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BRIEF ANALYSIS

**The future of the bilateral
relations between Türkiye and
Russia: regional strategies and
objectives**

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THE FUTURE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN TÜRKIYE AND RUSSIA: REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

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Abstract

Turkish-Russian relations are not only a regional issue, but also an important topic within the general dynamics of international relations. Throughout history, relations between the two countries have not been limited to their immediate neighborhood, but have developed into influential relationships in the international system. Especially in the post-Cold War period, the decline of global polarization and the emergence of new power relations have led to significant changes in relations between Türkiye and Russia. The focus of this study is to emphasize that Turkish-Russian relations are not only bilateral, but also interact with political, economic and strategic factors at the global level, and to show how these relations are shaped within the dynamics of today's international system.

Keywords: Türkiye, Russia, relations, Central Asia, Caucasus

Introduce

Throughout history, relations between Türkiye and Russia have evolved from periods of competition and conflict to multi-layered cooperation after the end of the Cold War (1991) and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Relations between Türkiye and Russia have changed significantly since the 2000s due to changes in power and international events. Türkiye-Russia relations are an active topic that attracts many scholars and authors who try to shed light on these evolving relations. Both countries have a vested interest in important regions and share a commitment to resolving conflicts that Western powers have been unable to adequately resolve or address. The successes of both countries in tackling hot conflicts, particularly the conflict in Syria and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, have given their relations an international dimension and recognition.

Relations between the Republic of Türkiye and the Russian Federation are not new. They go back almost seven centuries, since the founding of the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire, where they engaged in a bitter rivalry over the domination of territories in the Balkans (Eastern Europe), the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Black Sea region. This makes the historical dimension an important factor in

shaping their relations and foreign policy towards several regions of common interest.

Both countries are developing solid and, from their point of view, logical foreign policy strategies to achieve their goals of setting policy, becoming a regional power and establishing a game in this important geography. There is a long-standing economic cooperation between Türkiye and Russia that has made both countries dependent on each other. Both Russia and Türkiye are using different methods to prove their claim to leadership in the region. Russia is trying to use its economic and military influence to strengthen its position as a regional power. Türkiye, on the other hand, tries to protect its air and land borders and maintain its leadership by intervening in the problems in the region in accordance with its national interests.

The aim of this study is to look at Türkiye-Russian relations in the 21st century from a multi-layered perspective, to outline how the two countries can be influential in the region, and to assess the policies they are pursuing to play a leading role.

An overview of relations between Türkiye and Russia

In the 1990s, Türkiye's policy towards Russia was characterized by Cold War-era rivalry discourse and a nationalist tone. With the political developments in Central Asia and the Caucasus, relations between the two nations became fragile. Nevertheless, trade between Türkiye and Russia flourished during this period, with an annual trade volume of [800 million to 1 billion dollars](#), mainly through unregistered [shuttle trade](#).

Given Türkiye's growing energy needs and Russia's position as a major supplier of natural gas, cooperation in the energy sector became increasingly evident. Türkiye's strong dependence on Russia for natural gas was strengthened by the launch of the [Blue Stream project](#) in 2003, which had beneficial economic effects.

Nevertheless, political tensions led to a feeling of mistrust between the two countries. Among the causes of many crises in the 1990s were the desire of ships carrying Caspian oil to use the strait, the Kurdish and Chechen problem, the clash of Caucasus and Central Asia policies, the [sale of S-300 missiles by Russia to Cyprus](#) and the [Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe](#). The future development of relations between Türkiye and Russia will be influenced by the internal dynamics of both nations and changes in the international system.

[The rise of](#) Vladimir Putin in Russia and [the rise of](#) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of the Justice and Development Party in Türkiye, enabled a visible acceleration of relations. This period can be described [as a golden age](#) in which Turkish-Russian relations reached their best level. This era can be described as a high point in which Turkish-Russian relations reached their highest level.

The disappointment of both nations with the Western powers strengthened their cooperation, which expanded to numerous areas. Cooperation in the fields of economy, tourism, energy and security has added depth and diversity to Türkiye-



Russia relations. The Eurasian Cooperation Plan and the agreements on "From Bilateral Cooperation to Multidimensional Partnership" have further strengthened their [relations](#).

Increased diplomatic contacts have played a crucial role in the recent rapprochement between Türkiye and Russia. High-level meetings and meetings of the High-Level Cooperation Council between the two countries have facilitated problem-solving through dialog.

Collaborative dynamics: Erdogan and Putin's strategic partnership

Erdogan's rise to power led to a new perspective in relations with Russia. Although much of the leadership was not involved in the political process during this period, changes in the international system and domestic political dynamics influenced Russia's and Türkiye's foreign policy preferences.

Türkiye saw the developing relations with Russia not only as an alternative to the EU and the US, but as an ideal partnership profile. In 2004-2006, high-level visits were held with both the West and Russia, leading to a strengthening of relations between the [countries](#).

Russian President Putin's positive attitude towards Türkiye, as well as the challenges Turkey faces with the EU, contributed to this development. The leadership teams frequently discussed the growing relations in the areas of energy trade, tourism and economic cooperation. Despite the growth, there were still some lingering differences on political and regional issues.

Russia's criticism of international organizations, including [NATO](#) (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the [OSCE](#) (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), and its political pressure on energy issues were a source of concern for Türkiye's national security agenda. While Türkiye maintains its security ties with the West, its efforts to cooperate with Russia in areas where they have similar perspectives are noteworthy.

The leaders of both countries have strengthened relations by prioritizing energy trade. However, an asymmetry in these relations is acknowledged, with a focus on Türkiye's need to diversify its energy supply. For the sake of Türkiye's national security, it is crucial to maintain a balanced approach in these relations and to cooperate in various areas.

Türkiye and Russia have shown a pragmatic attitude and a strong will to continue their relations. In the 2000s, Türkiye covered most of its energy needs from Russia. Russia also saw natural gas and oil exports as an economic priority, and by taking advantage of Türkiye's position, both Türkiye and Russia agreed on their common interests.

Turkish-Russian relations in conflict areas

1. The Crimean issue and Turkish-Russian relations

Crimea has long been of strategic importance to Russia due to its geopolitical location. However, the main problem in the region lies in Ukraine. Russia maintains its influence in Crimea through its policy of landing in the warm sea and its goal of a Eurasian empire. Crimea's history dates back to the time of the Hun Empire, when it was under [Turkish rule](#). As a port city, Crimea is of great importance for trade. However, Russia's quest for dominance over the independent post-Soviet states has led to secessionist movements, including in Crimea.

In 2014, the Russian invasion of Crimea led to the capture of [Crimean Tatars](#). Russia pursued a policy of assimilation aimed at eradicating national and intellectual figures and subjugating the population.

Türkiye provided diplomatic and cultural support to the Crimean Tatars and defended the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the Crimean issue. However, unlike other NATO members that imposed sanctions against Russia, Türkiye did not take any action. During the Crimean crisis, Putin visited Ankara in December 2014 to attend the 5th meeting of the High-Level Cooperation Council. He explained that the South Stream project would be discontinued due to the sanctions imposed on Russia by European countries. Instead, priority would be given to the Turkish Stream project through Türkiye. This shows that despite the crisis in relations between Türkiye and Russia, there is still cooperation in the energy sector. The complex geopolitical and economic interests between Türkiye and Russia form the basis for these [relations](#).

2. Turkish-Russian approaches to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem

As a result of the conflicts that began on July 12, 2020, when the Armenian army attacked Azerbaijani territory in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, the [Second Karabakh War](#) broke out on September 20, 2020. This conflict, which lasted 44 days, ended with Azerbaijan's victory. Türkiye sided with Azerbaijan during the war and played an important role in winning the war, especially through the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and unmanned attack aircraft ([UAVs](#)).

Azerbaijan has an undisputed priority and determination in Türkiye's view of the Caucasus. Azerbaijan is of great importance to Türkiye, both in terms of ethnic and cultural ties and in evaluating the heritage of the historical past, in determining the regional balance, in gaining a share of the natural resources around the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, and in establishing influence over other regional actors. In this context, Azerbaijan is Türkiye's strategic partner in the Caucasus. Every domestic and foreign policy issue related to Azerbaijan is considered as Türkiye's own affair. The Republic of Türkiye approaches Azerbaijan on every issue with the principle of "one nation, two states"¹¹ and has emphasized that the occupations of Armenia should be ended.

When the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is evaluated from Russia's point of view, it reflects a perspective in which Russia has been an ally of Armenia throughout history and has provided loans to Armenia for its armament. However, Russia in the Second World War. It did not openly choose sides during the Karabakh war, but allowed the conflict to continue and increased its military presence in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict region. However, it intervened towards the end of the war and excluded other external actors from the war. Russia benefited from its policy of balance by keeping the warring parties on an equal footing. During and after the war, Russia took on the role of mediator and deployed its soldiers in the region to ensure security in the [region](#).

The "[Turkish-Russian Joint Monitoring Center](#)", which was established with the ceasefire declaration signed by Armenia on November 10, 2020, began its work in the city of Agdam on January 30, 2021. This monitoring center was established to monitor the ceasefire and works in cooperation with Russia and Türkiye. It seems that the balance of power in the region after the war is viewed favorably for Russia and Türkiye. While Russia ensures security in the region with its mediating role, Türkiye has increased its effectiveness in the region with its role in winning the war and cooperating in the joint monitoring center.

3. Türkiye and Russia in the Syrian civil war

One of the issues where there are significant differences between Türkiye and Russia is the Syrian civil war and the problem. Syria has invited Russia into the civil war process and allowed it to intervene. Türkiye's Syria policy included an approach aimed at the overthrow of Bashar Assad and regime change. In this regard, Ankara has pursued an active policy by openly supporting certain opposition [groups](#). On the other hand, Russia has pursued an active policy in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean to ensure its influence in the region and the survival of its ally.

Since the beginning of the crisis, Türkiye has defended the territorial integrity of Syria, fought the terrorist organizations supported by the regime and supported the democratic transition in [Syria](#). Since the first days of peaceful protests in Syria, Türkiye has called for reforms for the regime in Syria, but when the process got out of control and turned into a civil war, Türkiye entered the process of determining its position in Syria. Together with the US, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Türkiye has adopted an approach aimed at regime change. The intensification of the crisis in Syria has led to an increase in the sphere of influence of terrorist organizations on the Turkish border. This situation has led to an increase in terrorist attacks on Turkish territory and thus to military measures to protect Türkiye's borders and citizens.

Developments in Syria have led to tensions between Türkiye and Russia, which have an impact on each other. Increasing news of Türkiye's possible intervention in Syria and the advance of opposition groups in regions where Assad is strong have worried Russia. As the civil war in Syria turns against the Assad regime and Russia

risks losing an important ally, Russia has begun to expand the [Hmeymim military base](#).

Russia's military intervention in Syria has further exacerbated tensions between Türkiye and Russia. The rules of engagement² declared by Türkiye following the downing of an F-4 fighter jet in 2012 and the negative impact of Russian air operations on Turkmen groups supported by Türkiye have increased tensions between the two countries. President Erdoğan's criticism of Russian operations in Syria and his statements that Russia will be isolated in the region have shown that relations between Türkiye and Russia are going through a difficult [phase](#).

Both Russia and Türkiye have been working together to protect the territorial integrity of Syria and ensure peace. However, following the downing of a Russian fighter jet that violated Turkish airspace in 2015, tensions arose between the two countries and Russia imposed [economic sanctions](#) on Türkiye. These sanctions had a negative impact on the economies of both countries, causing a decline in trade volumes and [financial losses](#).

However, tensions were eased as the parties pursued a pragmatic and constructive policy and a ceasefire was reached with the joint declaration signed in 2016. With the participation of Türkiye, Russia and Iran, they met in Moscow in December 2016 and in [Astana](#) in January 2017 and signed a joint declaration in which they respected the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria and a ceasefire came into force in Syria.

Relations between Türkiye and Russia were put to the test again in 2020 when Türkiye launched [Operation Spring Shield](#) as a result of the attack on parts of the Turkish armed forces. However, as a result of negotiations between the parties, an agreement was reached in March 2020 to cease military activities in the Idlib region and create a safe zone.

Türkiye and Russia continue to work together to secure peace in Syria and continue to seek solutions that meet their common interests.

4. Türkiye and Russia in Libya

The internal unrest in Libya during the [Arab Spring](#) became evident with a popular revolution that began on February 17, 2011 and ended on October 20, 2011 with the lynching and assassination of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, ending the 42-year Gaddafi era.

During the events in Libya, Türkiye and Russia pursued different strategies and policies. After the fall of Gaddafi, Türkiye supported the Government of National Accord as a legitimate power recognized by the United Nations. Russia, on the other hand, pursued a loyal policy towards General Haftar, who controls a large part of [Libya](#). Despite their different political preferences, it can be seen that the two countries are trying to work together through international dialog and diplomacy to solve the problems in Libya.

5. Russia-Ukraine war

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has led to a new polarization in international relations, particularly on the European continent. Western countries imposed tough economic sanctions against Russia and sent military aid to Ukraine. The large-scale occupation of Russia has led to the West isolating Russia politically, economically and financially. This situation has made it difficult for Türkiye both to be part of the Western military alliance and to engage in trade and dialog with Russia. However, Türkiye strives to maintain its relations within the framework of the general principles of the United Nations (UN) and [international law](#).

Due to the war between Russia and Ukraine, grain shipments from Ukraine via the Black Sea have been stopped, which has had a negative impact on the countries that buy grain from Ukraine. Thank you to Türkiye's diplomatic efforts, grain supplies from Ukraine were safely resumed thanks to the [agreement](#) signed between Russia, Ukraine and the UN.

Türkiye's active diplomacy and neutrality during the war in Ukraine as well as its constructive and humanitarian stance in the creation of food corridors are of great importance for world peace. While Türkiye does not recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea and rejects Russia's policies in Ukraine, it also criticizes the West's provocative stance and states that it understands Russia's security concerns. Türkiye's balancing stance helps it to act as an effective regional player in conflict resolution.

6. Contradictory Armenia policy

One point of conflict in the two countries' foreign policy is their policy in the South Caucasus region. In addition to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, there is a significant contrast in their positions on Armenia's genocide allegations. This contrast became particularly clear in 2015, which marked the centenary of the events of 1915 and the 100th anniversary of the victory over the [Dardanelles](#).

Anniversary of the victory over the Dardanelles. At that time, Russian President Vladimir Putin traveled to the commemorations of the 1915 events in Armenia, although he was invited to the celebrations for the victory at Gallipoli. The use of the term "genocide" in his speech clarified Russia's view of the events of 1915, to which Türkiye responded at the highest level, pointing to Russia's previous massacres in Central Asia, the Caucasus and [Eastern Europe](#).

Difficult challenges in Turkish-Russian relations:

1. Aviation crisis

The first aviation crisis between Russia and Türkiye took place on October 10, 2012, when a passenger plane from Moscow to Syria was landed by Türkiye at Esenboğa Airport in Ankara, allegedly with suspicious weapons on board. Under Article 35 of [the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation](#), a state has the right to intervene if it suspects that weapons are on board aircraft using its airspace.³

Türkiye claimed that the material on board the plane was military material, but Russia rejected this claim. The media of both countries covered this incident extensively, but high-ranking government officials did not pay much attention to it. This crisis was related to the postponement of the planned meeting of the High-Level Cooperation Council (UDIC) due to Putin's health problems. However, it was announced that Putin's visit was postponed and it was asked not to sacrifice relations because of this [incident](#).

The second aircraft crisis began when Russian planes violated Turkish airspace on October 3-5, 2015. On November 24, 2015, Turkish F-16 aircraft shot down a Russian SU-24 aircraft that had violated airspace. Following this incident, the Kremlin decided on various economic sanctions against Türkiye. These sanctions include important steps such as banning the import of agricultural products, restricting the activities of Turkish companies and suspending visa [exemptions](#).

The first steps towards the normalization of relations after the aviation crisis were the messages that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım published on the occasion of the Russian National Day in 2016. Following these steps, there was a positive response from Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov and Russian Ambassador Andrey Karlov was invited to the Iftar dinner by President Erdoğan. The steps to normalize [Turkish-Russian relations](#) gained momentum after the attempted coup in 2016.

2. The attempted coup on July 15 and the development of Turkish-Russian relations

One of the most important events in the history of Turkish-Russian relations was [the coup attempt of 15 July 2016](#). The normalization of relations between Türkiye and Russia before and after this incident has other reasons besides geopolitical factors. Türkiye's relations with the West, especially its relations with the US and EU countries, have shaped [Turkish-Russian](#) relations throughout the historical process.

The reaction of [the US](#) and the EU during and after the coup attempt, the lack of a positive response from Türkiye to the demands for Fetullah Gülen's extradition and Russia's open support for Türkiye have contributed to the formation of sympathy for Russia among the Turkish public. Türkiye's military operations on the ground, especially those against DAESH and the [PKK](#) offshoot [PYD/YPG](#) on the basis of UN agreements, have enabled the revival of Turkish-Russian relations with a vision that pursues political goals beyond normalization.

[St. Petersburg on August 9, 2016](#), one of the turning points in Turkish-Russian relations. The St. Petersburg summit showed Türkiye's rapprochement with Russia on issues such as security. The fact that security issues are coming to the fore instead of economic cooperation shows that relations are characterized not only by trade, but also by security and military cooperation.

3. Astana process

The [Astana summit](#) in January 2017 was described as a platform that strengthened cooperation between Türkiye, Iran and Russia in Syria. At this summit, the countries

opted not only for military solutions, but also for initiative. The Astana process⁴ led to a significant change in Türkiye's Syria policy, which began to pursue a balanced policy with Russia vis-à-vis the US.

Thanks to the Astana process, Türkiye had the opportunity to [increase its military presence in Syria](#). However, the takeover of control of some regions by Russian troops after the US withdrawal has increased the risk of Türkiye being confronted with jihadist and radical organizations. In particular, the deployment of Russian troops immediately after the bases vacated by the US has caused concern among the Turkish public and led to speculation that the US and Russia are working together to protect the PYD.

Although Türkiye considers the YPG a terrorist organization, the different stances of the US and Russia on this issue complicate Türkiye's position in the region. At the consensus meeting in Sochi on October 3, 2018, where the Astana process continued, the countries reached a joint agreement on the measures to be taken against separatist actions and the fight against terrorism, emphasizing the territorial integrity of Syria. This agreement included Russia's efforts to mediate between Türkiye and Syria and also stipulated that Russia and Syria would guarantee the withdrawal of YPG forces near Türkiye's [borders](#).

The Astana process provided common ground for Russia and Türkiye, who held different positions in 2015, and created a basis for a solution.

4. The S-400 crisis

In order to strengthen its national air defense system, Türkiye has requested an offer for S-400 air defense systems from Russia. Although this decision greatly worried the US and NATO, Türkiye held talks with Russia on [S-400 missiles](#) in 2019, and the delivery of the S-400 missiles began in July 2019. Fears are expressed that Russia may take advantage of the disagreements between the United States and Türkiye, especially with the aim of weakening the NATO alliance. However, it is seen as a difficult question as to why Russia was offered such an opportunity by the US. There is a suspicion that the US is deliberately using the S-400 issue to conceal and disguise major structural problems with Türkiye.

In the US Congress, Türkiye's role in the NATO alliance was questioned because of this agreement and it was even stated that the US could withdraw from the [Incirlik base](#). With regard to Türkiye's decision to purchase these defense systems, in addition to many progressive opinions that this endangers NATO and US security, members of the US Congress have also criticized Türkiye's choice of Russia as an ally.

Overview of Turkish-Russian energy relations and security

Türkiye's purchase of natural gas from Russia has not restricted regional competition. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, countries such as Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan proclaimed their sovereignty. During

this process, Türkiye became an important transit country as these independent nations seek to distribute their energy reserves to global markets.

The sanctions imposed on Iran by the United States in 1996 have intensified the rivalry between Türkiye and Russia. One of the projects underlying this competition is the [Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline](#), which was proposed by America and supported by Europe. It was to serve as the first stage of the East-West Energy Corridor, transporting Azerbaijani oil to Türkiye via Georgia. Russia was against this project and tried to prevent the closure of its own energy [transportation pipelines](#).

The construction of the [Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline](#) was completed in 2006 and enabled the export of Azerbaijani oil to the world market via Türkiye. This development strengthened Türkiye's geopolitical position, although it also intensified competition with Russia.

In 1986, Türkiye signed a 25-year intergovernmental agreement with the energy companies of the Soviet Union. Construction of the Trans-Balkan Natural Gas Pipeline, the first pipeline of its kind between Türkiye and Russia, began after the agreement was signed. Completed in 1987, the pipeline, also known as the Western Pipeline, was originally intended to reach Türkiye via Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria. Every year, six billion cubic meters of natural gas were exported to Türkiye through this pipeline. In 1998, the pipeline contract was extended until 2022 and the annual export volume was increased to 8 billion cubic meters. These agreements represent significant cooperation with the Soviet Union (later Russia) to meet Türkiye's energy needs and ensure [energy security](#).

Following the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, the Trans-Caspian Natural Gas Pipeline project, the second important stage of the East-West Energy Corridor, was launched. As part of a planned project, Turkmenistan's natural gas is to be exported to Europe via the Trans-Caspian Pipeline, which has yet to be built in the Caspian Sea. The pipeline is to run from Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan and on to Europe via Türkiye. However, Russia has introduced [the Blue Stream project](#) to prevent the planned pipeline from following the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.

In December 1997, Türkiye signed an agreement with Russia to purchase 16 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually via the [Blue Stream pipeline project](#). This project envisaged the direct supply of Russian gas to Türkiye through the Black Sea. However, Russia gained a strategic advantage by further increasing Türkiye's dependence on Russian gas and making Türkiye's gas sales to third countries dependent on Russia's approval.

The Blue Stream project has progressed rapidly, surpassing the Trans-Caspian project. Disputes between the countries that have energy resources in the Caspian region and Russia's attitude have hindered the realization of a project to transport Turkmen gas to Europe. This has led to a reduction in Türkiye's advantage. As the trade volume increased over time, Russia benefited and made the axis of interdependence unfavorable for [Türkiye](#).

With the realization of the Blue Stream project, Türkiye became an important base for both Europe and Russia, which eventually led to the emergence of new projects. In 2004, the [Nabucco natural gas pipeline project](#), supported by the US and the EU, was proposed to transport natural gas from countries such as Azerbaijan, Iraq, Iran and Turkmenistan to Europe via Türkiye. However, Russia countered with the South Stream project to hinder Nabucco and increase competition. However, negative developments in Türkiye's negotiations with the European Union during this period prompted Türkiye to approach Russia. In 2009, [20 cooperation protocols](#) were signed in the fields of natural gas, oil and the nuclear industry. Türkiye linked its support for the South Stream project to the promise to realize the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline project. However, the South Stream project did not materialize due to a lack of European support and approval problems. The Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline project was threatened with the same fate.

Türkiye and Russia have planned several projects for cooperation in the energy sector. In 2009, the two countries signed an agreement to launch a [20 billion dollar](#) nuclear power plant project in the Akkuyu region of Mersin. This project is expected to make a significant contribution to meeting Türkiye's energy needs.

In the meantime, Russia has expressed its interest in realizing the Turkish Stream project. The Turkish Stream project is intended to meet the energy needs of both Türkiye and the countries of the European Union. The Russian government has increased the transportation capacity of the Blue Stream initiative and offered significant discounts to [Turkish companies](#).

However, due to the aviation crisis, Russia imposed tough sanctions on Türkiye and the Turkish Stream project was [canceled](#). As part of their energy security plans, the Turkish authorities have taken several measures to reduce their dependence on Russia for energy supplies. As part of an accelerated strategy, an agreement was reached with Azerbaijan on the completion of the [TANAP](#) (Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline) pipeline. Talks have also been initiated to improve the import of liquefied natural gas from Qatar. However, despite all efforts, certain challenges remain.

The Turkish Stream agreement was revised in 2016, which led to a reduction in the annual gas transport volume from 65 billion cubic meters to 31.5 billion cubic meters. Part of this volume is destined for transportation to Europe, the rest goes to Türkiye. After receiving the necessary permits for the Turkish Stream project, construction of the offshore section began on May 7, 2017. The pipeline will be officially inaugurated in January 2020 with an annual volume of 31.5 billion cubic meters of natural gas. Some of these supplies will go to Türkiye, while the rest will be diverted to south-eastern and [southern Europe](#).

Potential cooperation and beneficial areas in Türkiye-Russia relations

The new trends in relations between Russia and Türkiye before the start of Karabakh War II and during the war are one of the important factors influencing the course of the war and determining its outcome. Russia and Türkiye are shaping their relations by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the multipolar structure of the international system, and both countries are taking advantage of these opportunities.

Historically, Turkish-Russian relations have been characterized by geopolitical competition and conflict. However, 2016 ushered in a new era and saw significant changes in relations. Before this turning point, there were important developments in Turkish-Russian relations. One of them was the rejection of the [March 1 Memorandum](#) resolution by Turkey's Grand National Assembly and Türkiye's refusal to allow the US to intervene in Iraq from its own territory. The rejection of the March 1 Memorandum led Türkiye to change its image from being dependent on the United States to that of a strong country capable of acting independently in accordance with its own interests.

Another important phase was the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008, during which Türkiye emphasized the importance of resolving the conflict in the region by taking a constructive stance towards Russia through the [Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Pact](#). Türkiye's efforts among the countries in the region to solve the problems in the Black Sea were recognized by Russia. Although Türkiye is a member of NATO, it defended the Montreux Treaty and pursued a policy of limited military intervention in the [Black Sea](#).

In the post-2016 period, developments in relations between Ankara and Moscow can be attributed to the two countries' shared pragmatic interests and the new international conjuncture. The new dynamics in this period reflect a realpolitik in which the importance Moscow attaches to Ankara and the new approach it pursues are based on its own global and regional, geopolitical and geo-economic interests. At the same time, this new approach aims to improve Russian-Turkish relations while expanding to areas such as military cooperation and the exchange of defense systems. This also includes efforts to create a breach in NATO and the Western alliance.

The military and defense agreements in particular show that this new era is not accidental. It should be noted that Russia has not fulfilled every step or demand of Türkiye, and Türkiye has not fully met its expectations in regions such as Libya and Syria. However, it is clear that Türkiye has entered into a new alliance with Russia in this process.

Russia supported the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, Türkiye's first nuclear power plant, and cooperated in the defense industry. In particular, the purchase of the S-400 air defense system by NATO member Türkiye is an example of military

cooperation between the two countries. In addition, the joint efforts of Türkiye and Russia to solve the problems in the Black Sea contribute to maintaining the status of the Black Sea and creating peace between the countries in the region.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the 21st century, Russia and Türkiye have established a more pragmatic and sustainable relationship. Since 2002, the two countries have increasingly focused on cooperation, eventually forging a multi-faceted partnership. Although their geographical proximity once fueled rivalry, today Russia and Türkiye pursue both competition and cooperation on a strategic level.

The conflicts in Karabakh and Azerbaijan-Armenia in the South Caucasus region have put Turkish-Russian relations to the test. Türkiye's military, technical, diplomatic and social support has further cemented Azerbaijan's victory in the second Karabakh war. Russia's abandonment of Armenia in favor of Türkiye in this war means a change in Türkiye's regional influence and the possibilities of partnership in a multipolar global order. One factor that has influenced the resolution of the Karabakh conflict is the Turkish-Russian relations that were established after 2016.

In light of developments in Karabakh, it is necessary for Türkiye and Russia to develop a more assertive and sustainable cooperative approach towards Syria in the Astana format. This process includes the potential for reconciliation between Türkiye and Syria as well as the possibility of initiating recognition of the Turkish Republic of Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean. There are also opportunities to address other issues between the two countries that serve their respective national interests and contribute to regional and global stability. Türkiye's role as a mediator in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia reflects the current state of relations between Türkiye and Russia.

Security dynamics, particularly in the Black Sea region, have combined with global factors to shape relations between Türkiye and Russia. Factors such as insecurities in Moscow, heightened threat perceptions following the coup and the state of regional trade underline the importance of Ankara's policy of balancing. However, it is important to recognize the complicated nature of relations between Türkiye and Russia. The future of their relationship is shrouded in uncertainty, which underscores the need for Ankara to prioritize strengthening its Western alliances while maintaining cooperation with Russia. A balanced policy by Türkiye that takes into account the changes in the global security architecture is crucial to reduce the fragility of future relations.

In general, Türkiye and Russia are countries that need each other diplomatically and economically. The clearest example of this is Türkiye's good relations with the Western bloc while maintaining strong political, economic and social ties with the

Eastern bloc by building relations with Russia. In this way, Türkiye has strengthened its hand in both directions.

From the Russian perspective, it is clear that Russia views Türkiye as a gateway to the West and sees relations with Türkiye as a balancing mechanism against the West while making its own foreign policy moves. It is precisely for this reason that Russia and Türkiye, despite their different goals and political differences, must cooperate on many issues and act with common sense in order to be effective in the new world order.

Notes:

¹ The phrase "one nation, two states" is a national concept used to express the relations between Azerbaijan and Türkiye. This statement forms the basis of the official stance of Azerbaijan and Türkiye towards each other. Azerbaijan and Türkiye have many things in common such as history, language, culture and mutual bonds of friendship. This concept emphasises the close relations and mutual understanding between two countries and explains that these similarities create a strong bond between two separate states of one nation.

² Rules of engagement are a mechanism that establishes the policy guidelines of the competent authorities for the use of armed force and ensures that these rules are communicated to unit commanders at the highest level. In this way, democratic control of the armed forces is made possible. Rules of engagement determine in which situations and with what kind of force the armed forces can be deployed, thus creating the legal and political framework for military operations.

³ „No munitions of war or implements of war may be carried in or above the territory of a State in aircraft engaged in international navigation, except by permission of such State. Each State shall determine by regulations what constitutes munitions of war or implements of war for the purposes of this Article, giving due consideration, for the purposes of uniformity, to such recommendations as the International Civil Aviation Organization may from time to time make.”

⁴ The Astana process, a diplomatic cooperation between "Türkiye, Russia and Iran", began in 2017 as an attempt to resolve the conflict in Syria. While the first meeting was held in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, on 23 January 2017, the last meeting, the 20th round, was held in Astana on 20 June 2023.