

From Foe to Friend: Turkish-Russian Relations in the 21st Century¹

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ABSTRACT

After the restrictive and deterrent dynamics of the Cold War, the relationship between Turkey and Russia seemed likely to produce back-breaking competition and to cause conflicts in the Turkish Republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus. For a period of time, these predictions have indeed come true. Turkey has begun wholesale cooperation with the Turkish states that were former Soviet Republics and Russia did not approve this affiliation. Nevertheless, this was the first step in Turkey's multidimensional and regional foreign policy within the Black Sea region, the Caucasus and Central Asia primarily comprise a wide range of commercial concerns. Today, Turkey perceives the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the whole of Eurasia not as an arena for competition but as an agora for cooperation. This article argues that, the twenty-first century represents a milestone for Turkish-Russian relations. The changing circumstances of international politics and economics have mutually attracted the two nations. Turkey and Russia are no longer rivals; they now have complementary economies and interests that require them to form a new multilevel partnership.

Keywords: Turkish-Russian Relations, economic and politic cooperation, Black-Sea Region, Military Dialogue, Diplomacy.

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The main point of view put forth in assessments of Turkish-Russian relations is formed by a certain antagonism that exists in the academic world and in the literature (Çitçi 2010, pp. 213-222). It is a fact that the Ottoman Empire was characterized as the “sick man of Europe” (Mansel 1995, p. 268; Watson 1988, p. 319; Swallow 1973) and that the Slav-Orthodox citizens’ provocation by the Russian Czars caused huge trauma for the Turkish administration during the fall of the empire (McCarthy 1996; Jelavich 1978; Jelavich 2009, p.40). During this period, nearly five million³ Turks were murdered or deported from the lands in the Balkans where they had lived for more than 500 years (Inalcik 1993; Karpas 1985). However, both the new government after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the new Turkish Republic founded at the end of the Ottoman Empire have put significant effort into improving relations between Turkey and Russia. The two nations showed solidarity with each other and began to collaborate at the beginning of the 1920s. The Soviet Union was the first country to recognize the new Grand National Assembly of Turkey that had saved Anatolia from occupation (Fromkin 2001). This Assembly, gathered in Ankara, held extraordinary powers to command the war and to establish the new state. Russian support was therefore crucial at the beginning of the occupation and is now memorable for the Turkish people because it marked the beginning of the collaboration between the two nations. In this context, the Treaty of Brotherhood, a friendship treaty between the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and Bolshevik Russia signed on 16 March 1921, provided a strong basis for the Russian economical, political and military support provided while the war continued (Gökay 1997).

Following the Turkish War of Independence, the level of relations between Turkey and Russia has risen; this was especially evident at the tenth anniversary celebrations of the new Turkish Republic. Russian tanks appeared at the parade in Ankara under the supervision of General Voroshilov (Aydoğan 2007, pp. 337-357). Today, a monument that is very meaningful for the Turkish people and for Turkish history, located in Taksim Square at the center of İstanbul, symbolizes this friendship. Behind statues of the famous figures and national heroes of the Turkish War of Independence and the imposing figure of Kemal Atatürk can be seen two Russian Generals standing with the Turkish founders. One of the generals is Voroshilov and the other is General Frunze, the famous commander of the Red Army (Tekiner 2010, p.98). These two figures were included in this memorial at the request of Atatürk himself in order to honor Russia’s concrete and moral support during the war (Birch 2009). Moreover, Russian support was not limited to the war period. Following the establishment of

³ See the annotated map prepared by McCarthy (2010).

the Turkish Republic, Russia provided technical and economic support for the young republic's large industrial projects (Harris 1967, pp. 146-147). This support was not in vain. Russia has always been concerned about the occupation of the Turkish straits by British forces and about the prospect of an alliance between Turkey and the Western world (Hurewitz 1962, pp. 605-632). Some historians have asserted that Russian support was not sincere and that the guns sent by Russia were the very Ottoman munitions that were gathered from the Eastern front during World War I. From this perspective, the Russian supply represents merely limited aid in the form of offering Turkey's own weapons to itself with a further requirement that the aid was conditional on the establishment of the Turkish Communist Party (Sönmezoğlu 2001, p. 60; Armaoğlu 1983, pp. 308-310). However, the Soviet Union's support for Turkey as a buffer zone has paved the way for the new republic.

World War II shifted the direction of relations. On one hand, there were relations between Germany and Turkey in the special circumstances of war while Turkey attempted, as a non-partisan country, to balance its relationships with the major powers. On the other hand, the offensive politics of Stalin annihilated the cooperation between Turkey and Russia (Harris 1995, p. 6). The world's separation into two main poles by the Potsdam and Yalta Conferences after the war also sent Turkey and Russia to opposite sides of these political alliances. As a result, rivalry and competition between the two countries rose to their highest levels. The rigid bloc system of the Cold War and the role that was cast for Turkey have exaggerated the ideological and geopolitical rivalries between the two nations.⁴ Nevertheless, the two countries have always had the common grounds of geography and complementary economies on which to base a sustainable partnership. This potential has been reactivated after the collapse of the Soviet regime and the inclusion of the Russian Federation as a new state in the international system.

AFTER THE COLD WAR

When the restrictive and deterrent dynamics of the Cold War disappeared, the relationship between Turkey and Russia seemed likely to produce back-breaking competition and to cause conflicts in the Turkish Republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus. For a period of time, these predictions have indeed come true (Gökırmak 2005, pp. 249-250). Turkey has begun wholesale cooperation with the Turkish states that were former Soviet

⁴ Turkey and The Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints, *A Report of International Crisis Group - Europe Report N°203*, 7 April 2010

Republics. Multitudes of deputations consisting of government officials, Turkish investors and merchants have rushed to these new lands, and these interactions have improved the relationships of the former Soviet Republics with Turkey. Nevertheless, this policy and approach should not be seen as political and military challenges to Russia or as a pan-Turkish strategy. We must remind ourselves that Turkey has been a center of cultural attraction for the new independent states in Central Asia and the Caucasus (Gökırmak 2005, pp. 249-250). Turkey has never pursued a containment policy against Russia nor tried to build a monopolistic hegemony in the former Soviet States. On the contrary, it has endeavored to mediate between these countries and the world system and attempted to help the entire region and its new independent states integrate with the world. Turkey's present connections with Central Asia must be understood in this context; this applies not only to its relations with Turkish states but also to its relations with Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine.

In this context, Turkey has intensified its efforts not only toward the construction of a political alliance but also toward cultural and economic targets consisting of investments in energy, construction, textiles and pipelines. In fact, this first step in Turkey's multidimensional and regional foreign policy has persisted in its relations for some time. Turkey's regional interests within the Black Sea region, the Caucasus and Central Asia primarily comprise a wide range of commercial concerns, from building roads, hotels and markets to selling the goods of its export inventory (Gökırmak 2005, pp. 249-250).

The twenty-first century represents a milestone for Turkish-Russian relations. The changing circumstances of international politics and economics have mutually reattracted the two nations. While the cooperation between Russia and Turkey had already been growing because of the requirements of their developing industries and of Turkey's energy gap, the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent US campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq have brought the two countries closer together. The immoderate demands and unclear strategy of the United States as it pursues "The Greater Middle East Project" have not been accepted by the Turkish people. As a result, Turkey has strengthened its relations with Russia as a reasonable partner. Nonetheless, the reasons for increased relations between the two countries are not limited to these factors. The European Union's uncompanionable and careless policies toward Turkey and Russia have also brought the two countries closer.

MORE THAN PRAGMATISM

Despite these contributing factors, current relations between Turkey and Russia can not be defined as an “axis of outsiders (Hill & Taspınar 2006, pp. 81-92)” or a “pragmatic partnership”. They are deeper than these definitions indicate: each nation’s economy is significantly integrated with that of the other. Made up in the 1990s merely of Russian tourists’ purchases of merchandise, the nations’ economic relations have diversified and improved gradually each year. The volume of trade rose to six billion dollars in 2003 and to 40 billion dollars by 2009.⁵ Today, the objective of the two countries is to achieve approximately 100 billion dollars in trade within the next five years.⁶ This target is not generally seen as wishful thinking. The Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, one of the main establishments of the Turkish economy and which has 1.2 million recorded commercial and industrial firms, has declared this quantity of trade to be its sincere aim. To quote the president of the union, “the richness of our neighbor Russia makes us happy, because the prosperity of Russia will create possibilities for new jobs in Turkey”. The balance of power that was formed after the global economic crisis requires an increase in cooperation and solidarity. The building of a new global order and the composition of a welfare zone are possibilities that we today find in our hands. Turkey and Russia are no longer rivals; they now have complementary economies and interests that require them to form a new multilevel partnership (Öniş 2001). Today, Turkey perceives the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the whole of Eurasia not as an arena for competition but as an agora for cooperation. In understanding the relations between Turkey and Russia, the concept of “complementary economies” is important because this type of relationship does not occur frequently in the world economy. For example, when we look at the economic structures of Turkey and China, we do not see the same situation (Daly 2007). It is clear that the Turkish and Russian economies have a great opportunity to establish cooperation for the future.

⁵ “Russia, Turkey expect to deepen ties in more fields”, *Todays Zaman*, 09 May 2010, available at:

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-209722-russia-turkey-expect-to-deepen-ties-in-more-fields.html>, accessed 06 June 2010.

⁶ “Turkey, Russia plan to boost annual trade to \$100 bln in 5 years”, *Ria Novosti*, 08 June 2010, available at: <http://en.rian.ru/world/20100608/159343079.html>, accessed 10 June 2010; “Russia, Turkey could increase trade to \$100 bln over 5 yrs – Medvedev”, *Ria Novosti*, 12 May 2010, available at: <http://en.rian.ru/world/20100512/158994532.html>, accessed 10 June 2010.

As a natural result of this situation, Russia is currently the largest trade partner of Turkey, and Turkey is the fifth-largest trade partner of Russia.⁷ A large amount of energy provided by Russia is the primary import of Turkish industry. Turkey imports 66% of its gas, 50% of its coal and 30% of its oil from Russia (Thumann 2010). In addition to energy trade, Turkish construction firms in Russia continue to grow and nearly 200 Turkish heavyweight construction companies have completed about 1000 projects in a wide range of structures from hotels and roads to malls and factories since the beginning of the 1990s.⁸ The financial volume of these projects is over 30 billion dollars and contributes to the workforce and building sector of the Turkish economy.⁹ Today, 16% of the Russian imports from Turkey consist of building materials and iron and steel products. Russian businessmen have four billion dollars directly invested in Turkey, and Turkish businessmen have six billion dollars directly invested in Russia (Babalı 2009, pp. 25-33). In addition, Turkey has become the main tourism destination for Russians. The number of Russian tourists has reached about three million per year, which means that, together with the Germans, the Russians form one of the largest tourist groups in Turkey (Öğütçü 2010, pp. 63-88).

Aside from economic cooperation, cultural relations between the two countries are also improving steadily. There are new Russian cultural centers and friendship clubs and newly offered Russian courses in various Turkish cities. The Turkish people have a great desire to learn Russian.¹⁰ Moreover, the marking of the Russian culture year in Turkey in 2007 and the Turkish culture year in Russia in 2008 have given significant momentum to the deepening of the relations between the peoples (Medvedev 2010). An increasing number of Turkish students are also pursuing their educations in Russia. Academic exchange programs between Turkish and Russian universities are supported by the governments, and an agreement has been signed for the mutual opening of the state archives (Güller 2009). In addition, Turkey has supported Russia's observer status in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (Özcan 2005). This movement toward membership has both brought a new dimension in relations between Russia and Muslim countries and created a new basis on which Russia can develop political and

⁷ "Economy Key Factor in 2009 Turkey-Russia Ties", *World Bulletin*, 01 January 2010, available at: http://www.worldbulletin.net/news_detail.php?id=52061, accessed 17 May 2010.

⁸ "Rusya'da Türk müteahhitlere yatırım imkânı", *Zaman*, 01 Eylül 2009, available at: <http://www.emlakpencerem.com/rusyada-turk-muteahhitlere-yatirim-imkani.html>, accessed 14 January 2010.

⁹ "İhracatta 107,5 milyar dolarlık hedefi aşacağız", *Yeni Şafak*, 28 July 2010, available at: <http://yenisafak.com.tr/Ekonomi/?i=270596>, accessed 28 July 2010.

¹⁰ "Rusya - Türkiye Diplomatik İlişkileri", *Gazetem.ru*, 30 June 2010.

commercial ties with the countries of the Middle East. Russia's new ties have also given rise to efforts to rehabilitate the situation in Chechnya, as shown by the fact that construction is today being begun by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, under the supervision of Russia, that will attempt to make conditions better in this suffering region (Gagnon-Lefebvre 2008). All these features of the relationship between the two nations show that Turkey supports peaceful solutions and territorial integrity in both the Caucasus and the Black Sea regions.

The new cultural and commercial cooperation between Turkey and Russia has also improved their social relations. Both countries have signed an agreement to lift their mutual visa restrictions. The removal of visa restrictions will increase the flow of visitors between the nations. According to commentators, this will mainly benefit Russians because the number of Russians who visit Turkey is much greater than the number of Turkish tourists in Russia. The number of Turkish citizens for whom Moscow is a tourist destination is between 30,000 and 40,000.¹¹ Turkey will, however, undoubtedly gain an indirect advantage from the removal of restrictions. Aside from providing an increase in tourism incomes, the Russian people who return to or decide to live in Turkey will bring with them a cultural richness. As an example, the number of marriages between Russians and Turks since the early 1990s has reached about 280,000 (Kirt 2006).¹² This number is remarkable when we consider that the Russian and Turkish peoples have lived in different, even hostile, ideological, ethnic and religious environments throughout the centuries and have only normalized their relations as recently as 20 years ago. When we examine these marriages, we learn that some of these couples live in Russia and some live in Turkey. Generally, the husbands are Turkish and the brides are Russian.¹³ Their children can read Pushkin in Russian on the one hand and listen to music or watch television in Turkish on the other. These families simultaneously feel and understand the atmospheres of İstanbul and of St. Petersburg. When the

¹¹ "Turkey and Russia to lift visa requirements next week, sources say", *Hurriyet-Daily News*, 07 May 2010, available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-and-russia-will-sign-a-visa-removal-agreement-next-week-2010-05-07>, accessed 11 May 2010.

¹² "Vizenin Kalkması Evliliklerini Patlatacak", *An interview with Lavissa Merck for Akşam*, 16 May 2010, available at: <http://www.aksam.com.tr/2010/05/16/haber/737/pazar/haber.html>, accessed 02 June 2010; "Russian Girls Abandon Their Nation in Need", *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 18.10.2006, available at: http://english.pravda.ru/russia/kremlin/18-08-2006/83990-russian_girls-0/, accessed 02 June 2010.

¹³ "Vizenin Kalkması Evliliklerini Patlatacak", *An interview with Lavissa Merck for Akşam*, 16.Mayıs.2010, available at: <http://www.aksam.com.tr/2010/05/16/haber/737/pazar/haber.html>, accessed 02 June 2010.

couples are asked how they see the future of Turkish-Russian relations, they may say, “you will get the answer when you see our children take office in both the Duma and the Turkish Grand National Assembly” (Başlamış 2010).

A NEW MILITARY DIALOGUE

The growing interdependence between Turkey and Russia in economic and social life has also improved the countries’ political and military cooperation. In the 1990s, Turkey became the first NATO country to purchase weapons from Russia. This cooperation continues with recent negotiations to purchase a batch of the Kornet-E anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) (Torbakov 2008, p. 28). If we consider the improving level of NATO-Russia relations and the trade agreement for “Mistral” class warships between Russia and France (Jankowski & Kowalik 2010, pp. 76-98), we can see that Turkey has been a pioneer in improving military relations with Russia and that its pioneering role has not only benefited Turkish interests but also those of NATO.

In this context, an understanding of the naval area of the Black Sea region is especially crucial for an understanding of the importance of Turkish-Russian military cooperation. While emerging asymmetric security risks dramatically affect nearly every region of the world, the Black Sea region has remained relatively calm. The provisions of the Montreux Convention, as well as the good level of cooperation achieved among the littoral nations in the Black Sea through regional initiatives such as those of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the Black Sea Naval Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR) and the Black Sea Confidence and Security Building Measures (Black Sea CSBMs), have been central factors in stabilizing the region. Each of these initiatives, all of which are based on the goodwill between and the common interests of Turkey and Russia, has provided a remarkable contribution to the preservation of a stable climate in the region.¹⁴

On the other side, all of the Black Sea littoral nations have expressed their support for these efforts at the three high-level representative meetings of the BLACKSEAFOR since 2004. While efforts toward identifying the modalities of the employment of BLACKSEAFOR as a tool for the littoral states to use in dealing with the illicit trafficking of drugs, arms and human

¹⁴ “Regional Initiatives Aimed at Enhancing Security in the Black Sea Maritime Domain”, *Turkish General Staff*, available at:

<http://www.tsk.tr/eng/uluslararasi/karadenizdenizisbirligorevgrubu.htm>, accessed 21 July 2010.

beings, as well as the proliferation of WMD, are being pursued, Turkey launched its Operation Black Sea Harmony (OBSH) in its territorial waters and in the Black Sea on 01 March 2004. The objectives of OBSH are entirely in line with the aims and objectives of NATO's Operation Active Endeavour (OAE) in the Mediterranean and it cooperates closely with OAE in information sharing. Its mission is to patrol the Black Sea randomly and to detect and trail ships suspected of being involved in illegal activities. Once a suspect ship is detected, it is tracked by various means to its destination by combined efforts and is eventually handed over to relevant authorities for search, detention and prosecution if necessary. Since the introduction of OBSH, thousands of ships have been detected and identified. Turkey believes this operation has increased the deterrence of illegal activities and contributed to the safety and security of the ever-increasing volume of maritime trade in the Black Sea.¹⁵

Given this framework, it will not be surprising if a new military alliance forms in the Black Sea in the near future by means of a military treaty between Russia, Turkey and the Ukraine under the name of the Black Sea Defense Treaty (Ciurea 2010). The signing of the new agreement for the Russian fleet in the Crimea (Watson & Tkachenko 2010), together with other geopolitical factors that currently exist, render this alliance easily organized. Such an alliance may raise some questions about Turkey as a member of NATO and as an applicant for the European Union. However, though Russia and Ukraine are not members of these institutions, they have strongly developing relations and some organic connections with these and other Western organizations.¹⁶ In addition, Mr. Rasmussen, the Secretary-General of NATO and the chairman of the NATO-Russia Council, has clearly indicated that his primary objective is to work toward transforming NATO-Russian relations into a strategic partnership.¹⁷ Secretary-General Rasmussen has also stressed that disagreements should not overshadow the fact that NATO and Russia share many common security interests owing to

¹⁵ "Regional Initiatives Aimed at Enhancing Security in the Black Sea Maritime Domain", *Turkish General Staff*, available at:

<http://www.tsk.tr/eng/uluslararasi/karadenizdenizisbirligigorevgrubu.htm>, accessed 21 July 2010.

¹⁶ *Bucharest - NATO Summit Declaration*, 3 April 2008, available at:

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm, accessed 04 June 2010; "NATO and Russia: A New Beginning", *A speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Carnegie Endowment*, Brussels, 18 Sep. 2009, available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_57640.htm, accessed 04 June 2010.

¹⁷ "NATO and Russia, Partners for the Future", *A speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Moscow State Institute for International Relations*, 17 Dec. 2009, available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_60223.htm, accessed 05 June 2010.

the threats that they face in common.¹⁸ It should thus not be difficult to form and maintain such an alliance in the Black Sea. If such an alliance is founded, Russia and Turkey will each play an important role, along with the other potential member states, in ensuring stability in the region.

The Black Sea region is increasingly becoming an energy transportation route that forms a geostrategic corridor between Europe and Central Asia. This is another important factor necessitating an increase in security and cooperation in the region. Of especial importance, following the operations in Afghanistan, US and NATO forces experienced difficulty using the Pakistan corridor for logistical necessities. The Black Sea region has served as an alternative route for these operations. As the US presence in Afghanistan increases, US regional demands for non-military supplies in 2010-2011 will be 200-300% higher than the 2008 baseline. To accommodate these increases and to address ongoing concerns with Pakistani supply lines, US planners have opened the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), a series of commercially-based logistical arrangements that connect Baltic and Caspian ports with Afghanistan via Russia, Turkey and the other Black Sea countries (Kuchins & Sanderson 2010). Although the impetus behind creating new supply lines is grounded in the US military's immediate needs, such an operation offers an opportunity for Turkey to further its constructive and humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan. At the same time, this opportunity is also in the interests of Russia, which suffers greatly from narcotics traffic and terrorism sourcing that emerge from the power gap in Afghanistan (Weitz 2010).

Despite all this, today's Russia has not appeared as anxious as Turkey about the potential problems known as "frozen conflicts (Blank 2008, pp. 23-54)". In this context, Turkey awaits fuller participation by Russia in solving these issues, especially those of the Nagorno-Karabagh region and the 20% of Azerbaijani lands that are currently occupied by Armenia. If Russia gives full support to the "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform" proposed by Turkey (Aras 2009) and stresses the urgency of a peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia, this will make a significant contribution to regional stability and mutual trust. If this does not happen, misperceptions about Russia's image may result and Turks may believe Russia is using these "frozen conflicts" to control the region or perhaps even to rebuild the Soviet sphere of influence.

¹⁸ "Russia and NATO Have Common Interests", *An interview with NATO Military Committee Chairman Giampaolo Di Paola for "Russia Today" (rt.com)*, 25 July, 2010, available at: <http://rt.com/news/russia-nato-common-interests/>, accessed 26 July 2010.

PIPELINE DIPLOMACY

Along the axis shared by Turkey and Russia, undoubtedly the most important and remarkable issue is energy. After the cold war, Russia became an oil and gas supply center both for Europe and for countries of the Far East, while Turkey, because of its geographical position and its quickly growing economy, has emerged as a transportation route and a demand center. This coincidence is the main reason to promote improvement in energy cooperation between Turkey and Russia. Although competing pipeline projects caused some doubt at the beginning of this relationship, newer political and economic conditions, including an increase in demand, have eased the cooperation between the two countries and have exemplified the need for future cooperative projects. Today, the energy cooperation between Turkey and Russia continues to strengthen. In spite of the many articles published about the competing nature of the Nabucco and South Stream gas pipelines (Norling 2007) (Socor 2009a) and the Burgas-Alexandroupolis and Samsun-Ceyhan oil pipelines (Socor 2009b; Baran 2008), all these projects remain on the agendas of the littoral states. Turkey has agreed to allow its territorial waters to be used for Russian Gazprom's and Italian Eni's proposed South Stream natural gas pipeline (Pronina & Meric 2009). Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan has declared that Nabucco and South Stream are not rivals and would together offer diversity.¹⁹ Russia's approach has been similar. Prime Minister Putin has confirmed that the South Stream project would not shut out Nabucco.²⁰ However, because the priorities of these projects change with time, some projects may emerge as primary in spite of former predictions. For example, many comments have emphasized the importance of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline, but because of uncertainties in the project, Russia has initially preferred to use the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline; this has resulted in the transfer of a considerable amount of Russian and Kazakh oil directly from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean through Turkey (Kaya 2009; Socor 2009c).

A similar development can be seen for the future of the South Stream project. The South Stream pipeline was originally planned to bypass Ukraine, given that the relations between Russia and Ukraine have worsened because of gas price disputes in 2006 and again in 2009. However,

¹⁹ "Putin seals new Turkey gas deal", *BBC News*, 6 August 2009, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8186946.stm>, accessed 16 May 2010; "Turkey, Russia Sign Nuclear Deal", *Asbarez*, 14 January 2010, available at: <http://asbarez.com/76099/turkey-russia-sign-nuclear-deal/>, accessed 08 April 2010.

²⁰ "Gazprom, Austria sign South Stream Agreements", *New Europe*, Issue: 883, 2 May 2010, available at: <http://www.neurope.eu/articles/100523.php>, accessed 15 June 2010.

following the election of Viktor Yanukovich as president, Russia expressed its confidence in the new administration and has not expressed very much concern about the project. Nonetheless, Ukraine has opposed the project and today still mentions that there is no need to build the South Stream pipeline (Krasnolutska & Choursina 2010). In any case, this proposal involves some cost problems for Russia. The project will inevitably be quite expensive, between 19 and 24 billion euros depending on Russian President Medvedev's decisions about the final choice of routes for some of the pipeline sections. This new estimate is at least twice as high as the estimates quoted barely a year ago when Gazprom and the Kremlin joined several governments in signing the agreement to join the South Stream Project (Socor 2008)²¹. In addition to these financial problems, the Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov has requested that the South Stream pipeline be temporarily halted.²² This suggestion resembles the response of Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov in April 2008, who at that time claimed that the Bulgarian pipeline network was not an "extension" of Russia's network and that Russia's natural gas company Gazprom should respect Bulgaria's sovereignty.²³ Nevertheless, Mr. Primakov has said that the South Stream Project will be implemented with or without Bulgaria.²⁴

Although Russia has emphasized its determination to finish the South Stream project, Russia can also export its gas to new markets via Turkey, and this will give a new impetus to the cooperation between Turkey and Russia. This fact, along with Ukraine's reaction, Bulgarian and Romanian reluctance and the estimated cost of the South Stream project, has served to strengthen another project called Blue Stream-2. When Blue Stream-2 operates in conjunction with the Blue Stream-1 pipeline, 50 billion cubic meters of Russian gas will be able to reach international markets. If Blue Stream-2 is integrated within the Nabucco project, its cost will undoubtedly be decreased.²⁵ At first glance, this seems to be a contradiction, given that the aim of Nabucco is to reduce energy dependence on Russia; however, an integration of this nature is also a risk for Russia. Energy interdependence

²¹ "Russia to build most expensive gas project in history", *Pravda*, 09 February 2009, available at: http://english.pravda.ru/russia/economics/09-02-2009/107079-russia_gas_project-0/, accessed 20 January 2010.

²² "Bulgaria prioritizes Nabucco over South Stream gas pipeline", *Ria Novosti*, 13 June 2010, available at: <http://en.rian.ru/world/20100613/159405843.html>, accessed 15 June 2010.

²³ See "Russia, Bulgaria: Lingering Tensions", *Stratfor*, 27 April 2009.

²⁴ "South Stream to be implemented by all means - Primakov", *ITAR-TASS*, 21 June 2010, available at: <http://www.inform.kz/eng/article/2280330>, accessed 22 June 2010.

²⁵ "Blue Stream 2 Still in Plans", *An interview with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin*, 08 June 2010, available at: <http://rt.com/business/news/blue-stream-pipeline-turkey/>, accessed 19 June 2010.

between Turkey and Russia will lead not only to the dependence of Turkey and Europe on Russian gas sources but also to the dependence of Russia on Turkey's transit routes and gas markets (Yinanç 2010). It is clear that such a dependence and economic interconnection will strengthen the nations' mutual trust and provide new opportunities for cooperation. It has been mentioned that Turkey has made serious sacrifices in order to improve Turkish-Russian relations. Although the balance of trade is against Turkey, especially in the energy sector, Turkey does not hesitate to search for new areas of cooperation such as the collaborative building of a nuclear power plant in Turkey.

NUCLEAR PARTNERSHIP

In this aspect of the nations' cooperation, the first tender to construct a nuclear power plant in Turkey was announced in September 2008. A Russian-Turkish consortium outbid competitors, but the contract was annulled in November 2009 because Turkey was dissatisfied with the energy prices offered (Sotnikov 2010). The finishing touches were applied to the deal in January 2010 when Turkey's TEDAS (Turkey Electricity Distribution Company) pledged to buy 70% of the new station's energy output. The nuclear power plant will be sited near the Mersin Mediterranean seaport in Akkuyu. Four 1.2 GW units will be built and phased in by the consortium between 2016 and 2019. Russia will at all times maintain the controlling stake in the \$18-20 billion project, which is to be implemented by Atomstroyexport (Sotnikov 2010). An interesting part of the agreement is the assignment of ownership of the nuclear power plant. The project will not be limited to construction but will also include the creation of a nuclear engineering company that will be owned completely by Russia. The uranium to be supplied as fuel to the Akkuyu nuclear power plant will be mined by Russian companies in Namibia, and the construction project will be realized in full compliance with Moscow's obligations in the context of the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (Sotnikov 2010). On the whole, because Turkey is a NATO country with special ties to the United States, this project is important as a way for Russia to regain trust as a constructor of nuclear power plants (Sotnikov 2010).

The proposed nuclear project will also be a gain for Turkey's nuclear technology. Moreover, it provides a chance to overcome the prejudices applied to nuclear power plants. A vast majority of the Turkish public strongly believes that the Chernobyl disaster was the main reason for the increasing incidence of cancer in the Black Sea region, in spite of the fact that the Turkish Atomic Energy Agency has reported that such a correlation has

not been scientifically proven. Although people are hesitant to introduce nuclear power plants due to the Chernobyl accident, it is nevertheless a fact that there are currently 12 nuclear power plants near the Danube River that are working with the waters of the Danube that empty themselves into the Black Sea. Such hesitation is not reasonable if necessary precautions are taken. In the future, Turkey intends to build another nuclear power plant in the Black Sea region (in Sinop) and by so doing aims to reduce its dependence on foreign energy imports and to meet its growing demand for electricity. From the point of view of Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yıldız, Turkey hopes to be able by 2020 to account for 10% of its total energy consumption with nuclear energy.²⁶

CONCLUSION

All of the developments within this framework of shared interests show that the collaboration between Turkey and Russia is not weak and temporary. From both countries' points of view, Russian-Turkish relations have advanced to the level of a "multidimensional strategic partnership" (Weitz 2010). This means that the two countries, which have struggled for power around the Black Sea for centuries, are now strongly invested in mobilizing their collaborative economic and political potential. However, this improvement in relations should not be perceived as a success only for the two countries. The close partnership that is emerging along the axis of Turkish and Russian relations also makes significant positive contributions to the economic, political and social life of the littoral states of the Black Sea Region, and even further, of the states of the Caucasus and of Central Asia. A peaceful and stable region will ensure much-needed economic prosperity and social welfare among these littoral countries.

It is true that there are problems that must be overcome in order for coexistence along the Russian-Turkish axis in the Black Sea region to advance. In this context, Turkey's proposal for the "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform" provides a good starting point. This platform and mutual economic agreements to enable free markets will also create a proper base from which to solve the problems of the region. In this regard, Russia should trust Turkey and endeavor to improve international cooperation through a more balanced trade and security system. While Turkey supports initiatives to achieve a stable region by way of a collective security system, it also sincerely believes in its cooperation with Russia. Today, it is time to

²⁶ "Turkey to Discuss Nuclear Energy on Anniversary of Chernobyl", *Sunday's Zaman*, 25 April 2010, available at: <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-208417-turkey-to-discuss-nuclear-energy-on-anniversary-of-chernobyl.html>, accessed 30 April 2010.

heat up these negotiations while the conditions and possibilities for constructing peace and cooperation in the Black Sea region are perhaps more auspicious now than ever. The only remaining necessity that all sides require for success is to conduct the cooperation process toward peaceful political arrangements and sustainable economic developments with sincerity and patience.

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