

The Nature and Dynamics of the Development of Russian-Turkish Relations in the Post-Soviet Period

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Abstract: The article examines the development of Russian-Turkish relations over the past 30 years, the main aspects of geopolitical relations and, in particular, the conflicts in the South Caucasus and adjacent regions. The authors believe that the key ones are the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the 44-day war unleashed by Azerbaijan in 2020, the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict and the five-day Georgian-South Ossetian war, as well as the Ukrainian crisis, the Libyan and Syrian conflicts, in which Moscow and Ankara have different interests. Russia and Turkey consider conflicts as an important means of establishing influence in the region and use them to ensure the desired course of events in the region. The analysis of the above-mentioned conflicts is of key importance from the point of view of the Russian-Turkish geopolitical competition, because their inflammation led to the start of the rearrangement of the spheres of influence in the region. Moreover, the new configuration of forces in the South Caucasus will largely depend on the outcome of the resolution of these conflicts. The authors identify the main patterns in the development of bilateral Russian-Turkish relations, which are characterized by a combination of confrontation, competition and cooperation. This study is based on comparative and empirical methods, as well as the method of system analysis. The authors studied the materials of Russian and Turkish official sources, and also analyzed the primary conclusions in the publications of Russian, Turkish, Armenian and other foreign researchers who have studied individual stages and pages of the topic under study over the past thirty years. The study of monographs and articles by Russian-speaking, English-speaking, Turkic-speaking authors is done in the original languages. During the post-Soviet period Russia and Türkiye have 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.

Keywords: Russia, Turkey, South Caucasus, Geopolitical Rivalry, Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict, Ukrainian Crisis

1. Introduction

Transformations that took place after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the space of Greater Eurasia brought in new elements into relations between the countries in the entire region. Collapse of the USSR led to the independence of the former Soviet republics and their conversion 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 outlined much clearer and became more predictable.

Likewise rose and intensified their political role in regional and, in general, international issues.

Under these conditions Russia-Türkiye relations underwent a notable development. Bearing the experience of past centuries these relations nevertheless shaped some new reality that attracted our attention as well as many other specialists over the world. So this article aims to examine, analyze and evaluate the dynamics and logic of the development of Russia-Türkiye relations during thirty post-Soviet years, which is important for understanding what to expect in the development prospect and what new realities may emerge in regions where these relations are either

confrontational and competitive, or collaborative.

After 1991 independent Russia was at the stage of dramatic political and economic changes that determined 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 states¹ [8, 19]. In this regard, it makes sense to study the current results of the 30-year development processes where Russia was promoting its interests through building relations with traditionally rival states, such as the Republic of Türkiye in the south. West gave the go-ahead to Türkiye's claims regarding its expansion towards the former Soviet South Caucasus and Central Asia² [4, 11] where the Turkic republics of these regions wished to develop friendly relations based on linguistic and ethno-cultural commonality, on the one hand³ [28], and Türkiye, which became the 16th economy in the world, was looking for any opportunity to expand its influence, casting glances to the East, since the European Union imposed a ban on its expansionist aspirations in the West. Under these conditions relations between Türkiye and Russia became more comprehensive and multi-valued.

2. Confrontation over Conflicts and Their Resolution

Divergence in Russian and Turkish interests on the issues of the Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia-Abkhaz and Georgia-Ossetia conflicts was clearly manifested in 1991–92. Türkiye obviously claimed to increase its presence in the South Caucasus trying to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet Union⁴ [22] yet Russia had sufficient resources to prevent the Turkish interference into the above conflicts. Thus when Türkiye tried to deploy its troops on the border with Armenia and punish it for supporting the local forces of Nagorno-Karabakh the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the President of the Russian Federation Burbulis and Commander-in-Chief of the CIS Forces Marshal Shaposhnikov clearly explained to Türkiye that its actions could lead to a third world war⁵ [20, 26]. The warning had a chilling effect and forced official Ankara to refrain from taking punitive measures against Armenia. Starting with the formation of the OSCE Minsk Group in March 1992,

Turkish diplomacy tried at all costs to intensify its presence in the process of political normalization of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, with the goal of expanding its presence in the South Caucasus through all types of support to Azerbaijan⁶ [7, 21]. Since the 1990ies and until 2020 its efforts failed, as Armenian diplomacy insisted that Türkiye could not be an impartial mediator, since it was biased in defending and promoting the Azerbaijani interests. In the Abkhaz conflict Türkiye tried to protect the Georgian interests, at that its own approach was based on the position of large Abkhaz communities living in Türkiye with relatives in Abkhazia⁷ [10, 12, 16]. In this case Türkiye, on the one hand, did not resort to military intervention considering the Russian influence but tried by its active neutrality to take a more effective part in regional affairs, on the other hand.

Quite instructive was the position of Türkiye in the August Georgian-Ossetian war of 2008, which differed from all other, even allied positions. Türkiye did not support the position of the West regarding this war⁸ [24, 27]. It is now obvious that the Georgian side started the war in order to oust the Russians from Ossetia, but the course of events in opposite direction roused great international tension with an attempt by the West to actively intervene for coping with the consequences of this war. Through its neutrality and active use of all the 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 strengthened its presence in Georgia (and throughout the South Caucasus). Specifically, the Free Trade Agreement between Türkiye and Georgia that entered into force in 2007 enabled Türkiye to become the largest trade partner of Georgia and in 2011 the trade turnover between the two countries exceeded \$1.5 billion. There was no such an index in Georgia's economic relations with any other state⁹. In 2000-2011 Türkiye invested over \$1.4 billion in Georgia, which made 16% of all direct foreign investments in Georgia¹⁰. Georgia became the first post-Soviet republic where Türkiye succeeded to surpass Russia as the main

1 Allison R., *Military Forces in the Soviet Successor States*. The Adelphi Paper, 1993; 33 (280), p. 19; Craig Nation R. *Russia and the Caucasus*. Connections; 2015, 14 (2), p. 1-12.

2 Bal I. The Turkish Model and the Turkic Republics. *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*. 1998, September-November, p. 5; Gadzhiev K. S. *Geopolitics of the Caucasus*. Moscow, 2001, p. 347 (In Russian).

3 Winrow M. G. Türkiye and Newly Independent States of Central Asia and Transcaucasus. *Middle East Review of International Affairs Journal (MERIA)*. 1997; 1 (2-July), p. 6.

4 Kramer H. Will Central Asia Become Türkiye's Sphere of Influence. *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*. 1996, March-May, p. 2.

5 Hale W. Türkiye, the Black Sea and Transcaucasia, In *Transcaucasia Boundaries*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996, p. 64; Waal D. Th. *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*. New York and London: NYU Press, 2003, p. 203.

6 Khachatryan G. D. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through the prism of relations between Armenia and Türkiye. *Post-Soviet Studies*. 2018, 1 (2), p. 21 (In Russian); Helvacikoylu G. The Role of Türkiye and Russia on the Resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict. *UPA Strategic Affairs*, 2021, 2 (1), p. 158 - 174.

7 Aras B., Akpinar P. The Relations between Türkiye and the Caucasus. *Perceptions*, 2011 Autumn; XVI (3) p. 53-68; Celikpala M. From Immigrants to Diaspora: Influence of the North Caucasian diaspora in Türkiye. *Middle Eastern Studies*; 2016, May, 42 (3) p. 423-446; Eissler E. R. Can Türkiye De-isolate Abkhazia? *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 2013; 12 (3) p. 125-135.

8 Oniş Z., Yılmaz S. Türkiye and Russia in a Shifting Global Order: Cooperation, Conflict and Asymmetric Interdependence in a Turbulent Region. *Third World Quarterly*, 2016; 37 (1) p. 71-95; Weiss A., Zabanova Y. Georgia and Abkhazia Caught between Türkiye and Russia. *SWP Comments 54: German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, 2016 December, p. 2-3.

9 Cecire M., *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-turkiye-as-a-caucasus-power>.

10 Archvadze I., *Georgian market in the shadow of the Turkish economy*, 13.02.2012. URL: http://georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=334&spphrase_id=245212. (In Russian).

economic partner¹¹ [13]. Thus Georgia-Türkiye relations developed significantly during the rule of President M. Saakashvili who named that period of his cadence "the Golden Age" of bilateral Turkish-Georgian relations¹² [25]. Ankara's policy was clearly worded 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."¹³ [9].

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, which is supported by the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar¹⁴.

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 patronage. Since the moment of the conflict escalation Russia seeking to strengthen its geopolitical influence in the regions controlled by the LNA, was on one hand providing informal support to the forces of Marshal Khalifa Haftar¹⁵, and on the other hand continued the dialogue with the GNA still wishing not to lose cooperation with it and to sign large-scale agreements at the stage of Libya's restoration 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 Government of National Accord of Libya¹⁶ (1) and at the end of November 2019 Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the head of the UN-recognized Government of National Accord of Libya Faiz Saraj signed a memorandum of cooperation in the military sphere and understanding over maritime zones¹⁷. However, here too, Russia and Türkiye did not clash directly. Highly likely confidential diplomatic channels were used to keep the process under control.

Another important challenge in Russian-Turkish relations

was the Syrian conflict. In Syrian confrontation Russia defended Bashar al-Assad and its right of presence in the Syrian Arab Republic¹⁸. 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 may easily penetrate to one of the sensitive points of Islamic radicalism in Russia - the North Caucasus¹⁹ [2]. Türkiye has been and is still supporting opposition political organizations, to which it provides political, financial and military assistance²⁰. There are even the offices of such organizations open in Türkiye²¹ [31], which proclaims itself the protector of its Muslim brethren, hosting over 2 million Syrian refugees²². Türkiye is concerned about the intensification of the Kurdish cause as a result of the Syrian crisis, which is considered both a serious internal and external threat to Ankara²³. In the internal Syrian conflict Ankara pursued an anti-Assad policy, seriously assisting the opposition forces fighting against the Assad regime, including the terrorist group "Islamic State" (ISIS), as well as providing a diplomatic and propaganda shield against official Damascus²⁴. It is important however, that Russia and Türkiye as well as the Islamic Republic of Iran showed common approaches to the issue of fighting against the terrorist "Islamic State", which served a basis for creating a trilateral Russia-Türkiye-Iran format to resolve the conflicts at the level of presidents²⁵.

This format proved to be the most viable of all for advancing the process of stabilization in Syria. Let us recall that the Geneva format created for this purpose was discontinued in view of the absence of significant results, just

11 Celikpala M. Türkiye as a Regional Power and the Caucasus. *Insight Türkiye*; 2007, 9 (2), p. 28.

12 Saakashvili M. Interview with Mikheil Saakashvili: Georgia's Westward March. *Turkish Policy Quarterly*. 2013; 12 (1), p. 21.

13 Aras B. Davutoglu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy. *Insight Türkiye*, 2009; 11 (3): 137.

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

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

16 Avatkov V. A. Ideological and Value Factor in Turkish Foreign Policy. *Bulletin of MGIMO-University*. 2019; 12 (4), p. 113-129 (In Russian).

17 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>.

18 Miller C., 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/>.

19 Bagdasaryan S., Petrova S. Geopolitical positions of Russia and the USA in the Syrian conflict, State and municipal administration. *Uchenye zapiski SKAGS*, 2018; 2, p. 112. (In Russian).

20 Syria rebels said to receive missiles via Türkiye, *Hurriyet*, 01.08.2012. URL: <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/syria-rebels-said-to-receive-missiles-via-turkiye-26899>; Erdogan: Türkiye, FSA close to capturing Syria's Al-Bab, 12.02.2017. URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/erdogan-turkiye-fsa-close-to-capturing-syria-s-al-bab/748823>.

21 Yuksel E. Strategies of Turkish proxy warfare in northern Syria. *CRU Report*, 2019, November, p. 1-24; The main groups of the Syrian opposition. *Dossier (In Russian)*, 06.01.2015. URL: <https://tass.ru/info/848044>.

22 "Our country has been home to the highest number of refugees for the past 7 years", said Erdoğan, 20.06.2022. URL: <https://www.tcgb.gov.tr/en/news/542/138450-our-country-has-been-home-to-the-highest-number-of-refugees-for-the-past-7-years->; The Mediterranean Sea should become a symbol of hope for refugees and migrants 07.04.2017. URL: <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2017/04/1302881>. (In Russian).

23 Markedonov S., Russian-Turkish Relations and Security Problems in the Caucasus Region, 30.05.2016. URL: <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/valday/Rossiiskoturetskie-otnosheniya-i-problemy-bezopasnosti-Kavkazskogo-regiona-18188>. (In Russian).

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

25 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>.

like the Astana format, despite some success, while, 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 Türkiye²⁶, as well as the assassination of the Russian ambassador to Türkiye²⁷, which, however, did not lead to any sharp deterioration in relations.

Finally, the Ukrainian case. Türkiye has not recognized the reunification of Crimea with Russia²⁸ [14]. Türkiye believes that it is entitled to patronize the Crimean Tatars as their compatriots. Türkiye has been and is still supporting Ukraine in international arena²⁹ [17]. Russian-Turkish interests clashed over the past year 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 support³⁰ and though Türkiye has condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine at the same time it does not join the global western sanctions³¹. It is worth noting that Türkiye's approaches to this issue found some understanding in the West since official Ankara avoided sanctions from its side. 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 to sanctions and refusal to open another front against Russia was perceived there as a success since it could serve kind of a channel for various economic and political communications³².

3. Türkiye's Competing Strategies

Impeding Türkiye to become a full-fledged member of the European Union the global West actually compelled Türkiye going eastwards where it could increase its influence and presence. Neo-Ottomanism, which served an ideological basis of the new Turkish advance, stimulated the official

Ankara to spread in all countries and among the peoples who had once been part of the Ottoman Empire³³ [30]. Additionally Türkiye was realizing its integration capacity 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 90ies, Türkiye (on the 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 Asia³⁴ [6]. The Turkish ideology of Eurasianism supposed consolidation of all particles in the large expanses of Eurasia under the Turkish leadership. It was believed then that Russia, which lost in the Cold War, did not have the resource to prevent, moreover, resist this process³⁵ [18].

Turkish activity in the zones of the traditional Russian influence was in 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 South Caucasus. Back in 2008, Türkiye proposed to create 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 Russia³⁶ [15, 29]. It is hard to believe that Ankara did not understand this. At the time being that format did not receive any significant response. However, after the defeat of Armenia in "44-day War" of 2020 and the announcement of truce through the mediation of President V.V. Putin the possibilities of establishing new relationships have become more realistic. By agreement between Russia and Türkiye in the immediate vicinity of the zone of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in the city of Aghdam, a Monitoring Center was deployed where Russian and Turkish military personnel were represented in equal numbers³⁷. In the authors' opinion this new element symbolized that in 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 Shushi Declaration announced the prospect of full integration with Türkiye³⁸.

26 Koren M., Turkey Takes Down a Russian Warplane, 24.11.2015. URL: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/11/turkey-russia-syria-nato/417450/>. Shaheen K., Walker S., Putin condemns Türkiye after Russian warplane downed near Syria border, The Guardian, 24.11.2015. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/24/Turkiye-shoots-down-jet-near-border-with-syria>.

27 Malsin J., Russian Ambassador to Turkey Shot Dead in Ankara, 19.12.2016. URL: <https://time.com/4606600/russian-ambassador-turkey-ankara/>.

28 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>; Demir S. Türkiye's Foreign Policy and Security Perspectives in the 21st Century: Prospects and Challenges. Florida: Brown Walker Press, 2016, p. 169.

29 Ereker F., Ozert U. Crimea in Turkish-Russian Relations: Identity, Discourse, or Interdependence. Athens Journal of Social Sciences. 2018, 5 (4): 371-388.

30 Karadshah J. and Sariyuce I., Turkish drones have become a symbol of the Ukrainian resistance, 11.04.2022, URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/04/11/middleeast/mideast-summary-04-11-2022-intl/index.html>.

31 Banerjee B., Türkiye on Russia-Ukraine crisis, 31.05.2022. URL: <https://thekootneeti.in/2022/05/31/Turkiye-on-russia-ukraine-crisis/>.

32 Putin noted the successful cooperation between Russia and Turkey on Syria and Libya, 29.09.2021. URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/12534529>. (In Russian).

33 Davutoğlu A. Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu, İstanbul, 2001, s. 118.

34 Safrastyan R. On the ideological justification of the regional policy of Türkiye: the concept of Eurasia-South Caucasus: regional security and stability / Materials of the conf. General ed. of G Novikova. Ed. A. Melyan, S. Sargsyan. Transl. by A. Melyan. Yerevan, 2004, p. 70-72 (In Russian).

35 Fuller G. Türkiye Faces East: New Orientations toward the Middle East and the Old Soviet Union. Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1992, p. 37-39.

36 Devrim D. and Schulz E. The Caucasus: Which Role for Türkiye in the European Neighborhood? Insight Türkiye, 2009; 11.3, p. 177-193; Celikpala M. Türkiye ve Kafkasya: Reaksiyoner Dış Politikadan Proaktif Ritmik Diplomasiye Geçiş. Uluslararası İlişkiler, Cilt 7, Sayı 25, s. 93-126.

37 Russia and Turkey open monitoring centre for Nagorno-Karabakh, 30.01.2021, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-armenia-azerbaijan-monitoring-centre-idUSKBN29Z0FL>

38 Tashjian Y., "Shushi Declaration" and its Implications on the South Caucasus

The Turkic republics of Central Asia are steadily though step by step moving towards expanding and deepening multifaceted cooperation with Türkiye. Starting from the linguistic and cultural cooperation they now cooperate on a wide range of issues, including the sphere of defense and security³⁹. One can only wonder how the first president of Kazakhstan (perhaps also other leaders of the Central Asian states) managed (in an official or informal setting) persuading 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 V.V. Putin faces the need to find an acceptable formula for peaceful coexistence.

4. Cooperation for Peaceful Coexistence

During the entire post-Soviet period, in particular, the past 10–20 years, Russia was 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 part of the countries of the post-Soviet space around itself. Supporters of the Eurasian integration (who have been following the process development for a long time) confirm that from the very beginning of the confrontation between the West and Russia the Russians had been seriously thinking that the advancement of economic integration processes would enable to find a chain of new opportunities for ensuring economic development and, on the other hand, might ensure the atmosphere of peaceful coexistence and security in the region of Greater Eurasia⁴⁰ [3]. 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 in a hope that they would be imbued with the attractiveness of 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 was considered a political success in Russia. In 2021, the volume of economic cooperation between Russia and Türkiye exceeded \$33 billion⁴¹. Russia is building a nuclear power plant in Türkiye at its own expense⁴² [23]. It is important to note that Türkiye is developing a project to build another nuclear power plant near Sinop⁴³ 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 difficulties⁴⁴ 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. The Trilateral Statement of November 9, 2020 between Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia announced the end of the Second Karabakh War.

It also provided creating a joint Russian-Turkish military observation mission in Agdam directly adjoining the conflict zone. Thus, in our opinion, Russia agreed to the 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 "3+3 Format"⁴⁵. 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 the 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 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 great Eurasian partnership idea will encourage them to maintain in the foreseeable future the existing level of established 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 be still felt. Therefore, the political course of large and small countries of the region in processes involving two major actors should be carried on in the absolute logic of taking consideration of these realities.

5. Conclusions

During the post-Soviet period Russia and Türkiye have gained a lot of experience in developing a common attitude towards political and ethnic conflicts. It is noteworthy that

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39 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-common-security-concept-erdogan-says>.

40 Greater Eurasia: Development, security, cooperation. Yearbook. Issue. 2. Part 2 / RAN. INION. Department of scientific cooperation; ed. Gerasimov. Moscow, 2019: 1040 (In Russian).

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

42 Masumova R. N. Russia and Türkiye: Resetting Economic Partnership. Perceptions, 2018 Summer, XXIII (2), 9, p. 42.

43 Karabay Z., 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>; Şimşek B., 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>.

44 Putin says Turkish gas hub can easily be set up, reveals Nord Stream damage details, 01.11.2022, URL: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/putin-says-turkish-gas-hub-can-easily-be-set-up-reveals-nord-stream-damage-details/>.

45 Russia proposes "3+3" format to unlock economic and transport communications in Caucasus, 06.10.2021, URL: <https://www.intellinews.com/russia-proposes-3-3-format-to-unlock-economic-and-transport-communications-in-caucasus-222935/>.

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 the history Russian-Turkish relations went through the periods of “ebb and flow”⁴⁶ [5], 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 of Russia's positions in neighboring regions, specifically in the Black Sea and the Middle East, which threatened Türkiye's plans to become a regional leader, compelled Ankara to make another attempt for reconsidering its influence in the South Caucasus, as evidenced by its participation in September 2020 Azerbaijan's 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, 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.

The important news in Russian-Turkish relations was that Türkiye, despite its membership in NATO and closeness to the United States, started cooperating with the Russian armed forces both in the case of the Syrian and in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts. In Syria, this resulted in joint patrols and coordinated operations, and in the Nagorno-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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