia and Türkiye in this large region. In the South Caucasus region Türkiye has become an important actor with significant influence over its close allies Azerbaijan and Georgia. Russia seeks to play such a role in this region that, on the one hand, would help preserve its traditional zones of influence, and, on the other hand, in consensus with Türkiye and Iran, promote the processes of appeasement, strengthening security and stability in the South Caucasus. Under these conditions, the constructiveness of the countries of the South Caucasus, including Armenia, is of particular importance, as their role is determined by the desire not to fall out of the proclaimed regional processes. Strengthening Russia's positions in neighboring regions, specifically the Black Sea and the Middle East, which threatened Türkiye's plans to become a regional leader, compelled Ankara to make another attempt to reconsider its influence in the South Caucasus, as evidenced by its participation in Azerbaijan's September 2020 military aggression against Artsakh (the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic). As a result of the 44-day Artsakh war Moscow, on the one hand, strengthened its military presence in the region by deploying a peacekeeping mission in the conflict zone and establishing its control over strategic regional communication hubs and, on the other hand, did not oppose Ankara's entering into the region and actually began a dialogue with it and recognized its interests in the South Caucasus, traditionally a vital zone of Russian interests.

To repeat, Türkiye's membership in NATO and closeness to the United States did not stop it from developing strong Russian-Turkish relations. On the contrary, Türkiye started cooperating with the Russian armed forces both in the case of the Syrian and in the case of the Karabakh conflicts. In Syria, this resulted in joint patrols and coordinated operations, and in the Karabakh conflict, in joint monitoring of the post-conflict settlement.

Despite the proxy wars between Ankara and Moscow in conflict zones of different regions, Russia and Türkiye do not resort to direct confrontation, given the difficulties in the field of international cooperation and deep bilateral multi-vector trade and economic relations, including cooperation in the field of energy. This is the factor determining the current nature of Russian-Turkish relations, which are both competitive and collaborative.

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<sup>47</sup> Al. Safaryan, N. Pogosyan “On the cooperation of Eurasian universities in the field of studying controversial issues “at the junction” of Armenian studies and Turkic studies,” *Selected pages of the Russian-Armenian strategic union*. Yerevan, 2022, p. 36, (in Russian).

**ՈՌԻՍ-ԹՈՒՐՔԱԿԱՆ ՅԱՐԱԲԵՐՈՒԹԻՒՆՆԵՐԻ ԶԱՐԳԱՅՄԱՆ ԲՆՈՅԹԸ ԵՒ  
ԴԻՆԱՄԻԿԱՆ ՅԵՏԽՈՐՀՐԴԱՅԻՆ ՇՐՋԱՆՈՒՄ  
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Յօդուածում քննարկում է վերջին 30 տարիներին ռուս-թուրքական յարաբերութիւնների զարգացման գործընթացը, աշխարհաքաղաքական մրցակցութեան հիմնական երեսակները եւ յատկապէս հակամարտութիւնները Հարաւային Կովկասում եւ յարակից տարածաշրջաններում:

Հեղինակների կարծիքով այս ենթախորքում առանցքային են արցախեան երկու պատերազմները, վրաց-հարաւօսական հնգօրեայ պատերազմը, ինչպէս նաեւ ուկրայնական ճգնաժամը, լիբիական եւ սիրիական հակամարտութիւնները, որոնցում Մոսկուան ու Անկարան ունեն հակոտնեայ շահեր: Աւելին, այդ հակամարտութիւնների կարգաւորման վերջնարդիւնքից է մեծապէս կախուած լինելու Հարաւային Կովկասի ուժային նոր բաշխումները:

Յօդուածում հեղինակները ներկայացնում են նաեւ ռուս-թուրքական երկկողմ յարաբերութիւնների զարգացման օրինաչափութիւնները, որոնք աչքի են ընկնում մրցակցութեան եւ համագործակցութեան համադրութեամբ:

