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**Introduction**

Since the end of the Cold War, approaches that focus on the individual have begun to compete with the classical theories in international relations theory. Realism and liberalism have seen states as major actors of international relations, underlining the fact that states rival against each other in the direction of power and their interests. Agency of individuals and their influence were either ignored or found as scientifically not measurable. When we look back through history, we make mention of the states together with their leaders. While some leaders participate in negotiations and sign agreements, some of them are crucially important that we hear their names at every event and at every step the state takes. This turns them into active decision-makers, not passive perceivers, contrary to what classical theories advocate. In the new international environment created after the Cold War, the individual factor is increasingly gaining importance. Leaders find a wider range of action in this new environment. Apart from leading politics, they are taking important steps according to new problems such as economic, social, and environmental. While taking these steps, their personality, leadership understanding, how they perceive their external environment-political nature and their competitors, their values, ​​and aspirations come into play. It is possible to reach the characteristics of leaders with newly developed methods under the understanding of constructivism and structuration theory, which focus on the individual in international relations theories. After reaching them, it is possible to predict the steps of the states by establishing a connection with the moves of leaders taken in domestic and foreign politics. In addition to all these, structural factors such as formal institutional powers and responsibilities, the history and national interests of states, and internal and foreign policy norms that have been formed over the years continue to have a remarkable effect. In the framework of the "agent or structure" dilemma on which this study is based, it is emphasized that both factors should be examined.

The Russian and Ottoman empires, which were shown as two major powers and regional rivals in the history pages, collapsed in the 20th century, and two new actors have come in their place. On the one hand, the Republic of Turkey, which strives to become a democratic and social republic by blending Western values, and the new superpower grounded on communist ideology: the Soviet Union. These two new actors supported each other and showed an unseen sincerity in their history. However, with the Cold War atmosphere, the threat felt by Turkey, and its membership to the Western bloc’s military coalition NATO, this moderate atmosphere with the Soviets has cooled down. There was no convergence until the end of the 20th century. However, the remarkable cooperation that started in the economic field in the 21st century has also given fruits in the fields of military and regional security. In this context, as rising powers and significant states playing an active role in the region while also trying to be the voice owner in international politics issues, Russia and Turkey have a common characteristic: they both possess strong and stable leaders. Undoubtedly, the Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Russian leader Vladimir Putin taking the stage in this period have an effect that gives momentum to bilateral relations.

In this context, the **research objective** of this thesis is to assess the importance of the leadership factor in shaping interstate relations through the cases of 21st century Turkish- Russian relations and to advance conceptual understanding of the subject. **Research tasks** of the thesis are: to reach and examine in details theoretical concepts and methodologies which are related and helpful to explain the influence of agents and leadership factor in foreign politics, to detect milestones of Russian-Turkish relations in early 21st century and find causal connections, to investigate both countries’ constitutions in order to understand presidents’ institutional authorities and responsibilities in foreign policy, to reach belief systems of Russian and Turkish leaders, and finally, with the framework shaped with earlier chapters, link the results to assess leaders role in early 21st century bilateral relations of Turkey and Russia.

In case to make clear the term “early 21st century”, I would like to underline that the period of 2000-2021 (first half of the year) covers the events in bilateral relations and the moves of leaders in these events were emphasized. This thesis aims to find answers to a number of questions which forms **research question**: What are the roles and impacts of the leaders on Turkish- Russian interstate relations? Are they crucial enough to make significant changes in course of the events? Or do they just have some kind of catalyzer effect on what is otherwise predetermined by structural and contextual factors?

Moreover, the research is focused on the **hypothesis** which argues that certain types of leaders, as core decision-makers in the international arena, are capable to direct bilateral relations based on their own will and belief system.

Various **methods** have been used to achieve the goals mentioned above. In order to reach the belief systems of leaders, operational code analysis, borrowed from the field of political psychology, was used. Apart from this, the causals for the historical development of the bilateral relations were analyzed and matched thanks to process- tracing methodology. Content analysis was applied to the verbal sources of leaders in order to analyze their impact in the events that were determined as the turning points of early 21st century Turkey-Russia relations. Chapter 1 describes those methodologies in detail.

**Literature Review**

While the influence of leaders in foreign policy is increasing day by day, this issue finds more place in international relations research. Methods have been developed to measure this influence on a scientific basis. While the relations between Russia and Turkey have been on the world agenda since their imperial period, the moves of the two states are being watched carefully by the other actors in the international arena. Their leaders undoubtedly have an impact on the momentum of these relations. This thesis aims to get a fresh output by blending these two current issues in international relations. In this way, the contributions of other authors are important. The following part of the introduction is devoted to the literature review.

The roots of political leadership can be found in the works of Niccolò Machiavelli and Max Weber. While Machiavelli underlined that leaders are able to make changes with their characteristics as “strength” and “wise”-by using them against external risks under the influence of *fortuna* (luck), Weber argued that political leaders possess authority (legitimate power) which can be distinguished into three: charismatic, traditional, and legal.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Nowadays, the frontier between domestic and international politics is blurry which makes automatically an affective domestic leader (in this case, the head of the state) a foreign-decision maker as well. Here, it is important to know how they have such influence. The works on political psychology give an explanation to this question and contribute to foreign policy studies with novel methods. Hermann and Hagan claimed that the limitations of bipolar world order which made scholars concentrate on the anarchy of the world system according to leaders’ moves are behind, and nowadays leaders can find more space to act effectively about different issues.[[2]](#footnote-2) Understanding the leaders will automatically help to predict the state’s behavior in foreign policy. Hermann, in her work, concentrated on leaders’ personalities and some other factors which affect their decision-making process. The circumstances such as leaders’ personal interest in foreign policy, the way they came to force, the atmosphere of the national situation, the training they have regarding foreign policy, etc. should be considered.[[3]](#footnote-3) Moreover, she constructs a method for the leaders’ personality research: A Trait Analysis. This method focuses on seven dimensions of personality: leaders’ belief to control events, need for power, self-confidence, conceptual complexity, task focus, ingroup bias, and finally distrust of others. She describes how to find outcomes that create a framework of leaders’ personality and “*provide information about whether the leader will respect or challenge constraints, will be open or closed to information from the environment, will focus more on solving problems or building community, and will be more hardline or more accommodationist*”.[[4]](#footnote-4) Speeches and media interviews are used for this method. On the other hand, scholars such as Nathan Leites, Alexander George, Stephen G. Walker, Mark Schafer, and Ole Holsti focus on the belief systems of the leaders which can be gathered from the method called “operational code analysis”. Leites concentrated on psychological and cultural phenomenon while describing the leader’s character and strategy. Based on Leites' framework, George designed a total of 10 questions, philosophical and instrumental, that reveal the operational codes. The answers specify a model of instrumental rationality bounded by a belief system.[[5]](#footnote-5) Walker and Schafer described how it is possible to find answers to George’s ten questions in a quantitative way and expressed the frame of a systematic at-a-distance (since the researcher does not have direct access to the leader) method of Verbs in Context System (VICS).[[6]](#footnote-6) Doing this, they combined operational code analysis within a content analysis. Holsti constructed a coding manual in order to systemize operational code analysis.[[7]](#footnote-7) Researchers use Profiler Plus program to save time during the coding procedure of the method.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Leadership trait analysis and operational code analysis focus on rhetoric sources and aim to help researchers to explore a black box of the decision-makers within the at-a-distance method. The difference in those sources is that while leadership trait analysis relies on spontaneous statements to find out ‘personality traits’; operational code, on the other hand, relies on leaders’ speeches for the investigation of their ‘belief systems’. Both methods are in need to be developed. While they are being used in different fields (like the international political economy) and geographies there is still a deficiency of research in non-Western contexts (despite works on the leaders of Iran, Russia, China, etc). Studies showed that both methods are applied constantly to Western presidents and prime ministers. On the other hand, the operational codes of the leaders that I focused on in my thesis are included in some studies. For example, Derman and Oba reached and compared Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin's belief systems by answering George's philosophical and instrumental questions in an academic journal article.[[9]](#footnote-9) They also described Erdogan’s operational codes separately.[[10]](#footnote-10) Both studies possess qualitative features and there is no statistical data. Derman and Oba claimed that Erdogan and Putin’s leadership profile is often described by Western articles as authoritarian and their strong leadership is highly criticized. Aware of the theoretical lack of research on the personality and values of the two leaders, the authors chose to resort to operational code analysis and concluded that Erdogan and Putin are dispositional towards stability and order.[[11]](#footnote-11) Gorener and Ucal in their research found out Erdogan’s leadership profile by analyzing his personality traits.[[12]](#footnote-12) They used verbal materials which helped them to reach conclusion. The authors claim that Erdogan is a central decision-maker of the Republic of Turkey and his strong influence spreads to foreign policy behavior of the state as well. They argue that he considers issues by the division of “black and white” which put the lid on Turkey to gather a neutral mediator role in regional issues.[[13]](#footnote-13) Veshenikin, in his dissertation, used verbal materials from 2008 to 2011 to reach operational codes of Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev.[[14]](#footnote-14) This study focuses mostly on domestic politics and the comparison of those two leaders.

The main focus of this thesis is the influence of the leaders in the relations of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey in the 21st century. The two states, which have been interacting for centuries, have competed in their geographical region, and have played a role in the formation of each other's state identity. Examining the relations from a historical perspective has laid the groundwork for the emergence of a quite diverse and large amounts of works and sources. When we look to the early 21st century, we see that bilateral relations are based on cooperation in general, despite their fluctuating state. The main milestones in this period are included in the second part of the thesis. The attitudes of the leaders of the two countries at these turning points often had a direct impact on the course of events. It would be a mistake to ignore the other factors while underlining the leadership factor.

Kelkitli refers to two approaches when evaluating the relations between Turkey and Russia: complex interdependency theory and leadership theory.[[15]](#footnote-15) The first has been put forward by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye[[16]](#footnote-16), and according to their definition, interdependence means the reciprocity factor in the relations of different states. This interaction does not have to be symmetrical. Keohane and Nye describe two types of interdependence: sensitivity interdependence, i.e. when the framework remains unchanged and no new policy is devised due to the difficulty in forming new policies within a short time or commitment to a certain pattern of domestic and international rules, and vulnerability interdependence- where there are alternatives and a new politics can be pursued.[[17]](#footnote-17) Complex interdependence theory offers a broader framework than realism because states, although they are primary actors, have to resist the other elements included in the international system (international organizations, multinational corporations, NGOs, etc.) and at the same time bring solutions to economic, sociological and environmental issues besides policy and security problems. Kelkitli underlines that Turkish-Russian relations in the 21st century possess the characteristics of both, sensitivity and vulnerability interdependence, especially in the field of energy. While Turkey has importer partners in oil, its dependence on Russia in the nuclear field, along with the natural gas and Akkuyu project, is of great importance. On the other hand, Turkey is a very important economic partner for Russia, which earns most of its income from energy exports. Nevertheless, Turkey is the more dependent party regarding energy relations. Kelkitli emphasizes that although the relations have developed in diplomatic, economic, social, and even military fields, it should not be forgotten that the two countries may completely break the ties as a result of serious disagreements, as can be seen after the Aircraft Crisis. This shows that economic cooperation did not create political integrity which brings two states together as the complex interdependency theory foresaw.

Conversely, the leadership factor gains importance which is also included in Kelkitli’s work. She highlights the effects of changes caused by Turkish and Russian decision-makers who possess assertive, charismatic, and populist characteristics. Foreign policy decisions are being made in both countries by a small group which is composed of the president, prime minister (In 2018, the prime ministry and the council of ministers were abolished, and the executive power was given to the president completely in Turkey), foreign and defense ministers and trusted advisers and bureaucrats.[[18]](#footnote-18) Those leaders work in loyalty and ready to confront all the obstacles to their authority.

Evren Balta describes up-to-date Turkish-Russian relations within the term of ‘a complex causality’. He mentions asymmetrical power relations, diverging definitions of national interests, relations with the West, transformations of domestic regime types, and economic and social networks as driving forces of bilateral relations.[[19]](#footnote-19) Neorealist point of view underlines the significance of power and interests while explaining interstate relations. As Akturk argues, when the distribution of power is asymmetrical, conflicts are more likely among Russia and Turkey.[[20]](#footnote-20) Also, the neorealist approach claims that multipolar world order within its unpredictable feature reasons flexible and fluid alliances which can explain the instability of Russian-Turkish relations.[[21]](#footnote-21) On the other hand, two countries are thirsty to declare and share their national interests and have a voice in the international arena. Their cooperation may be caused by being ‘excluded’ or ‘unpresented’.[[22]](#footnote-22) This situation is also can be caused by international criticism from the transatlantic bloc to Russia and Turkey concerning their domestic tendencies (for example regarding their human rights records, authoritarian tendencies, and regional competition) after which both countries feel isolated and tend to cooperate with each other.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Another important factor is that the two states lost their former privileges in the process of adaptation to the modern international system after their powerful imperial backgrounds. Actually, they have competed more with the West, rather than with each other, and nowadays their need to pursue national interests brings them together. As political and ideational factors are significant, economical and social ones also should not be forgotten. Developing commercial ties and institutionalization of trade push states to avoid crises in their bilateral relations. By dint of trade, states are prone to resolve their differences and create more compatible regional policies.[[24]](#footnote-24) Turkey and Russia have developed an important partnership especially in the field of energy. The two countries, which have significant cooperation in the fields of trade and tourism, have come closer not only in the economic field but also in the social field. Frequent gatherings of Turkish and Russian businesspeople and academicians, marriages of Turkish and Russian citizens and children born from these marriages, mutual student exchanges can be given as examples of factors that strengthen the social bond between the two states.

**The primary sources** used in this thesis can be classified into four different groups. The first group contains the speeches, statements, and interviews of the Russian and Turkish leaders, which form the raw material of the thesis. In the second chapter, these sources have a supportive role during the examination of the process in the development of relations, while in the third part, they undertook a role of being core resource for the operational code analysis to reveal the belief systems of the leaders and for the analysis of the statements of the selected cases in order to examine leaders’ effects on the Russian-Turkish relations. The statements, speeches, and interviews are gathered primarily from official websites of the states (The President of Russia, Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, Ministries of the Foreign Affairs, etc.). Additional sources were gathered from well-known news agencies (Sputnik News, Anadolu Ajansi, Al Jazeera, BBC, etc.). The author's ability to usage of Turkish, Russian, and English languages has provided an advantage in the selection of the most appropriate sources.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Treaties are in the second subgroup of primary sources. It is important to have a general knowledge about the treaties in order to fıgure out the legal framework of early 21st century Russia-Turkey relations and to better understand the position of states in regional issues.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The third group of primary sources includes the two states' constitutions. During the examination of the duties, responsibilities and authorities of the President, the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey entered into force since 1982 within its latest updates (2017) as well as the final version of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, adopted in 1993 and updated as a result of the referendum in 2020, were used. [[27]](#footnote-27)

Finally, the fourth group of primary sources includes reports. The natural gas and oil reports of the Turkish Energy Market Regulatory Board, dated January 2021, were used in order to take into account the statistical situation of the Russian- Turkish cooperation in the field of energy.[[28]](#footnote-28)

This study makes an **academic contribution to the field** by reaching the conceptual understanding of the agent-structure dilemma in shaping interstate relations through a correlation between operational codes and discourses of leaders with foreign policy dynamics. In this way, the black box of decision-making that is influential in the behavior of agents in the international arena is further resolved, which is one of the goals of international relations study.

**Chapter 1**

**Conceptual and Methodological Framework of The Study**

**1.1-The Idea of the Leadership**

*Leadership is influence.*

John C. Maxwell

The concept of leadership mentioned in this research is political leadership in general which mainly focuses on foreign policy. What is meant by political leadership is the ability to direct followers towards a common goal, to influence them, and to shape domestic and foreign policy at the same time, by taking the authority given by the state and/or the support of the group it influences.[[29]](#footnote-29) In political systems, leaders are assigned roles and functions that are associated with strong terms such as initiative, direction, decision, coordination, intervention, advocacy, strategy, oversight, consistency, control, and executive action. Leadership is the result of both holding a certain position and having the power to prove it.[[30]](#footnote-30) It is also about judgment regarding what needs to be done (or not done), and what actions (or strategies) should follow from such judgment.[[31]](#footnote-31) The power of the leader can be measured by the ones who support him/her and by his/her control over things.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Leadership arises from the interaction of a large number of individuals in a context built by the network of authority. It also means that a function of groups generates the concept of leadership.[[33]](#footnote-33) In this case, in order to be able to talk about leadership, the existence of a community of individuals and the relationship between them becomes essential.

Leaders' personal characteristics are also important to affect their decisions. Thomas Heggen argues that the source of leadership is personal traits alone. There are even extremist approaches that argue that leadership is innate. However, it should be kept in mind that some leadership traits can also be acquired later.

Niccolò Machiavelli and Max Weber are the icons of political leadership approach and other approaches are more or less referred or advanced versions of them.

When the concept of political leadership is mentioned, Max Weber, who is one of the pioneers of the concept, not only made the basic definitions, but also classified the authority -that he saw as the source of legitimacy- and divided it into three.[[34]](#footnote-34) They are: patriarchal- based on traditions, charismatic- in which the individual possesses this characteristic, and bureaucratic- which is based on rationality and law.

Traditional authority rests on the belief in the sacredness of the social order. Patriarchal authority represents its pure type. In this type, there are obedient subjects as opposed to the lord (who is male). The main reason they obey is because the leader is blessed by tradition. If the leader takes a decision contrary to these traditions, it damages his holiness and legitimacy. Here, apart from the legal rational authority, those who obey the leader do so with a faithful servant understanding.[[35]](#footnote-35)

The source of charismatic authority is the personal and emotional attachment of the followers to the master, which is due to the virtue (charisma) he/she possesses. Among these virtues are magical abilities such as heroism, wisdom, and power of speech. The charisma must be proven by the leader. Obedience to the leader is not based on his position or tradition, but on the unusual qualities he/she has. Charismatic authority rises on "belief" and "recognition" and can be seen as a revolutionary force throughout history. In essence it is very lordly and authoritarian.[[36]](#footnote-36) Weber defines charismatic leadership as the most unstable form.[[37]](#footnote-37) A charismatic leader must be successful in performing the miracles and providing a safe and good life to his/her followers. Otherwise, if success disappears, the authority will also fall.[[38]](#footnote-38)

Bureaucratic authority represents the purest type of legal authority.[[39]](#footnote-39) The ruled ones obey in order to fulfill the duties demanded by the office.

Niccolò Machiavelli described that “individual” leaders can make changes and made suggestions to young leaders in his book *“The Prince”.*[[40]](#footnote-40) Machiavelli's lion / fox analogy in his descriptions of the nature of leadership is still relevant even today.[[41]](#footnote-41) In these metaphors, the lion represents physical strength, while the fox represents cognitive power in terms of acting wisely in the sight of traps- *fortuna*. What is meant by “fortuna (luck)” is the concept that he frequently stands on in his book *the Prince*, that leaders use their wisdom and skills to defeat violent and destructive forces which human beings cannot control and hide their positions and reach their goals. Since both, lion and fox, have their own weaknesses, a good leader should have both characteristics together. These implications of Machiavelli put the relationship between the leader and his environment at the center. In this context, the roles and obligations of leaders are matched with the trust and welfare of their social existence.[[42]](#footnote-42)

The traditional approaches of the international relations discipline, focus on states, and especially in the last century, international organizations and corporations as the main actors in international arena. In these approaches, states focused on achieving the balance of power in the anarchial atmosphere of the international system, regardless of by whom they are ruled. However, with the evolution of the international system towards a multi-polar system, the role of individuals in international relations is increasing. Especially the determination of the leaders, who are the decision makers of states, in today's international system makes it necessary to investigate this issue.

Many scholars in the international relations discipline focus more on the domestic and international environment rather than on individualistic nature of leaders. Yet, regardless of the state's political regime, leaders try to match their own agendas with their surroundings and face the challenge of their voters to adopt their own perspectives.[[43]](#footnote-43) The leaders are not only affected by the environment, but they face the challenges in order to shape it best fit their agenda.[[44]](#footnote-44)

At this point, leaders do not only interpret the current situation, but also direct factors in the domestic and international environment to their own favor through manipulation. In doing so, they can engage new actors as well. Today, the sharp line between domestic and foreign politics has become blurry. Likewise, leaders in the executive position of a state are effective both in domestic and foreign policy and must act without any clear discrimination in their strategies.[[45]](#footnote-45) In fact, it can be said that there are alternative and even opposite interpretations regarding to foreign policy that it has evolved to a more important level than domestic politics, due to the intense globalization process in every aspect of social and political life. That is why the 35th President of the United States of America J.F. Kennedy often said that "domestic politics can only defeat us; foreign policy can kill us." [[46]](#footnote-46)

The importance of the individuals in international politics should be highlighted. It is important to acknowledge that individuals are able to act in crisis and uncertainty. As for political psychology, the researchers focus on individual characteristics when making assumptions about the actions of the state. At this point, they investigate personalities and motivations of leaders, how they cope with the situations they encounter (problem presentation), the characteristics of the advisory systems they have created, and how they respond to the pressures in domestic policy.[[47]](#footnote-47)

This research is based on a conceptual assumption that leaders are not passive perceivers but rather active agents trying to change the internal and external environment with their strategies.

Studies on political leadership (which are concentrated in political psychology) often emphasize the relationship between leaders and their environment. Margaret Hermann collected these studies into four categories.[[48]](#footnote-48) In the ‘great man’ approach, some of the traits found in individuals make them a good leader: charisma, personality, background, and political experience.[[49]](#footnote-49) Here, those characteristics are given, and leaders were born, rather than made.[[50]](#footnote-50) In the second model, the leaders are in a sort of ‘firefighter’ position and react to the events happening around. The main thing here is that events that take place in a certain time frame give birth to a leader and therefore it is not necessary to obtain information about that individual.[[51]](#footnote-51) This understanding is very similar to the traditional approaches (structural); leaders have no freedom of action. In the third model, the leader is a ‘puppet’ influenced by his/her followers, and here the characteristics of the followers must be investigated.[[52]](#footnote-52) In the fourth model, the leader is in the position of a "salesman" who is sensitive to what his/her followers desire. The relationship between the leader and the follower is essential in this research.[[53]](#footnote-53)

It was underlined that political leaders develop strategies to influence the internal and external environment. So, what are these strategies they develop in order to build support? Andrea K. Grove (2007) addresses four different strategies in her research.

Table 1: Four Leadership Strategies

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategies** | **Definitions** | **Resource** |
| **Broadening Audience** | Expanding coalition to create legitimacy at home or abroad, or to support message of shared identity. | International norms, organizations/actors with sympathetic mission |
| **Buying off** | Using material resources or promises of them to co-opt opposition abroad or at home or change conditions abroad or at home. | Economic aid |
| **Trying hands** | Limiting range of options in one arena to convince an actor(s) in another arena that a particular course is necessary. | International law, foreign aid conditions (from state or other actor) |
| **Framing threat** | Depicting particular actors as dangerous to constituency (at home or abroad) to rally support and promote unity. | Repression, military behavior |

***Source:*** *Andrea K. Grove, ‘Political Leadership in Foreign Policy- Manipulating Support Across Borders’, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 8.*

Finally, there are some expectations from leaders. Their responsibilities include taking key decisions and shaping the political agenda by fulfilling administrative duties as well as the executive ones. Leaders are both guarantors of continuity and key actors of necessary change.[[54]](#footnote-54)

**1.2-Agent- Structure Dilemma in International Relations**

One of the parts of the theoretical basis of this research is the agent-structure problem in international relations theory. This problem has been put in depth by the international relations theorist Alexander Wendt. Apart from ‘agent-structure’ dilemma in literature it is also known as part-whole, micro-macro, actor-system problem. Wendt underlines the fact that, in international relations by writing about social actor or agent, researchers are generally consider states and on the other hand while writing about social structure, they often mean the international system.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Approaching this problem with the right view and by using structural methods is important to correctly analyze the properties of the world system and to interpret state behaviors in international relations. Wendt criticizes the neorealist approach (Kenneth Waltz) and world-system theory (Immanuel Wallerstein), which previously brought solutions to the problem. Although the perspectives are different, common problems and shortcomings of the two theories remain. These become the "common fundamental weaknesses" of structural theory in international relations. As a response to this weakness and a solution to the problem, Wendt highlights the Structuration Theory put forward by Anthony Giddens.[[56]](#footnote-56)

There are two truisms related to the agent-structure problem. First one is that human beings and their organizations are purposeful actors, and their actions reproduce or change society. Secondly, the interactions between these purposeful actors are structured through the social relationships that make up society. Theoretically, if we consider these two facts, it can be argued that human agents and social structures are interdependent. In this case, in order to analyze a social action, it is necessary to examine the social relationship (or the rules of the game) in that context.[[57]](#footnote-57) However, despite neorealism and world-system theory are referring to the actions of states; using the properties of both states (powers, interests) and system structures (polarity, relations of unequal exchange), the main problem is that they have not found an obvious way of conceptualizing these entities and their relations.[[58]](#footnote-58) So the real problem is how those two are interrelated. There are two ways to answer this question: you either make one of the two analysis units ontologically primitive or give both an equal and irreducible status. At this point, Wendt states that neo-realists reduce the structure of the state system; while the world-system theory reifies the structure and limits agents as the ‘affects’ and reproduction of the world capitalist system.[[59]](#footnote-59) Neorealists and world-system theorists agree that an adequate international relations theory must be more structure- than agent- oriented in which Wendt does not agree with them.[[60]](#footnote-60) At this point, structuration theory avoids these shortcomings of the two approaches and gives an equal ontological status to both agent and structure.[[61]](#footnote-61) Ontologically, neorealism has an individual, world-system theory has a holistic attitude.[[62]](#footnote-62)

***Neorealism, World- System Theory, and Structuration Theory***

According to Wendt, the reason why neorealist solution to the agent-structure problem is reductive is because their narrow definition of the concept of structure.[[63]](#footnote-63) First of all, it should be known that neo-realists define the structures of the international system with the observable attributes (distribution of capabilities) of the states in that system. It is possible to define neorealist structural approach as agent-centric, and individualist.[[64]](#footnote-64) Those capabilities of system structures play in their explanations of state behavior. But *'system structures cannot generate agents if they are defined exclusively in terms of those agents in the first place*'.[[65]](#footnote-65) Wendt, while underlining this lack of neorealism, also brings a solution to it. He proposes to make the concept of state theoretically problematic and develop a state theory, which is accepted as "given" by neorealist, not questioned and not discussed: ‘They cannot make their theory explicit as long as they treat the state ontologically primitive’.[[66]](#footnote-66)

On the other hand, world-systems theorists use the structuralist approach by defining international system structures based on the basic organizing principles of the capitalist world economy.[[67]](#footnote-67) In their solution to the agent-structure dilemma, the structure of the world system is primitive, it is ‘given’, and unproblematic.[[68]](#footnote-68) However, the importance of other factors (such as state, class) is reduced. Wendt states that world-system theorists "reify" the structure in this way. As a result, while structuring the framework for the solution of the agent-structure problem, they also neglect the fact that only human action embodies, reproduces, and transforms these structures.[[69]](#footnote-69) Immanuel Wallerstein and Louis Althusser, two of the significant world-system theorists, consider ‘the whole’ as more important than the parts, and they seek for the solution in the agent-structure problem not in the relationship between these two, but in the structure.[[70]](#footnote-70) In this theory, the structure of the world system is defined as the regulatory principles of the world economy and the international distribution of labor which ‘produces the state and classes’. Basically, they argue that state agents are ‘the effects’ of the structure of the world system. Althusser views state and class agents as passive "carriers" of systematic imperatives. The lack of a structuralist solution to the agent-structure dilemma stems from their inability to explain the properties of the world system structure and how this structure gives rise to this system. Nevertheless, Wendt underlines that the world-system theory is close to his solution to the agent-structure dilemma, the "structuration theory", by recognizing the generative role of structures.[[71]](#footnote-71)

Structuration theory tries to provide a conceptual framework while examining the entities in the social world and the relationship between them. It does not tell us what kinds of agents or what structures to expect in any concrete social system.[[72]](#footnote-72) This theory attempts to comprehensively describe the possible paths of action for state agents, rather than generating specific predictions about specific situations and behaviors.[[73]](#footnote-73) The main points of the structuration research program of researchers such as Anthony Giddens, Philip Abrams, Roy Bhaskar, Pierre Bourdieu, and Derek Layder provide us with information about this theory. Perhaps the most important feature of the theory is their acceptance of unobservable social structures that generate agents (at this point they differ from individualists). They claim that they can accept the existence of these structures ontologically as long as there are observable affects. Unlike the structuralists, they are aware of the need for a practical theory of reason and consciousness that can explain human intention and motivation.[[74]](#footnote-74) Wendt says: *‘without ideas there are no interests, without interests there are no meaningful material conditions, without material conditions there is no reality at all’*.[[75]](#footnote-75)

Structuration theory tries to develop theoretical account for both state agents and system structures (in the terms of balance and without engaging in either ontological reductionism or reification).[[76]](#footnote-76) Structurationalists ask 2 kinds of questions: “How is action X possible?”, “Why did X happened rather than Y?”.[[77]](#footnote-77) They define structure as a set of internally related elements which cannot exist independently of the agents they govern (like agents, practices, technologies, territories).[[78]](#footnote-78) In Bhaskar’s words: “*Thus society is not the unconditioned creation of human agency, but neither does it exist independently of it (reification). And individual action neither completely determines individualism nor is completely determined by determinism) social forms.”[[79]](#footnote-79)*

Structuration theory tries to explain the features of both state agents and system structures which is denied to the individualist and structuralist ontologies of neorealism and world-system theory, and it defines a research agenda for international relations that organizes wider social scientific research.[[80]](#footnote-80) The agent-structure debate has the potential to increase the capacity to develop new structuralist theories and bring peaceful changes to the international system.[[81]](#footnote-81)

The leaders as the agents of not only national but also international system are interrelated with the social structures aswell. In this research, the affect of the Turkish and Russian leaders on the bilateral relations is considered under the agent-structure dilemma.

***Leaders as Agents***

Bass and Stogdill claim that “*leaders are agents of change – persons whose acts affect other people more than other people’s acts affect them.”[[82]](#footnote-82)* In the modern international relations discipline, scholars tend to neglect the role and individuality of leaders. The reason is that it is difficult to process the leader's personality and abilities and his/her role in practice with scientific precision.[[83]](#footnote-83) According to the prominent international relations theorist Robert Jervis, it is not possible to prove the role of individual leaders through the positive sciences and therefore it is necessary to focus on structural explanations rather than agents. For him, leaders do not really matter.[[84]](#footnote-84) However, when we look at the 1930-1940s, it is possible to see that leaders were not neglected in the international relations literature. The classical realists of the period, Reinhold Niebuhr and Hans Morgenthau, emphasized the importance of examining the statements and acts of individual leaders and diplomats in order to understand international relations. Morgenthau argued that the political world is not prone to "scientific" rationality and that to be an expert in politics it is necessary to have the moral power of the state people rather than the rationality of an engineer.[[85]](#footnote-85)

Byman and Pollack have shown that the reason for this negligence of international relations theorists is that they think they have nothing to say about leaders and that "nonpersonal forces" often explain the events taking place in international politics.[[86]](#footnote-86) However, as Kenneth Waltz admitted later, the main reason behind the overlook of leaders was that the theory of international relations wanted to be placed on a basis based on the physical sciences model.[[87]](#footnote-87) On this simple and rigorous ground, individual leaders with varying temperaments, experiences, and capacities stood very complex. For this reason, Waltz preferred the state rather than the individual as the fundamental unit of analysis. Individuals, on the other hand, were reduced to actors who gave rational answers to the structural conditions they encountered. Consequently, it was structure that determined future actions and results in this understanding.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Robert Tucker underlines that, “people as individuals, and particularly those who are leaders, often make a significant difference in historical outcomes by virtue of the ways in which they act or fail to act at critical junctures in the development of events.”[[89]](#footnote-89)

All this shows that it is necessary to go beyond the endless "agent-structure debate" in international relations. We can only do this by admitting that intelligent (not necessarily rational) human agents, are both the producers and the products of structures and institutions.[[90]](#footnote-90)

There are theoretical studies that try to overcome this dilemma in international relations. For example, the school of "foreign policy analysis" places individuals and the social environment at the center of their research. Snyder states that the method they use to define the state is simply to evaluate the official decision maker of that state. The behavior of the state is explained by those who act on behalf of that state: decision-makers.[[91]](#footnote-91)

Apart from that, the leadership agency was also discussed by researchers who examined multilateral negotiations and the relationship between internal and external politics. In his essay in 1988, Robert Putnam analyzes political elites with privileged roles that can shape foreign policy and interpret possibilities.[[92]](#footnote-92) In this study, "statesman" is the main strategic actor who has the opportunity to evaluate internal and external events and obtain creative outputs.[[93]](#footnote-93)

Additionally, there is a concept named “agent- centered historical institutionalism” which argues that analyzing institutional structures are not enough to explain the changes. For this, agents which are “ultimate propellant of change” should be taken into account.[[94]](#footnote-94) These agents operate within institutions and wider influences such as structural economic factors, demographic factors, currently dominant ideas etc. It should be underlined that institutions empower agents while wider contexts provide opportunities to move and at the same time constraints upon it.[[95]](#footnote-95)

On the other hand, as we consider the importance of leaders, forgetting about the other variables will be wrong. At this point, Fred Greenstein suggests taking into account the existence of other political, structural, and institutional constraints which are able to influence the policy.[[96]](#footnote-96) Greenstein underlines three propositions where individual leader’s acts are likely to affect the environment:

1. The allowance of the environment to be constructed by the actor;
2. The position of the actor in the political environment (are their role powerful enough to affect policy?);
3. The personal strengths and weaknesses of the individual leader (personalities, styles, etc.).

Personal characteristics of the leaders are effective as well when it comes to shape foreign policy decisions and actions. Margaret Hermann gives eight propositions for that:[[97]](#footnote-97)

1) If the leader possesses interest in foreign policy, then likely impact of his/her personality upon foreign action will be greater.

2) The way leaders assume their power (i.e., revolutions, coups, landslide elections) shows that their personality will affect foreign policy (more dramatic, more influential).

3) The charisma plays influential role to foreign policy behavior.

4) The majority of authority which the leader possesses being a head of the state also plays influential role where the leader’s personality affects the foreign policy.

5) The development and differentiation of foreign policy organization of the nation are also important factors. Less developed foreign policy organizations give an opportunity to the leaders to be dominant in taking foreign policy actions.

6) If the national situation is fragile and open to crisis then possibility of leaders to influence foreign policy is higher.

7) The less training in foreign politics leaders have, the more likely their cognitive styles are to affect foreign policy behavior. When training increases, the leaders start to influence their foreign policy behavior with their beliefs about the world.

8) When the external national situation perceived more ambiguous, the more likely the information-processing systems of leaders are to affect foreign policy behavior.

***‘The Role’ of Leaders in International Politics***

It is true that being a leader comes with a lot of burden and responsibility. One of the most important of these is that they are national security providers in the field of international relations and foreign policy. Here, leaders have three main tasks: first, they must determine the threats to national security and their urgency. Second, after this determination, they are expected to develop a policy or strategy. Finally, they need to get support - especially from voters - for these policies and strategies. Although many studies ignore it, the idea of the importance of leaders is intuitively obvious. Sometimes it is possible to see that leaders during international conflicts can determine the course of these conflicts, even if they are not the source of those conflicts themselves.[[98]](#footnote-98)

When we analyze international politics and try to foresee the steps that any state will take, we focus on their leaders. In doing so, we do it with the consideration that those leaders are effective not only within the boundaries of the state in which they are, but also outside. In the traditional foreign policy studies, this was not the case. Due to the understanding that the international system is anarchic, the influence of the leaders was somehow limited by their focus on the establishment of strategy which aim is to maximize the state's interests.[[99]](#footnote-99)

While such an understanding seems possible in the bipolar world order, in the present "new world order" acting solely on this understanding poses a problem for efficient analysis.[[100]](#footnote-100) During the cold war era leaders had restricted space to decide and move.[[101]](#footnote-101) Today, even though the powers of leaders are still limited, unlike the Cold War, systematic constraints are concentrated in the field of economy and environment, not on security problems.[[102]](#footnote-102)

Hermann and Hagan in their research concentrate on the roles leaders play in foreign policy. Firstly, leaders perceive and interpret constraints, which means that they have the capacity to assess limitations and, as a result, create expectations. In this sense, the government can have a significant impact on developing a particular strategy. The same leaders' belief systems, sensitivities and experiences in the political field are also effective in realizing this. When we think about how a state will act in the international arena, we should not be surprised that the ideals of that state’s leader come to minds. If the leader of the state has liberal or nationalist or authoritarian point of view, we make different evaluations about that state and its future steps at foreign affairs.[[103]](#footnote-103)

Secondly, “leaders often disagree”. Leaders' belief systems about the world may be different and they may not share the same ideas. At this point, it is necessary to look at the internal dynamics of the state again. If there is competition for power in domestic politics, or if there are equally important but different voices, this will affect the decision-making process in foreign policy. Before acting, it is important for leaders to reach a consensus. First of all, it is necessary to look at who is evaluating when an important decision needs to be made in domestic and foreign policy. Here authority is concentrated among those who will maintain the power of the state and stability. In some cases, actors do not want to take responsibility. As it can be seen, possessing the abilities and authority is not enough, there should be a direct move from the leader with his/her own will.[[104]](#footnote-104)

Finally, the interaction among leaders and domestic opposition should also be considered. As Robert Putnam and Andrew Moravcsik have observed, leaders are “central strategic actors” in the “two level game” that links domestic politics and international bargaining.[[105]](#footnote-105) In domestic politics, these leaders both try to gather supporters and try to maintain their legitimacy by resisting to the opposition from the other side. Leaders can make concessions in foreign policy on order to suppress dissent in domestic politics. For example, leaders of non-democratic states can build their foreign policies more easily than opposition leaders in democratic states.[[106]](#footnote-106)

Coming back to agent-structure dilemma, as Alexander George has observed, for practitioners it is easier to work with actor-specific models which concentrates in internal structures and behavioral features of each state and leader rather than academic approaches that assume all state actors can behave alike in the given situations.[[107]](#footnote-107) So, understanding who is in the decision-maker position in a state is more important than understanding the formal structure of that state's government as well.[[108]](#footnote-108)

In the 21st century, leaders are getting more and more involved in the regional and international system. Leaders' roles and capacities are directly dependent on the intricacies in domestic politics, how they are organized in the leadership position and their personal characteristics. We can understand how the future world will be shaped by examining which leaders will fall into the flow and which will challenge the difficulties in the name of changing the environment.[[109]](#footnote-109)

**1.3-Operational Code Analysis**

After the Cold War period, developing strategy and tactics about foreign policy became difficult due to the blurring of sharp lines between domestic and international politics. Therefore, policy makers began to act with their subjective views and beliefs about the international arena. They are trying to reach their foreign policy goals based on these.[[110]](#footnote-110) Walker and Schafer underline that beliefs are becoming more important as causal mechanisms in today's complex and interdependent world.[[111]](#footnote-111)

Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin stated that in order to understand foreign policy decisions it is necessary to look at the ‘black box’ of the decision-making process. This approach has an agent-centric perspective and focuses on individuals and small decision-making groups. For this reason, it differs from the structural or systems-level approaches in international politics, which often ignore individuals.[[112]](#footnote-112)

The operational code comes into play in the examination of the decision-making process. The operational code reveals the approach and strategies of the subject about himself/herself and the other. These personal beliefs determine his/her own rules of the game and actions in international politics.[[113]](#footnote-113)

Operational code analysis, which has become popular with the importance of beliefs and norms in international relations, is in essence a psychological approach that can be applied to political phenomena.[[114]](#footnote-114) In the operational code approach, the belief systems of the subjects are mapped. To believe in something is to verify the information obtained. A believer stores his/her impressions of information in his/her brain.[[115]](#footnote-115) In order to reveal belief systems in the operational code approach, it is necessary to investigate what the individual knows about exercise of power in human relations, what he/she feels and what he/she wants. In doing so, the individual's views about himself/herself and the other, and the interaction between them are important. The structures forming the belief system are revealed in the language of human subjects.[[116]](#footnote-116)

***Development of the operational code analysis***

Operational code analysis is first seen in two of Nathan Leites' works in the field of political psychology, The Operational Code of the Politburo (1951) and A Study of Bolshevism (1953), where he analyzes the Bolsheviks with their ideology and belief systems. Here, Leites defines operational code as a combination of ontological implications, causal attributions, and perspective norms, which are considered as political strategy conceptions.[[117]](#footnote-117) The concept of operational code was previously used by Robert K. Merton (1940). Merton defined them as the values and the world view ​​individuals carry.[[118]](#footnote-118)

Leites, in his works where he used psycho-cultural models, analyzed the political strategy of the Bolshevik ideology based on their characteristics.[[119]](#footnote-119) Focusing on Lenin's personality with the norms behind the 20th century Russian intelligentsia and revolution, Leites reached the concepts in the strategy of the Soviet elite by using the combination of psychological and cultural sources.[[120]](#footnote-120) Methodologically, Leites' studies have shown how efficient qualitative content analysis can be in solving the characteristics of the leading group.[[121]](#footnote-121)

After Leites, Alexander George brought an innovation to operational code analysis. In his 1969 review article "The 'operational code': A neglected approach to the study of political leaders and decision-making," he suggested to apply Leites' belief system analysis to other leadership groups as well. Referring to the unusual complexity in the nature of Leites' work, George stated that while this fact adds richness and intellectual attractiveness to the work, on the other hand, readers will have difficulty in understanding the research mode.[[122]](#footnote-122) In order to overcome this challenge, George developed a kind of question-answer method in operational code analysis. First of all, he distinguished operational codes under two categories: philosophical beliefs and instrumental beliefs. Philosophical (i.e., epistemological) beliefs contain assumptions about the fundamental nature of politics, the nature of political conflict, and the role of the individual in history. Instrumental beliefs, on the other hand, include approaches related to the most efficient strategies and tactics in achieving goals.[[123]](#footnote-123) While the philosophical beliefs of the individual help to define the event and situation, instrumental beliefs are in an effective position in determining the responses to be given according to the situation.[[124]](#footnote-124) Then, he described ten research questions as follow:[[125]](#footnote-125)

*The Philosophical Beliefs in an Operational Code*

P-1. What is the “essential” nature of political life? Is the political universe essentially one of harmony or of conflict? What is the fundamental character of one’s political opponents?

P-2. What are the prospects for the eventual realization of one’s fundamental values and aspirations? Can one be optimistic, or must one be pessimistic on this score; and in what respects the one and/or the other?

P-3. Is the political future predictable? In what sense and to what extent?

P-4. How much “control” or “mastery” can one have over historical development? What is one’s role in “moving” and “shaping” history in the desired direction?

P-5. What is the role of “chance” in human affairs and in historical development?

*The Instrumental Beliefs in an Operational Code*

I-1. What is the best approach for selecting goals or objectives for political action?

I-2. How are the goals of action pursued most effectively?

I-3. How are the risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted?

I-4. What is the best “timing” of action to advance one’s interests?

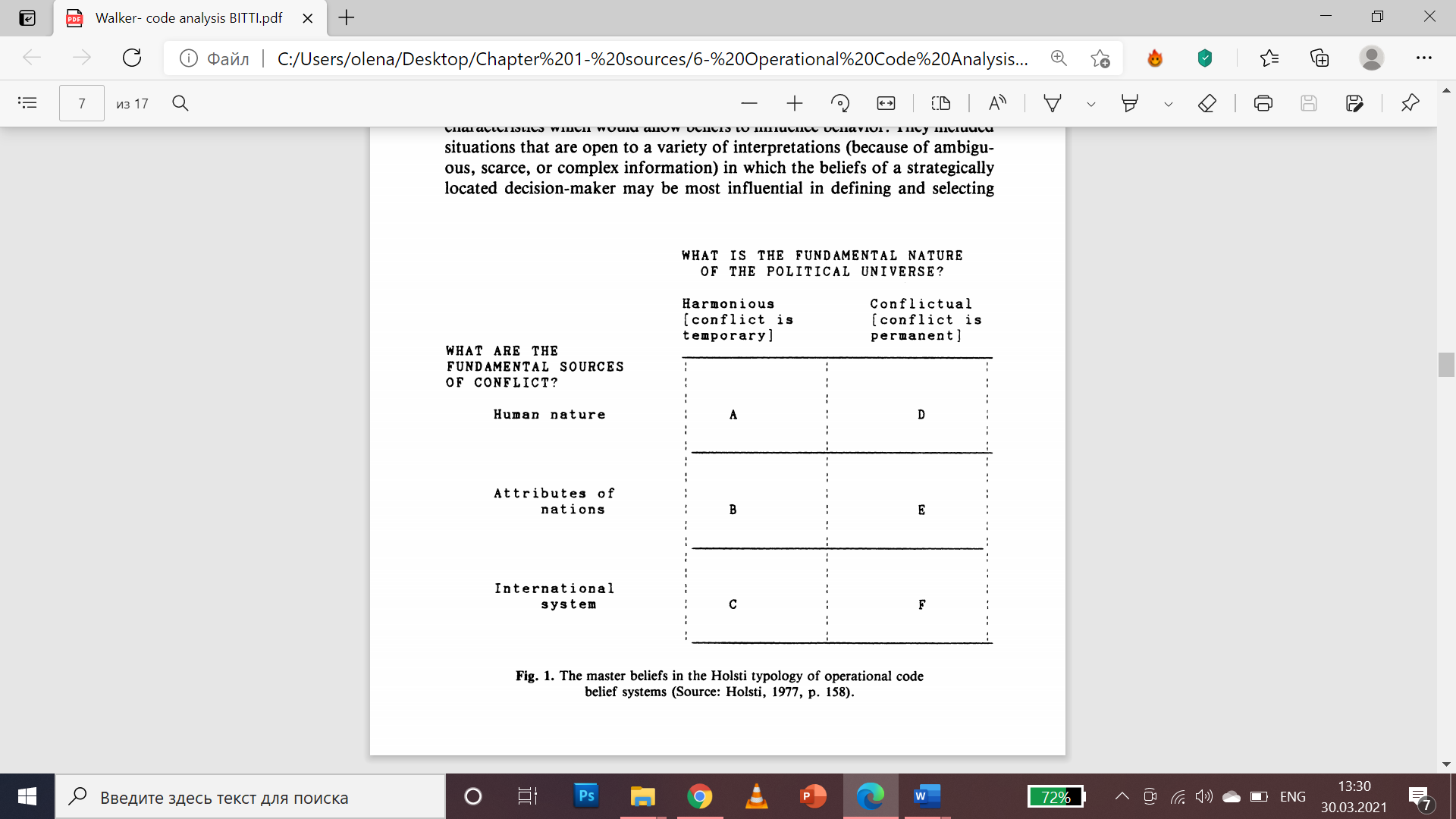
I-5. What is the utility and role of different means for advancing one’s interests?

When we answer these questions, we reach the elements of operational codes. At this point, however, George points out that: the elements of the code should be viewed "as a set of premises and beliefs about politics and not as a set of rules and recipes to be applied mechanically to the choice of action...."[[126]](#footnote-126) George also added later in his work that those beliefs influence decision-making indirectly and other variables are also at work determining what he/she will do.[[127]](#footnote-127)

The operational codes developed by George brought a psychological breath to decision-making theories and offered a new and basic way for researchers. In this way, researchers have reached the methods and observation opportunities generally accessible to political scientists. Both Leites and George, like many other academics, recognized the knowledge that leaders' view of the world had a fundamentally significant influence on their foreign policy choices.

Ole Holsti developed a typology of the decision-makers’ beliefs. He developed ten questions which was brought by George, implemented a three-step strategy and found out six political belief systems (ABCDEF).[[128]](#footnote-128)

Graph 1: Ole Holsti’s Typology of the Decision-makers’ Beliefs



***Source:*** *Ole Holsti, (1977). The 'operational code' as an approach to the analysis of belief systems. Final Report to the National Science Foundation, Grant SOC 75-15368, Duke University, Durham, N.C, p. 158.*

Holsti claimed that beliefs tend to reinforce one another to form a coherent belief system and under specified conditions beliefs constrain the range of alternative choices and thereby influence the final decision.[[129]](#footnote-129)

When it comes to analyze person’s belief system (so to study the human mind) it gets harder to do this if the person is not reachable. The most common solution to this in political psychology is called “at-a-distance” methodology which gives an opportunity for researchers to assess the decision-makers without even contacting them directly. This challenge has been overcome through the verbal behavior of the person. While what person says is not the only indicator of his/her mind it is definitely important and valid one.[[130]](#footnote-130) Assuming this, Stephen G. Walker, Mark Schafer, and Michael D. Young have developed the Verbs in Context System (VICS) in order to differentiate images of self and other in belief systems and to provide quantitative answers to George’s ten questions (operational codes are constructed by analyzing leaders’ speeches, interviews, writings, and other verbal or written materials, generally primary sources, in which the result can be either quantitative or qualitative).[[131]](#footnote-131) It is the systematic, at-a-distance method.[[132]](#footnote-132)

While working on the sources which show the decision-makers’ statements about self and the other, the verbs they use are being considered. Those verbs should be divided into two; where the leader speaks about self and where he/she speaks about the others. This makes clear the distinction between philosophical and instrumental beliefs. The coding of the verbs process continues with putting them under the categories such as “cooperative (+)” or “conflictual (-)” direction. Aftermath, those verbs are described with codes with scales of six values ranging from -3 to +3: Punish (-3), Threaten (-2), Oppose (-1), Support (+1), Promise (+2), and Reward (+3). 0, means neutral verbs, will not provide significant results. As the result, after the verbs are sorted and aggregated, we reach the quantitative answers to the operational code questions. The leader’s belief system showing his/her political understandings (of himself/herself and the other) of cooperation and conflict becomes clear.[[133]](#footnote-133)

This method can be applied either, manually or by using the computer software. For example, thanks to Profiler-Plus, the computer program which can provide valuable results in a short time, researchers have started to use operational codes more frequently to assess world leaders.[[134]](#footnote-134)

***Rationality and Operational Code Analysis***

Structural theories under the umbrella of neorealist, neoliberal, and constructivist research programs highlight the fact that leaders' beliefs reflect the facts in domestic and foreign politics, and that leaders act on this basis.[[135]](#footnote-135) The neorealist approach focuses on the balance of power between states. The rational act for agents is to maintain the power in the international arena in line with their interests. In the neoliberal approach, the economic and political institutions that the leaders are in are brought to the fore. The rational move acknowledged by neoliberals is to protect the interests of these institutions. In the constructivist approach, the focus is on international law and cultural norms, and attention is drawn to their influence in foreign policy. It is rational to reproduce these norms because in this way an international order is maintained which as the result preserves cultural values. At this point, beliefs are explained as facts that leaders have to perceive in order to realize their political goals.[[136]](#footnote-136)

Therefore, it is possible to talk about a substantive rationality in structural theories. It is stressed that the leaders make their decisions based on their political goals and “the knowledge of the external environment as mirrored by his/her beliefs”.[[137]](#footnote-137)

At this point, operational code analysis, which focuses on restrictive nature of the beliefs on the rationality of decision-makers, is a distinctive approach. Instead of accepting that all decision makers act on the basis of the same rationality, remaining outside the classical rational-actor understanding, the focus of operational code analysis is on idiosyncratic features of different decision makers.[[138]](#footnote-138) Contemporary operational code analysis aims a theoretical explanation of the cognitive influences on foreign policy.[[139]](#footnote-139)

**1.4-Other Methodologies**

***Process Tracing***

Process tracing is a qualitative research method which is defined by Bennett and Checkel as “the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case for the purpose of either developing or testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case”.[[140]](#footnote-140) It was originally used as a research methodology that tried to provide theoretical explanations of historical events.[[141]](#footnote-141) The aim of process tracing is to find out how causes influenced a change in a case and establish the link among events and causalities. In order to do that, causal direction should be established: if X and Y are correlated, did X cause Y, or did Y cause X? Process tracing is helpful to answer questions such as who knew what, when, and what they did in response. Secondly, it investigates if X and Y are correlated and is this because X caused Y, or is it because third variable caused both X and Y? At this point process tracing helps to explore whether there is a link among two of them and whether there is such evidence for other variables that may have caused X and Y.[[142]](#footnote-142)

There are three variants of process tracing: theory testing, theory building, and explaining outcome. With finding out the observable implications of causal mechanisms, theory testing provides the opportunity to examine this case and test particular theories and explanations’ accountability to it. In theory building, researcher seeks for the evidence which can develop hypothesis to explain the case or contribute to explanations of other cases. Lastly, explaining outcome uses both inductive and deductive logics to offer a causal explanation of a specific case.[[143]](#footnote-143)

Van Evera’s empirical process tracing tests designed to assess causation and eliminate potential explanations:[[144]](#footnote-144)

1-Straw in the wind test: A straw in the wind test, if passed, supports a particular hypothesis but does not rule it in or out.

2-Hoop test: A hoop test can be used to eliminate certain hypotheses.

3-Smoking gun test: The smoking gun test can be used to confirm a hypothesis.

4-Doubly decisive test: This confirms one hypothesis and eliminates all others.[[145]](#footnote-145)

Process tracing method is valuable for this research because it provides the researcher to check variables if they reflect the actors’ beliefs and representations. This method helps to investigate the relations between beliefs and behavior and to examine the preferences and perceptions (goals, purposes, values etc.) of actors empirically.[[146]](#footnote-146) Process tracing helps to develop and test alternative ideas about the causes of the events so it will be helpful to investigate whether leadership factor has exerted a decisive influence on the bilateral relations among Russia and Turkey or not.

***Content Analysis***

Content analysis is a flexible research method which is applied in quantitative, qualitative, and sometimes both research frameworks. This method contains a lot of analytical techniques to generate findings and put them into context. As methodology, content analysis has started to be used in the study of mass communications in the 1950s. Since then, it is a method used by many researchers from different fields like anthropology, library and information studies, management, political sciences, psychology, and sociology.[[147]](#footnote-147)

Basically, “it is the study of the content with reference to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained in messages”.[[148]](#footnote-148)

In general, the steps which acquires content analysis to be taken to accomplish it with success are:

1. Formulation of the research question or objectives

2. Selection of communication content and sample

3. Developing content categories

4. Finalizing units of analysis

5. Preparing a coding schedule, pilot testing and checking inter coder reliabilities

6. Analyzing the collected data[[149]](#footnote-149)

The approaches to the agent-structure dilemma in international relations help to shape the theoretical framework of this dissertation. The structuration theory’s perspective is closer to understand the early 21st century Russian-Turkish relations. Neo-realist or world-system theory’s understanding alone is not enough to describe the nature of those relations and the causality of the turning points. Agents and structure are both influential in this case.

Operational code analysis will help to understand the most important actors concerning 21st century Russian-Turkish relations: Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Qualitative operational code analysis is applied by answering ten questions of Alexander George in order to find out leaders’ belief systems. Quotes, statements, and remarkable answers to the interviews are used as a source for this method. Belief systems of the leaders highlighted their leadership characteristics, vision concerning the political nature and opponents, and which and how they use instruments in order to achieve their targets. The results of the analysis can be found in the second part of Chapter 3. The operational codes of Erdogan and Putin were also summarized and compared in the table.

Process tracing as a qualitative research method that tries to provide theoretical explanations of historical events was used in Chapter 2 while describing and linking in detail the top cases in the bilateral relations. The cases are examined within their causes and consequences.

Finally, qualitative content analysis within the usage of software NVivo, helped to analyze a big number of verbal sources. Erdogan and Putin’s statements and interview answers were sorted up and combined with the results of operational code analysis. With this, their influential role in the cases was evaluated.

**Chapter 2**

**The Milestones of the Russian-Turkish Relations in 21st century**

This chapter examines the crucial events in Russian- Turkish relations in early 21st century. These events will be linked to leaders’ thoughts and final acts in the third chapter. First of all, the second chapter briefly describes 21st century Russian-Turkish relations and after that focuses on key cases shaping those relations significantly.

In the early 2000s, Russia announced its new Foreign Policy Concept. On the basis of this concept, interests in the Post-Soviet region came to the fore. When it comes to Turkey, Foreign Minister Ismail Cem (1997-2002) declared Turkey’s new foreign policy which being less conflictual and more trade oriented. In addition to Turkey’s traditional West-oriented policy, Ismail Cem focused to strengthen ties with neighboring countries as well. The central motto was ‘zero problems with neighbors’ in which Turkey aimed to resolve conflicts and cooperate with neighbors. During the 2000s Turkey eventually turned into a trading state. In this context, Russia has been defined as a stable, necessary, and reliable trading partner.[[150]](#footnote-150) This new foreign policy understanding continued under the rule of the Justice and Development Party. As the result, political, military, and economic cooperation with Russia intensified.[[151]](#footnote-151) The relations between Turkey and Russia, especially in the economic sphere, bloomed rapidly during early 2000s. Mid- 2000s showed Russia and Turkey seeing each other not only as rivals that aim to influence the region but also as trustful trade partners.[[152]](#footnote-152) The trade volume between the two countries was 5,1 billion US dollars in 2002, 15,3 billion US dollars in 2005, and reached 37,8 billion dollars in 2008 which is the historical maximum.[[153]](#footnote-153) Besides trade, the institutionalization of the relations also got acceleration.

The period 1999-2010 is one of the warmest periods of time of Russian-Turkish relations. During those years, Russia possessed (neo)revisionist strategy against the West while Turkey tried to maintain its compatible strategy to the West.[[154]](#footnote-154) During the years of 2005-2008, Russia started to criticize expansion of the European Union and NATO. This was considered as a threat to the country. The relations of Russia with the West, primarily with the USA became tense. Vladimir Putin openly criticized NATO and OSCE, in which Turkey is a member country.[[155]](#footnote-155)

The Eurasianist approach in early 2000s was underlining Turkey’s domestic instabilities and the deadlock of the dialogue with European Union and suggesting development economic relations with Russia. Turkish general and secretary of Turkish National Security Council Tuncer Kilinc in March 2002 said that Turkey must cooperate with Russia and Iran instead of the European Union.[[156]](#footnote-156) Within Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem’s initiatives, Eurasia became field of cooperation instead of strategic priority and competition.[[157]](#footnote-157) It can be argued that unstable relations with the West became an important reason of two countries to become closer.

Before the examination of the main cases, it is useful to take a look at Appendix 1. There, the brief chronology of the early 21st century Russian-Turkish relations can be found.

**2.1- Cases**

*2.1.1- Military-economic Cooperation*

The liberalization of Turkish economy was in 1980s. In December 1984, Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Tikhonov visited Turkey and met with Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal. This meeting resulted signature of two agreements after which foundation of energy cooperation between two states have established.[[158]](#footnote-158)

2.1.1.1-Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant

While economic development, urbanization, and comfort of life are increasing, energy becomes number one demand. Turkey by signing a deal with Russia for the establishment of the first nuclear energy plant on its territory, made a big step forward in order to meet this demand. Turkey, despite being in geopolitically significant location, does not possess enough energy sources. Turkey is obliged to import 99.48% (According to statistics of January 2021) of its natural gas demand[[159]](#footnote-159) (Turkey imports natural gas primarily from Russia - 43.90% of imported natural gas was from Russia in January 2021), and 93% of fossil oil. Additionally, Russia is Turkey’s number one fossil oil importer (25.96% of imported fossil oil was from Russia in January 2021)[[160]](#footnote-160). This fact pushes the country for alternatives such as nuclear energy. Turkey is already a corridor of energy supplies, but also wants to be regional energy hub.

On 10 May 2010, the governments of Turkey and Russia signed an agreement of the construction of the nuclear power plant with four power units in Mersin- the city which is located in the south of Turkey. The Rosatom State Corporation's share in the project is 99.2% and the total cost of the project is around 20 billion US dollars. In accordance with the Intergovernmental Agreement, Turkish students participate in nuclear expert training programs in higher education institutions in Russia. Young Turkish experts will join the operational staff of Akkuyu project after completing their education and training at Rosatom technical training centers.[[161]](#footnote-161) The building process should be finished in 2023- the 100th year anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Akkuyu nuclear power plant is designed to meet 10% of Turkey’s energy need.[[162]](#footnote-162)

The key question here is why Turkey decided to make a deal for the establishment of nuclear plant with Russia rather than other giant energy suppliers like for example the US, France, or Japan? Turkey’s plans for the establishment of nuclear plant have emerged during 1950s. Agreements with France, Canada and the US were signed but in practice, sides did not achieve any results. The reasons were their concern of Turkey having nuclear weapons in the future and Turkey’s lack of budget.[[163]](#footnote-163) Russia is ready to cooperate with Turkey in this case. Sergey Boyarkin, Advisor to the Managing Director of the Russian Public Nuclear Corporation Rosatom Overseas, stated that his country is the world leader in nuclear technology. Explaining that 30 percent of the world market in nuclear is in the hands of Russia, Boyarkin said, "We are the world leader in uranium enrichment. We are starting to use the fourth-generation nuclear power plants in 2020. We have passed other countries in this field for 20 years,".[[164]](#footnote-164)

Turkey’s Ambassador to Russia (2010-2014) Adnan Sezgin reviews Turkish decision to sign a deal with Russia as politic.[[165]](#footnote-165) Sezgin commented that Russia’s acceptance for building nuclear plant to Turkey which is a member of NATO and possesses developed economy, will give reputation to Russia.[[166]](#footnote-166)

This project shows Turkey and Russia’s strategic partnership during their isolation from West.[[167]](#footnote-167) Also, there are critics arguing that this project may increase Turkey’s dependence to Russia. The establishment of Akkuyu nuclear plant is an important milestone in Turkish-Russian economic relations. It is also indirectly connected to other projects such Turk Stream gas pipeline and S-400 air missile system deal. Turkey is still one of the biggest Russian gas importers and the establishment of Turk Stream pipeline shows that despite establishment of Akkuyu, Turkey is ready to continue to import gas from Russia. Akkuyu nuclear power plant project needs serious security measures to be implemented. Alongside natural disasters, Turkey also should be ready to possible attacks to Akkuyu. Russian S-400 air missile systems can be used as defenders of it.

2.1.1.2-TurkStream Natural Gas Pipeline

At the beginning, Russia planned to build South Stream project which aimed to link Russian natural gas with its European clients through Ukraine. However, relations get worsened, and Russia decided to change the project. At this point, good relations with Turkey, which is its natural gas costumer since 1987, gave birth to a new project: TurkStream. In the new project, Russian natural gas will be passed from the Black Sea directly to Turkey. The pipeline is comprising of two parallel strings which have a throughput capacity of 15.75 billion cubic meters of gas per year[[168]](#footnote-168) (Totally 31.5 billion cubic meters of gas per year). Half of the natural gas is used by Turkey while other half will be supplied to South and Southeast European countries. TurkStream project was announced by Vladimir Putin in 2014, but the jet crisis froze its establishment. After normalization of Russian-Turkish relations, on 10th of October 2016, Russian and Turkish delegations met in Turkey and signed an intergovernmental agreement. TurkStream project became an important symbol of reparation of Russian-Turkish relations. On November 19, 2018 pipelaying in the Black Sea was completed and January 2020 saw the start of gas supplies via TurkStream. President of Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, President of Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic, Prime Minister of Republic of Bulgaria Boyko Borisov, Minister of Energy of Russian Federation Alexander Novak, and Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of Turkey Fatih Donmez attended to grand opening ceremony for TurkStream gas pipeline on January 8, 2020 in Istanbul[[169]](#footnote-169). The Russian President Vladimir Putin said that with TurkStream, natural gas from Western Siberian fields will come with the first line while with the second one the gas will be transported over Turkey to the Balkans, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia.[[170]](#footnote-170)

Map 1: South Stream Gas Pipeline Project



*Source:* *South Stream advancing steadily, Gazprom,* [*https://www.gazprom.com/press/news/2013/november/article177555/*](https://www.gazprom.com/press/news/2013/november/article177555/) *, Release:* *November 14, 2013 (Accessed on: 23.04.2021)*

Map 2: Turk Stream Gas Pipeline Project

harita içeren bir resim

Açıklama otomatik olarak oluşturuldu

*Source:* *TurkStream to Begin Pumping Gas to Balkans from January 1, Russia Business Today, Release: December 9, 2019,* [*https://russiabusinesstoday.com/energy/turkstream-to-begin-pumping-gas-to-balkans-from-january-1/*](https://russiabusinesstoday.com/energy/turkstream-to-begin-pumping-gas-to-balkans-from-january-1/) *(Accessed on: 23.04.2021)*

This project is not only a good example of Turkish-Russian energy cooperation, but also a project which increases Turkey’s geopolitical significance with strengthening its position as an energy center. With it, Russian natural gas will reach Europe via Turkey through the first time in the history. TurkAkim Project is not the first cooperation between Turkey and Russia regarding natural gas transition. The Blue Stream (Mavi Akim) project, which links Russia to Turkey for natural gas transition was opened in 2003. This project runs since that day in secure, despite difficult weather conditions and delivers 16 billion cubic meters of gas per year. Those two projects increase Russian reputation as a reliable natural gas supplier which strengths not only its economy but the economy of recipient country as well.

2.1.1.3- The Deal on Russian S-400 Air Missile System

Russia and Turkey have strengthened their economic ties after 15 July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey and after both sides found a common ground considering Syrian war. Beside economic cooperation, Turkish-Russian relations escalated to defense and security cooperation as well. This is crucially important since Turkey is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which members are historically rival countries of Soviet Union, and now, of Russia. According to Turkish Minister of Defense Hulusi Akar, Turkey is under air missile threat from 90s and in need to possess a strong air defense system.[[171]](#footnote-171) Turkey has started to be more concentrated on the supplement of long-range air defense missile systems since 2010s and contacted with Russia for S-400s, with France-Italy joint air defense system for the Aster 30 SAMP/T, and with the US for Patriots. There was not any constructive answer from France- Italy and the US. There was a second application for Patriots in 2017 which finished with disagreement. The cause of those disagreements is the terms demanded by sides which led to deadlock. Turkey does not want to be a market country anymore and wants a share of technology and joint manufacture of it. Minister Akar underlined the fact that the deal on S-400s is a necessity rather than a choice.[[172]](#footnote-172)

Negotiations on purchasing S-400 has started in 2017. Russia agreed with China to sell this air missile system and was ready to sell it to Turkey as well. According to Turkish Foreign Minister, Turkey and Russia agreed on joint manufacture of S-400s and agreement was signed at the end of 2017.[[173]](#footnote-173) With this agreement, it can be argued that Turkish- Russian relations in 2017, turned to the way they were before the jet crisis.

The US reacted harshly on this agreement. They claim that S-400s are incompatible and cannot be integrated to NATO military equipment and they see Russian air-missile system as a possible information thief. The US threatened to impose sanctions on Turkey, to block it from receiving deliveries of the new F-35 stealth fighter jet program, and to remove Turkish-made components from the F-35 supply chain.[[174]](#footnote-174) Despite those threats, Turkish officials showed determination that the deal will not be changed, and Turkey will be ready to use S-400 to defend itself. In 2019, Turkish Foreign Minister Cavusoglu said that negotiations with the US for purchasing Patriots has started. This time, the US wanted from Turkey to forego from S-400s and get Patriots in return. Turkey rejected this offer.[[175]](#footnote-175)

Turkey as the member of NATO, continues to fulfill its responsibilities to the organization. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, hailed Moscow and Ankara's agreement on S-400 missile defense systems as Turkey's national decision. Stoltenberg underlined that NATO members can decide for themselves what equipment to acquire.[[176]](#footnote-176) There is no change in the traditional, mostly West-oriented foreign policy of Turkey according to Turkish Minister of Defense.[[177]](#footnote-177)

Despite warnings of the US and Western countries, Turkey signed a deal for the purchase of Russian S-400 air defense systems which automatically makes Turkey the first NATO member which bought Russian air defense system. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has criticized the attitude of the NATO allies. After the beginning of shipment of S-400 to Turkey in 2019, the US announced that they have started to suspend Turkey’s participation in the F-35 program.[[178]](#footnote-178) Within signature of the budget draft in December 2019 by The US President Donald Trump- which he vetoed after- Turkey was put under Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) sanctions.[[179]](#footnote-179) CAATSA allows the US to take an act against individuals, companies or countries that are “disturbing international security”.[[180]](#footnote-180) The US House of Representatives has accepted the defense budget envisaging sanctions against Turkey in December 2020.[[181]](#footnote-181) Aftermath, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov criticized those sanctions claiming that they are a violation of international law.[[182]](#footnote-182)

Turkey tested S-400s in 2020 and Turkish Minister of Defense Hulusi Akar declared that Turkey is ready to use them when it is necessary.[[183]](#footnote-183)

This case shows how the West, especially the US is worried about rapprochement in military field of Turkey and Russia. Also, Turkey’s attitude on S-400 crisis showed how its thirsty to take its own decisions in foreign policy and be independent from the US. While there are some rumors that Turkey and Russia are going to sign another deal regarding S-400s, crisis between Turkey and USA is continuing in 2021 (the new government of the USA continues to press on Turkey to break the deal). On the other hand, selling missiles to a country which is both a NATO member and a significant role player in Middle Eastern affairs is a major win for Russia. It does not only increase its foreign military sales and international prestige, but also strengthens authority in the region.[[184]](#footnote-184)

*2.1.2- Syrian War*

The Syrian war can be described as an event that best reflects the brittleness of Turkish-Russian relations in the 21st century when both countries showed their important roles in the region and managed to act together despite their presence in opposite blocks and different interests.

In early 2010s riots in the Middle East called “Arab Spring” have started. People revolted against oppressive regimes in their countries in response to low standard of living and major riots resulted with brutal suppression of the security forces of the states. Syrian crisis has started with the uprising against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s government and turned rapidly into a civil war. While Syria was fading away as a state with all its institutions, intervention of the foreign forces become unavoidable since this crisis escalated to international level. It should be underlined that Turkey and Russia despite being in different blocs at the beginning of the crisis and possessing different interests about the region, have a general common point considering Syrian case: the aim of both countries is to protect the territorial integrity of Syria and to rebuild the state authority in the country. On the other hand, the interests which pushed sides to opposite blocs are remarkably important.

Russia’s position is highly shaped with its historical aims regarding the region and relations with Syria. During the Cold War bilateral relations of Russia and Syria were high and at an ally level. In April 1994, Syria signed a military-technical agreement with Russia which resumed with the sales of Russian arms.[[185]](#footnote-185) Arms equipping continued in 21st century.[[186]](#footnote-186) The cooperation of two countries was strong on the political front as well. Syria supported Russia in both the Chechen conflict and in the situation in South Ossetia.[[187]](#footnote-187) In 21st century, Syria is the only country left in the Middle East that still has remarkable ties with Russia. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev visited Syria in 2010 and new agreements were signed in order to enhance trade relations.[[188]](#footnote-188)

The regime change in Syria would mean for Russia as a loss of a loyal ally and uncertainty in the future. Possible authority gap or new Islamist regime can have serious consequences for Russia. Russia can find itself threaten by possible radical Islamist factions which. According to Federal Security Service of Russia, there are a lot of Russian citizens among ISIL organization. Their return to the country may have serious consequences.[[189]](#footnote-189) Some regions in the Northern Caucasus of Russia still contains separatist currents may be destabilized and Russia may face its traditional problems again.[[190]](#footnote-190) The Kremlin's main goal is to prevent foreign interventions that will lead to regime change by creating space for itself to act in Syria, rather than protecting Assad. Finally, Russia’s the only naval base in the Middle East, the Tarsus base, is the other major point of importance of Syria. Activated in 2008, this base is strategically important for Russia which it definitely does not want to lose.[[191]](#footnote-191)

Russia sees the Middle East riots as the countries’ internal issue. Government is the only legal authority which can use force. Russia supports Syrian government considering those points and aims to prevent Syria’s territorial integrity and state sovereignty.[[192]](#footnote-192)

In Russia’s 2016 National Security Strategy which was outlined by President Vladimir Putin, Russia’s priorities up to 2020 is to prevent “color revolutions” and “chemical weapons”. The key statements of the document are to strengthen national interests, national security, and strategic national priorities of the Russian Federation and achieve stable long-term development targets.[[193]](#footnote-193) According to the document, radical groups using nationalist and religious ideologies, some foreign and international non-governmental organizations and individuals are trying to destroy Russia's territorial integrity and destabilize political processes. Foreign intelligence services, terrorist and extremist groups and criminal organizations are also cited as threats.[[194]](#footnote-194)

After the invitation of the Syrian government, within the framework of the decision of the Russian parliament to "use military force abroad", Russia sent its aircrafts to fight against the terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).[[195]](#footnote-195) With the aircraft bombardment, Russian military intervention into Syrian War has started. At this point, Turkey and The US were concerned about opposition groups which were under Russian attack. Russia was not making difference among “moderate” and “radical” groups. Air operations in Syria intensified after the airplane with Russian tourists was shot down in Egypt as a result of the ISIL’s attack on October 31, 2015, after which 224 people died. After this event, Russia attacked not only military facilities but also all economic and vital centers belonging to ISIL and other anti-Assad forces.[[196]](#footnote-196)

Turkey was especially disturbed when Russian aircraft attacked Turkmen armed groups in the Northern Syria. Although President Putin declared that Russian military intervention in Syria supports the regime in their fight against terrorist groups, Russia’s bombing of some anti-regime Islamic groups close to Turkey, especially Turkmen inhabitants of the Jabal Turkmen region in Latakia, affected negatively Turkey’s views about Russia.[[197]](#footnote-197)

Behind Russia’s integration to Syria there are also some economic issues. Economic embargoes of the West on Russia and decreasing oil prices were negatively affecting Russian economy. Russia, which is experiencing budget shortages, has begun to feel the crisis in its economy deeply.[[198]](#footnote-198)

Russian inclusion to the Syrian War which changed all situations in the region was shocking for Turkey which expected the end of Assad regime.[[199]](#footnote-199)

Turkey, on the other hand, had hot and cold relations with Syria since the Cold War era. During the Cold War sides had been members of rival power blocs and after the Cold War bilateral relations were tense. Syria had claims over Turkish city Hatay and it supported PKK by hosting its leader Ocalan in the country and gave logistical, military, and financial assistance to the organization. However, in October 1998 Syria expulsed Ocalan from the country and cut off its support to PKK which resulted with rapprochement of the countries.[[200]](#footnote-200) The reason of this political change was because Syria also had its own Kurdish problem. Especially after Qamishli event which started with a conflict between Arab and Kurdish groups, made Syrian government rethink the Kurdish separatism and motivated to cooperate with Turkey. Syria arrested local PKK members, handed them over to Turkey and furthermore, two countries performed joint military exercises to increase border security against PKK militants.[[201]](#footnote-201) Along to security ties, two countries became closer by developing economic cooperation as well. The Free Trade Agreement was signed in 2004, the foundation of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council was established in 2009. The visa requirements between two countries were abolished in October 2009. One of the most exiting events was the establishment of Quadripartite High-Level Cooperation Council in 2010 which members were Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. They created a zone of free movements of goods and persons among themselves.[[202]](#footnote-202)

With the start of civil uprising in Syria, Turkey suggested President al-Assad to make a constitutional reform and to find a compromise with protestors. However, the regime continued its harsh suppression against protestors which turned Turkish JDP government against Assad. Turkish government started to support a regime change in Syria by providing arms and logistical aid to the opposition units and started to host hundreds of thousands of Syrians escaping from the regime’s brutality.[[203]](#footnote-203) This support strengthened after serious crimes against humanity committed by Syrian government. Ankara argues that it would be right for Syrians to decide on the future of Syria.

Syria, being a natural extension of Anatolian human geography, possesses many different ethnic and religious groups. Any negative scenario at their interaction may create serious regional results. Because of that, if Turkey will agree to monitor events in Syria from the outside, it may allow instability to move into its own home.[[204]](#footnote-204)

Beside Turkish support to Syrian opposition, Turkey claims for territorial integrity of Syria like Russia does. Radical groups which can easily occur in such authority gap can cause to serious security lacks. Therefore, despite all the differences in Turkey and Russia's views on the future of Syria, it seems possible for the two countries to agree on some issues based on the common perception of the threat.[[205]](#footnote-205)

On November 25, 2015, there was an incident that destroyed the Turkish-Russian relations that had risen since the beginning of the 21st century. Russian aircraft SU-24 was downed by Turkish F-16 with airspace violation accusation. According to Turkish Ministry of National Defense, although the pilot was warned ten times, the aircraft violated Turkish airspace in Yayladagi for seventeen seconds and with the aim to bomb Turkmens living in Bayirbucak.[[206]](#footnote-206) President Erdogan claimed that they did not know that the aircraft belonged to Russia.[[207]](#footnote-207)

The period of about 9 months after the plane crash, which is called the "Terrible Year" of bilateral relations, indicates how sensitive Turkish-Russian relations are in fact and how easily they are affected by external developments.[[208]](#footnote-208) It is surprising how two countries frequently used diplomatic channels to solve different issues including the security in the region for more than a decade but in this case such catastrophe occurred with a lack of connection. This can be explained with several conditions. After 2013 Gezi Events and lower-than-expected election results brought Turkish government to warning position. Besides that, issues with terrorist group PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) became harsh in 2015 and Turkish Armed Forces has started military operations at the southeast of the country. Developments in Syria pushed Turkey to expand its front of the fight against terrorism. Turkey was expecting support from the United States and from Russia which was their acceptance of YPG (People’s Protection Units) as a Syrian branch of PKK which is also a terrorist group but could not get any noteworthy feedback.[[209]](#footnote-209) This situation put Turkish decisionmakers into more stretched psychology. plane in 2015, before the accident, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, during Turkish Foreign Minister Sinirlioglu’s visit to Sochi, declared that Russia has concerns about Turkey’s allowance to open Incirlik air base to ISIL coalition, mainly to the US soldiers and other West countries (After Turkey and the US’ agreed decision).[[210]](#footnote-210) During this period, it can be said that Turkey’s trust to NATO was high, and Turkey felt their support despite Russian military operations near to Turkish borders. However, after the jet crisis Turkey could not find enough support from its allies.

Russian officials declared that Russian aircraft did not violate Turkish airspace and there was not any threat to Turkey since the aircraft was there for the fight with ISIL. After those facts, they also claimed that the consequences of this event will be harsh that Turkey will regret. Those measures were adopted by Russia after the jet crisis:[[211]](#footnote-211)

* Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov’s Turkey visit was cancelled. Russian citizens were called not to go to Turkey while Russian tourism agencies cancelled tours to Turkey.
* The Russian navy in the Mediterranean Sea sent warships carrying the air defense system S-300 missiles closer to the Syrian region.
* Russia declared that operations in Latakia will remain.
* Russian deputies brought to parliament the proposal to punish those who deny that the events of 1915 were “Armenian genocide” and emphasized that those who did not obey the law should be sentenced to fine or 5 years in prison.[[212]](#footnote-212)

Russia, whose economy was troubled by Europe's embargo and falling oil prices, restricted the imports of some products with Turkey after the plane crisis, but excluded light industrial products, including shoes, washing machines, dishwashers, and ovens. With this decision, the importance of the products in question for Russian consumers was once again understood.[[213]](#footnote-213)

Despite major crack in the relations, Russia did not define Turkey as an enemy country. Rather, they defined the case as “hostile”.

Russian officials put some requirements for relations to get warmer again. These requirements can be found in the statement of 14 November 2015 made by Andrei Karlov, Russian Ambassador to Turkey. According to Karlov, Turkey needs to apologize for the jet downing. Secondly, people who caused the jet downing and pilot’s death should be punished. Lastly, compensation must be paid to Russia due to the downing of the Russian jet.[[214]](#footnote-214)

In June 2016, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent letter to Kremlin in which he declares condolences to the pilot’s family, accepts to pay compensation, and that Turkey is ready to rebuild relations with Russia.[[215]](#footnote-215)

In 15th of July 2016, there was a coup attempt in Turkey ruled by Fethullah Terror Organization (FETO) where 248 people died for its prevention. Russian Federation was one of the first countries condemned this event. President Erdogan's first official visit to overseas after the coup was on 9 August 2016 to St Petersburg, which symbolized the end of the nine-month break in bilateral relations. After this visit, bilateral relations recovered quickly since both countries felt lonely in foreign politics again. Turkey could not find remarkable attention from its allies from the West considering struggle with PKK, whereas Russia was in need for foreign support for its foreign policy. Turkey is a rare gem for Russia for its energy supplement projects as well as a possible partner in Syrian peace-making process. Turkish-Russian cooperation not only opened the Syrian airspace and territory to the operations of the Turkish Armed Forces, but also created a new diplomatic space between Turkey, Russia and Iran, and enabled Turkey to negotiate with the regime in Syria, albeit indirectly.[[216]](#footnote-216)

Astana process can be given as an example of Turkish-Russian joint coalition considering Syrian peace-making. After Turkey-backed Operation Euphrates Shield where Syrian Democratic Forces (anti-regime groups) fought ISIL was successful, Turkey, Russia, and Iran decided to take Syrian peace-making process to a diplomatic level. In December 2016, three countries signed Moscow Declaration in which they express their will to find political solution to Syrian problem. Common vision of the parties is to undertake a decisive role in accordance with the UNSC resolution number: 2254, for the resolution of the crisis within the framework of respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.[[217]](#footnote-217) This document is important in allocating enemy groups from Turkey-backed opposite groups. On the other hand, not mentioning Bashar Assad in this document can be considered as Turkey's tacit acceptance of renunciation from its prior policy to overthrow Assad government.[[218]](#footnote-218)

The first Astana Talks meeting was in 23-24 January 2017, and since then sides met frequently and achieved satisfactory results.[[219]](#footnote-219) In this process, the sides contributed to following developments: they brought the Syrian government and the armed opposition together, ensured the continuity of the declared ceasefire and established monitoring mechanisms, determined the conflict-free zones and drew their boundaries under the control of the guarantors, ensured coordination among them, determined the elements that will contribute to the preparation of the new constitution that will shape the future of Syria, and enhanced trust between the sides.[[220]](#footnote-220) There was a disagreement among Turkey in Russia considering which groups should be represented in the peace-making process. As the result, two sides agreed that Turkey will give a list of non-PYD Kurdish groups which will also have voice in the process. After Astana Talks, Idlib was left to Turkey as a conflict-free zone which automatically became a guarantor state of it. Turkish Armed Forces within Syrian National Army led Operation Olive Branch in Afrin district against the People’s Protection Units (YPG) which resulted with capture of the city by Turkey and SNA. Later, with the aim of normalization of life, 1 hospital and 287 schools were opened.[[221]](#footnote-221)

During the Tripartite Summit in Tehran in September 2018, the new level in Syrian crisis occurred: the process escalated from armed struggle to political process and to the restructuring of Syria. Turkey, Russia, and Iran took up the situation in Idlib de-escalation area and decided to solve it with the spirit of cooperation that characterized the Astana format. They also underlined that separation between terrorist groups and the armed opposition groups would be of utmost importance including with respect to preventing civilian causalities.[[222]](#footnote-222)

Additionally, during a tripartite virtual summit on 1 July 2020, President of The Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Rouhani, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, and President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan reaffirmed their conviction that there could be no military solution to the Syrian conflict and that it could only be resolved through the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, UN-facilitated political process in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 2254.[[223]](#footnote-223)

On the International Meeting on Syria format at Sochi on 16-17 February 2021, where delegations from the United Nations, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq took part as the observers, Turkey, Russia, and Iran condemned Israeli military attacks in Syria, emphasized on the important role of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva in Syrian peace-making process, and highlighted the need to facilitate safe and voluntary return of refugees to their original places of residence in Syria.[[224]](#footnote-224)

To conclude, Syrian War showed how despite 10 years of flourish Turkish- Russian relations are fragile and open to collapse easily. This situation probably occurs as the result of the lack of institutionalization of the relations, and process-oriented approach of the sides concerning their relations. However, from possible military confrontation in 2015, Turkey and Russia managed to resolve the crisis and the relations normalized again which made them significant role players in resolution process of the Syrian War.

*2.1.3- Other Regional Conflicts*

2.1.3.1- Crimea

The Crimean crisis constitutes a link in the chain of events that broke out in Ukraine since 2013. On November 26, 2013, Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovych, who generally valued relations with Russia, denied signing a political association and commercial pact established as a result of the contacts between the European Union and Ukraine. On top of that, protests which also included Yanukovych supporters and were initially peaceful, began in major cities such as Kiev and Lviv. Violence increased when Ukraine's extremist right groups were included in the protests. The Ukrainian police used force against the protestors. After Yanukovych left the country, the Ukrainian Parliament decided to end his post and Russian language be removed from being the second official language. Despite that, Yanukovych asked help from Russia according to his Presidental status. Russia saw this as a source of legitimacy and intervened in Ukraine. This situation, which mobilized the Russians in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, resulted in the civil war in the country. Crimea did not regard the newly created Kiev administration as legal and established its own army and security forces. On March 16, 2014, a referendum on joining Russia or reviving the 1992 Crimean constitution was held in the peninsula. The result was 97 percent for integration to Russia. Russia and the Crimean Parliament gave the guarantee to protect the rights of the Crimean Tatars, who make up about 12 percent of the Crimean population. In 1774, with the treaty signed between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, the Crimean region came out of the protection of the Ottoman State. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Crimea became the Ukrainian autonomous republic and Turkey tried to provide the necessary support to the Crimean Tatars. For them, Turkey has been instrumental in the establishment of institutions such as mosques, hospitals, madrasas, schools, and the cultural centers.

Turkish President Süleyman Demirel, who is especially important for the Crimean Tatars, expressed the tragedy of deportation of the Crimean Tatars at the highest level in the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1994, and brought out the problems of the Crimean Tatars as one of the Turkish state policies. He initiated state aid for the Crimean Tatars as well. The Cultural Cooperation Treaty signed between Turkey and Ukraine on November 27, 1996 enabled Crimean Tatars to acquire various cultural rights. In 2005, intergovernmental treaty on the development of economic and cultural cooperation between the Republic of Turkey and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was signed among Turkey and Ukraine. This treaty announced the creation of a cooperation program between the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The aims of the platform were to plan establishment of traditional Crimean villages in the regions where Crimean Tatars live extensively, to develop health tourism in Crimea, to organize joint work for the protection of the cultural and historical heritage of Crimean Tatars in Crimea, and to attract Turkish investors to the region.[[225]](#footnote-225)

According to international law and the principle of territorial integrity and political unity of Ukraine, Turkey supports that the territorial integrity of Ukraine should be protected and the creation of a government that besieges everyone within the framework of human rights and equal citizenship is necessary. The Foreign Minister of Turkey Ahmet Davutoglu visited Ukraine on 28 February to 1st March 2014 and underlined that Ukraine is Turkey’s strategic partner. He said that Crimean issue should be solved in the framework of Ukraine’s integrity. Davutoglu also expressed that Turkey is ready to contribute to the solution where all ethnic and religious groups of Crimean people live together in peace.[[226]](#footnote-226) After the referendum held on 16th of March, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that this referendum is unlawful, and Turkey will not recognize any act taken after it. Turkey attaches special importance and priority to the security and well-being of the Crimean Tatar Turks. The event happening in Ukraine and in Crimea will directly affect regions’ security and stability. The Ministry called the sides to solve the problems in diplomatic ways within the frameworks of Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty, political unity, and territorial integrity.[[227]](#footnote-227) Turkey also condemned The Leader of Crimean Tatars Mustafa Abdulcemil Kirimoglu’s and The President of Crimean National Assembly Refat Cubarov’s inhibition of passage to Crimea.[[228]](#footnote-228) During Vladimir Putin’s visit to Turkey in December 2014, President Erdogan said that he found Russia’s approach to the Crimean Tatars positive and additionally he stated that the certain rights would be given to Crimean Tatars.[[229]](#footnote-229) In the official visit of President Erdogan to Ukraine in 2020, Turkey’s position regarding Crimea was repeated.[[230]](#footnote-230)

Nevertheless, Turkish official attitude beyond its rhetoric remained moderate. Turkey, instead of joining Western sanctions on Russia, choose to deepen its relations. For example, the official visits continued and during this crisis, Turkey and Russia agreed on TurkStream Project. Turkey stated that it is trying to protect the security and rights of the Crimean Tatars in a dialogue with Russia for the solution of the Crimean crisis.

2.1.3.2- Nagorno-Karabakh

Nagorno-Karabakh is a center of conflict in Caucasus where the regional rivalry of Russia and Turkey emerged. This conflict was frozen for years. The problem of belonging of this region between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the point of tension it created in the Caucasus region has reached an international dimension since the end of the 20th century. It is useful to look at the history of the dispute briefly. Nagorno-Karabakh was turned into an autonomous region of Azerbaijan by the administration of the Soviet Union in 1923. Although Armenians living in the region were given political and cultural rights, their complaints about Azerbaijan's discrimination continued. Under the influence of the softening policies of Mikhail Gorbachev's time, the Soviet of Nagorno-Karabakh held a referendum in 1988 to separate the region from Azerbaijan and to join Armenia. However, Moscow administration did not approve any land changes. The dispute turned into conflicts, and conflicts turned into a full-scale war after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In this war, Russia participated as a direct supporter of Armenia and brought the victory. Apart from Nagorno-Karabakh, 7 regions belonging to Azerbaijan were also captured by Armenia and hundreds of thousands of people had to migrate. In 1994, a ceasefire was signed, and the Minsk Group under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was established within the membership of America, Russia, and France for the settlement of the dispute. This body, despite the influential members it had, for years avoided bringing a solution that would ensure long-term peace. This conflict, which remained frozen for a long time but did not lack tension in the region, was reignited with the military intervention of Armenia in 2020. This time Armenia was far from the effective support of Russia, and Azerbaijan was backed with the important support of Turkey. This time the result of the war was in favor of Azerbaijan. Turkey and Russia, which played an active role in the Syrian War, cooperated in the process of problem resolution in this conflict. Let us examine the positions of Russia and Turkey in the conflict and the process that brought them to cooperation.

Although Russia-Azerbaijan relations are not as deep as Russia-Armenia relations, they are progressing at a moderate level. Energy cooperation takes place at the economic level of these relations. In addition to Western-supported projects such as Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, it has been also using the Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline with Russia for years and has been supplying natural gas to Moscow since 2010.[[231]](#footnote-231) Azerbaijan and Russia have also some trade agreements and their trade volumes tend to increase especially thanks to International North-South Transport Corridor.[[232]](#footnote-232)

Russia has identified Armenia, which is located between Turkey and Azerbaijan and has problems with both, as its strategic ally in the Caucasus. With the agreement signed in March 1995, Russia obtained the right to have military bases in Yerevan and Gyumri for 25 years. This agreement was extended during the visit of Russian President Medvedev to Armenia in 2010 until 2044.[[233]](#footnote-233) In addition, its army is equipped with Russian weapons and the two countries signed an agreement to establish a joint air-defense system in 2015, which was ratified by the Yerevan parliament in 2016.[[234]](#footnote-234) Russia, which is also dominant in Armenia's fields other than military and economy, made this country dependent on itself with its strategy. It can be said that Russia, satisfied with its attitude, is in favor of maintaining the status quo rather than a permanent solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem.[[235]](#footnote-235)

When we look at the position of Turkey, its problematic and far from being-solved relations with Armenia while having relations as close as a brotherhood with Azerbaijan naturally lead it to Baku side in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. For this reason, Turkey closed the border gates between Armenia in 1993 and cut all relations with it after the invasion of the Azerbaijani territories. Turkey expects to open its border gates only in cases if Armenia:[[236]](#footnote-236)

1) Renounce the so-called genocide allegation,

2) Return the territories it occupied in Azerbaijan, and

3) Recognize the borders between Turkey and its territories which are presented in Gumru and Kars Treaties.

Despite cutting all ties after the first Nagorno-Karabakh war, Turkey tried to be more constructive in its relations with Armenia at the beginning of the 21st century. After Serzh Sargsyan becoming President of Armenia in 2008, Turkish President Abdullah Gul became one of the first presidents congratulated Sargsyan’s victory. Aftermath, Sargsyan invited Gul to Yerevan in order to watch the World Cup football match among Armenian and Turkish national teams. The acceptance of Gul of this invitation made him the first Turkish President have ever visited Armenia.[[237]](#footnote-237) As a result of the process initiated under the mediation of Switzerland for the normalization of relations with Armenia, "Protocol for Establishing Diplomatic Relations" and "Protocol for the Development of Bilateral Relations" were signed in Zurich on October 10, 2009. These Protocols provide a framework for the normalization of bilateral relations.[[238]](#footnote-238) Baku reacted to those protocols harshly considering them as a major blow to its policy considering Nagorno Karabagh and resorted punitive measures against Turkey.[[239]](#footnote-239) Anyway, Armenia’s strict manners according to its state policy of international recognition of the so-called genocide and unwillingness to return Azerbaijani lands deadlocked the normalization process.

On the other hand, besides its ethnic (Azerbaijani people are originally Turkic), religious, and cultural ties with Azerbaijan; its commercial, economic, and military cooperation made it natural for Turkey to choose Azerbaijan as its main partner in the region. Turkey is not only the consumer of Azerbaijani natural resources but also a secure corridor for their transfer to other regions. Within those win-win conditions, Turkey, which has gained an ally in the Caucasus region, has also increased its geopolitical importance with the realization of projects such as Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas pipeline, and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad.[[240]](#footnote-240)

When looking at the Turkish-Azerbaijani military relations, it can be said that Turkey has partnerships in the joint production of arms, as well as its financial, logistical, and technical assistance to Azerbaijani armed forces.[[241]](#footnote-241) Also two countries signed bilateral agreements on defense cooperation and strategic partnership in 1990s. These agreements are important because the parties have become bounded to provide military support to each other in the framework of self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter if one of them will face military attack or aggression.[[242]](#footnote-242)

Turkey tried to find ways for the solution of the conflict at the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting held in Reykjavik on 15 May 2002, where Turkish, Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers came together. In this meeting, Turkey tried to initiate the dialogue to find a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, but was not successful.[[243]](#footnote-243)

In 2016, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan criticized the Minsk Group for their inability to solve Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.[[244]](#footnote-244)

Armenia rejected the resolution plan of the Minsk Group in 2008, which advice Armenia to draw its troops back from Azerbaijani regions and get ready to discuss the status of Nagorno-Karabagh. In 2016, the conflicts blazed up again in 2016. This time, Erdogan underlined that Turkey is on Azerbaijan's side and expressed his belief that Turkey’s Azerbaijani brothers will return to their homeland one day.[[245]](#footnote-245)

The Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, which has remained frozen out of a few conflicts for years, was once again on the international agenda with the outbreak of the second war on September 27, 2020, upon the expansion of the clashes that started on the contact line formed at the end of the first war and the Azerbaijani army's advance with the goal of reclaiming the lost territories. Turkey participated in the war as a supporter of Azerbaijan, in accordance with the Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance Agreement, which the sides signed in 2010. According to this agreement, parts will help each other in all possible means, including joint military exercises, over the aggression by a third party.[[246]](#footnote-246)

On the other hand, Russia’s relationship with the current government of Armenia under Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is problematic because there is a belief that this government came to charge to the West willing to decrease Russian influence in Armenia.[[247]](#footnote-247) During the second war, while Turkey providing all the help Azerbaijan needs, Russia chose to be near to neutral. For Russia, it can be said that there were reasons to help Armenia but there was no reason to punish Azerbaijan.[[248]](#footnote-248) Also, the power was concentrated within Azerbaijan which makes it harder to balance it over Armenia. Nevertheless, Kremlin expressed its position regarding new war, by underlining that if the troops reach Armenian territory, Russia will involve.[[249]](#footnote-249) The war was ended after 10th of November 2020 ceasefire in favor of Azerbaijani troops, which took some of its regions back. The Azerbaijani army was supplied, trained, and supported by the Turkish army.[[250]](#footnote-250)

According to the agreement signed after the war, Russia will send 2000 peacekeepers to the region and control the granting of land and rights gained by Azerbaijan.[[251]](#footnote-251) Although Turkey is not a signatory part to the agreement, it has proven that it strengthens its role in the Caucasus. Later, Turkey and Russia have established a joint Turkish-Russian observation center to monitor ceasefire.[[252]](#footnote-252)

Turkey and Russia, which have been competing in this region throughout history, did not directly contrast in the conflict and played an active role in its ending, despite their different ideas and interests.

Turkish-Russian relations have developed significantly in the early 21st century. There are many dialogues, official visits, and agreements in economic, trade, military fields. Turkey and Russia have proved their active role in the Middle East, Caucasus, and the Black Sea region. Although there are many different points of view and diversified interests, in many cases Turkey and Russia preferred to cooperate rather than compete and struggle with each other. There is a term that can perfectly describe their complicated relations: “frenemity”. This oxymoron word means “person/group/institution which is friendly despite fundamental dislike or rivalry”. There are some authors who characterize Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan as “frenemies” as well. Mert argues that the Turkish government is in aims to rewrite Turkish- Russian relations with an accent on common enmity toward Western powers.[[253]](#footnote-253) This alliance can be a game -changer in the international arena.

**Chapter 3**

**Political Agency in Foreign Politics of Russia and Turkey**

This chapter first of all concentrates on authorities possessed by the Presidents -as they are most crucial decision-makers of both countries- according to the Constitutions, after, operational codes of President Vladimir Putin and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are found and analyzed, and finally, the effectiveness of the leadership factor on bilateral relations is measured by linking leaders’ belief systems, results of content analysis, and the cases (which are mentioned in Chapter 2 before). In this way, Russian-Turkish relations are examined within the concept of ‘agent and structure’ as well.

**3.1- Formal Institutional Authorities of Russian and Turkish Leaders**

Before focusing on the leader himself/herself, it is important to discover which authorities he/she legally possesses according to the constitution of the country. Firstly, the constitution ascribes broad authorities and responsibilities to state leaders. Leaders tend to flex or expand these powers in order to strengthen their position against internal and external dynamics which oppose them, to offer stable governance, and to increase their power. Looking at Turkey and Russia separately, it can be argued that their leaders, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin, who are in the most active position in the 21st century, expanded their constitutional powers in this direction. This authority expansion enables them to become a determining factor in their relations with other states while strengthening their active and effective positions in decision- making processes. Since this dissertation focuses on the relations of the two states, the President’s authorities related to foreign policy are evaluated.

**3.1.1- Authorities of the President of Russian Federation According to the Constitution**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, working on the new constitution of Russia has started. Following to popular vote, Russia’s running constitution was adopted in 1993. The first amendment that strengthens President’s position was adopted in 2008. President Dmitry Medvedev proposed to extent the terms of the President of Russia from four to six years, and to extent the State Duma from four to five years. The State Duma approved the amendments, and they came into force at the same year. The most important changes were adopted in 2020, after popular vote (referendum). Around two hundred changes were done. One of them was about the expansion of powers of the President and reduction of powers of the Government. Now, Russian President can dismiss the prime minister. Prime minister’s role is reduced because before he/she "determined the main directions of the activity of the Government of the Russian Federation", but now he/she only "organizes the work of the Government of the Russian Federation" in accordance with the orders and instructions of the President (Article 113). Moreover, the law which aims the reset of presidential terms of the President, basically of Vladimir Putin, was included to the amendment package. Within this law, Vladimir Putin's chance to become president until 2036 has occurred (next election should be in 2024 and according to the constitution -article 81- President is elected for 6 years and the same person can be elected for two times).

Additionally, decisions of interstate bodies adopted based on the provisions of international treaties ratified by Russia in their interpretation that is contrary to the Constitution of the Russian Federation will not be subject to enforcement.[[254]](#footnote-254)

All these changes expand the range of powers of the head of state and open up the president to strengthen his/her position and become the most important decision maker, whether in domestic or foreign policy.

Here are the articles regarding to Russian President’s duty and authority:

According to Article 82, when taking office, the President of the Russian Federation shall take the following oath of loyalty to the people:

*"I swear in exercising the powers of the President of the Russian Federation to respect and safeguard the rights and freedoms of man and citizen, to observe and protect the Constitution of the Russian Federation, to protect the sovereignty and independence, security and integrity of the State, to faithfully serve the people".*

Here, it is briefly described that Russian President should be a servant and a protector of rights and freedoms of people, of the Constitution and indissoluble features of the State.

In Article 86 it is stated that President shall govern the foreign policy of the Russian Federation; hold negotiations and sign international treaties and agreements of the State; sign ratification instruments, received credentials and letters of recall of diplomatic representatives accredited to him.

When it comes to security terms, the Constitution of Russian Federation states in Article 87 that the President of the Russian Federation shall be the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the State. In Article 88 is stated that the President, in circumstances and according to the rules envisaged by the federal constitutional law, shall introduce a state of emergency in the territory of the Russian Federation.

**3.1.2- Authorities of the President of the Republic of Turkey According to Constitution**

Turkey’s current constitution was adopted after 1980 military coup in 1982. This constitution is often criticized for being anti-democratic and coup minded. After its adoption, the reforms were made several times. In 2007, constitutional referendum was held in Turkey after which clause regarding to election of the president was changed. Before 2007, the President of Turkey was elected by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. After the referendum, the President is being elected after popular election. The same person can be elected president twice (5 + 5), and the mission time of president is reduced from 7 to 5 years. In 2014, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan won Turkey’s first presidential election.[[255]](#footnote-255) In 2017 there was another crucial referendum. The amendment package included the abolition of the current parliamentary system and the replacement of it with the presidential system and the elimination of the prime minister's post. This change proposal was stated by the Justice and Development Party for a long time. The result of referendum was “for” the constitutional change, however, “against” votes were remarkably high. The Yes campaign won with 51.41 percent, while the No vote stood at 48.59 percent.[[256]](#footnote-256) This constitutional change granted to President of Turkey new powers. Additionally, it could keep Recep Tayyip Erdogan in presidential office until 2029 (In 2021, he is in his third year of Presidency and after 2017 constitutional changes he can run for presidency one more time).[[257]](#footnote-257) Let us examine the constitution of the Republic of Turkey to understand the role of the President and Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s authority.

According to article 103, on assuming office, the President shall take the following oath in front of the Assembly:

*“In my capacity as President of the Republic, I swear upon my honour and integrity before the Great Turkish Nation and before history to safeguard the existence and independence of the state, the indivisible integrity of the country and the nation, and the absolute sovereignty of the nation, to abide by the Constitution, the rule of law, democracy, the principles and reforms of Atatürk, and the principles of the secular republic, not to deviate from the ideal according to which everyone is entitled to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms under conditions of national peace and prosperity and in a spirit of national solidarity and justice, and do my utmost to preserve and exalt the glory and honor of the Republic of Turkey and perform without bias the functions that I have assumed.”*

This oath generally describes president’s duties and responsibilities. Here, president is obliged to play a defender role for Turkey’s persistence as an independent and sovereign state, while being a protector of nation’s values as well.

Article 104 grants to president the role of the head of the State and vests executive power in the President. He/she shall give message to the Assembly regarding domestic and foreign policies of the country, appoint and dismiss the deputies of the President of the Republic and the ministers, accredit representatives of the Republic of Turkey to foreign states and shall receive the representatives of foreign states appointed to the Republic of Turkey, ratify and promulgate international treaties, determine national security policies and take necessary measures, represent the Office of Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Armed Forces on behalf of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, and decide on the use of the Turkish Armed Forces. Regarding to national defense, Article 117 grants to President the role of being a representative of The Office of Commander-in-Chief. The President shall be responsible to the Assembly for national security and for the preparation of the armed forces for the defense of the country. Appointed by the President, The Chief of the General Staff is the commander of the armed forces and in time of war, exercises the duties of Commander-in-Chief on behalf of the President. Article 119 describes the circumstances where the President of the Republic may declare state of emergency in one region or nationwide for a period not exceeding six months.

**3.2- The Belief Systems of the Leaders**

In this part, the belief systems of Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan who are the main actors of the early 21st century Russian- Turkish relations, are included. In order to understand the relations of leaders with other actors and their own understanding of the nature of politics in a cognitive framework the operational code analysis method of political psychology was used. This method is helpful to evaluate leaders’ impacts on developing events. Alexander George's ten basic questions given in the first chapter of this thesis were answered by adding appropriate statements and quotes of Putin and Erdogan. Qualitative operational code analysis is used instead of quantitative one in the goal of to present the reader clearer and more understandable conclusions.

To remind: while the philosophical beliefs of the individual help to define the event and situation, instrumental beliefs are in an effective position in determining the responses to be given according to the situation.[[258]](#footnote-258) Philosophical (i.e., epistemological) beliefs contain assumptions about the fundamental nature of politics, the nature of political conflict, and the role of the individual in history. Instrumental beliefs, on the other hand, include approaches related to the most efficient strategies and tactics in achieving goals.[[259]](#footnote-259)

3.2.1- Vladimir Putin’s Belief System

*The Philosophical Beliefs in an Operational Code*

P-1. What is the “essential” nature of political life? Is the political universe essentially one of harmony or of conflict? What is the fundamental character of one’s political opponents?

The orientation to other political actors reshapes Putin’s belief system about the nature of political life. First of all, it is necessary to say that Vladimir Putin frequently reflects his belief in the significance and power of the Russian Federation at the international arena in every period he takes part in the political scene.

*“You said that Russia is located between East and West. It is East and West that are located at the left and right of Russia,”* he said in 2013.[[260]](#footnote-260)

*“The borders of Russia do not end anywhere,”* he said in 2016.[[261]](#footnote-261)

Preserving and increasing Russia's importance and power is Putin's primary goal. The Russian leader is also aware that such a powerful state in the international system is always under threat. In his statements, he generally underlines that this threat originates from the West, but states that Russia has the capacity to respond and win in a possible attack coming from any source.

*“We have heard various oral statements and promises many times. At one time we were promised not to expand NATO, then we were promised not to deploy bases. But NATO is expanding, moving eastward, and the bases around us are growing like mushrooms,”* Putin stated in 2012.[[262]](#footnote-262)

*"Whoever offends us will not live for three days"* said Putin in 2000 about Russian-IMF relations.[[263]](#footnote-263)

*“At the same time, today, taking into account many factors, including not only the military, but also our history, geography, and the internal condition of Russian society, it can be said with confidence: today we are stronger than any potential aggressor. Any,”* he stated in 2016.[[264]](#footnote-264)

Despite the existence of strained relations with the West throughout history, Vladimir Putin is also aware that cooperation, especially in the field of economics, is important. He thinks pessimistically about the friendships that can occur in his position, criticizes Europe's foreign policy and considers that possible cooperation can only be strengthened if it is mutual.

*"What are Europeans like? First we eat yours, then we will each eat our own,"* he claimed in 2013.[[265]](#footnote-265)

*“We need to understand what we will get in return. This is very easy to understand, if you remember our childhood. When you go out into the yard, you hold a piece of candy- they say to you: give me a piece of candy. You clamp it in your sweaty fist and say: and what you will give in return? We also want to know: what they will give us in return?”* he stated regarding cooperation at profitable projects with Europe.[[266]](#footnote-266)

*"There are no friends in high politics at all. It should not be,"* Putin said in 2020.[[267]](#footnote-267)

Putin's dissatisfaction with the West's attitude towards Russia, and despite the presence of threats he feels, is a fact that he sometimes speaks words that may moderate relations:

*“America is a great power. Today, probably, the only superpower. We accept that. We are willing to work with the United States,”* said Putin in 2016.[[268]](#footnote-268)

Putin also complains about the injustice in the international system and the suppression of Russia by external factors. What is meant by injustice is that while the actions of other actors are seen as acceptable, when Russia takes the similar action, it gets intense reaction in return. Despite this, he argues that Russia is more innocent in its actions compared to other actors. He says that Russia is not satisfied with the position imposed on it and that it will shape its own future in the international system by preserving the balance of power.

*“What is allowed to Jupiter is not allowed to the bull. We cannot agree with such formulations. Maybe the bull is not allowed, but I want to tell you that the bear will not ask anyone for permission, he will not give his taiga to anyone, this should be clear,”* declared Putin while responding to critiques about Crimean and Kosovo referendums.[[269]](#footnote-269)

*“…we do not seek advantages, but maintain a balance,”* he stated about Russia’s nuclear weapon production after the US President Trump said that they will withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.[[270]](#footnote-270)

*“Compared to you, yes, we are white and fluffy,”* claimed Vladimir Putin to the West world in 2020.[[271]](#footnote-271)

He details the escalation of the problems in international relations in 2021 Davos World Economic Forum as follows:

*“We see a crisis of the previous models and instruments of economic development. Social stratification both at the global level and in individual countries is increasing. We have talked about this before. But this, in turn, today causes a sharp polarization of public views, provokes the growth of populism, right-wing and left-wing radicalism, and other extremes, exacerbating and hardening domestic political processes, including in leading countries. All this inevitably affects the nature of international relations, does not contribute to their stability and predictability.* *International institutions are weakening, regional conflicts are multiplying, and the global security system is also deteriorating.*”[[272]](#footnote-272)

P-2. What are the prospects for the eventual realization of one’s fundamental values and aspirations? Can one be optimistic, or must one be pessimistic on this score; and in what respects the one and/or the other?

Vladimir Putin is a leader who is aware of the power of the state to which he is affiliated, and the responsibilities given by managing this power. He acts within the framework of some principles he carries in order to achieve future goals.

*“I am not a friend, and not a bride, and not a groom. I am the President of the Russian Federation. 146 million people. These people have their own interests, and I am obliged to defend them,”* said Putin as an answer to complaints of the West to Russia in 2016.[[273]](#footnote-273)

When he was asked during the interview by The Financial Times in 2019 who is his inspirational leader, Putin answered that its Peter the Great:

*“He will live as long as his legacy lives, as well as the legacy of each of us. We will live as long as our legacy lives,”[[274]](#footnote-274).*

First of all, Putin expresses the importance of making changes in order to ensure the welfare of the state and to reach its national interests. He emphasizes that there are steps to be taken for the sake of these changes and that the obstacles to these steps must be overcome. At this point, he is especially aware of the pressure of external factors on Russia's foreign policy.

*“The whole world is now going through a critical period, and the leader will be the one who is ready and able to change, the one who acts, goes forward. This is the will that our country and our people have shown at all the defining historical stages of our development. Over the past* *almost 30 years, we have achieved changes that have taken other states centuries to achieve”* he stated in 2018 during the Presidential Address.[[275]](#footnote-275)

*“Maybe the bear needs to sit quietly? Do not run after the piglets through the taiga, but eat berries, honey. Maybe they will leave him alone? They will not leave. Because they will always strive to put him in a chain. And as soon as it is possible to put in a chain, additionally they will pull out all claws and teeth,”[[276]](#footnote-276)* Putin stated in 2014.

Apart from Putin's leadership understanding, Russia's national interests and the influence of external factors, some values are also effective in shaping his belief system of foreign policy. At the core of these are patriotism, nationalism, adherence to the law, and the constant condition of state integrity and sovereignty.

*“We have no and cannot have any other unifying idea than patriotism,”*[[277]](#footnote-277)

*“If we push such ancient nationalism forward, throw mud at representatives of other ethnic groups, we will destroy the country, which is not in the interest of the Russian people. And I want Russia to be preserved, including in the interests of the Russian people. In this sense, I said that I am the most correct, the most real, and the most effective nationalist,”* he said in 2018.[[278]](#footnote-278)

Vladimir Putin acknowledges his authority and responsibilities as a leader, confident in realizing values and aspirations by considering Russia's national interests. At this point, we can say that his look towards the future in terms of achieving his goals is optimistic:

*“I am simply sure that Russia will gain additional powerful dynamics of development, will be stable, with a balanced democracy, with good prospects for using the latest achievements of the technological revolution. We will continue to work on improving our political system and the judicial system. And all this together, I am sure, will strengthen both the unity of the Russian Federation and the unity of our people, and create prospects for confident movement forward for a long historical perspective,”* stated Putin during the interview in 2018.[[279]](#footnote-279)

In any event, Putin’s trust to Russian people is visible, which helps him to look at the future positively:

*“Dear friends. Everything passes and this will pass. Our country has gone through serious trials more than once: both the Pechenegs tormented it, and the Polovtsians - Russia coped with everything. We will defeat this coronavirus infection too. Together we will overcome everything,”* he said in 2020.[[280]](#footnote-280)

P-3. Is the political future predictable? In what sense and to what extent?

After describing that Putin in general looks optimistically at the future in terms of achieving goals, we also need to find out his views on the predictability of the political future. Since he is concentrated to take the control of the course of events and his plans, it is aimed not to leave the future of the state blurry. Putin also has established ideas and judgments about the state of the international system and the behaviors of other actors. From this point of view, it is rare, if not impossible, for Putin to experience a situation he did not expect.

*“The Americans touch anything, they always get Libya or Iraq,"* Putin stated these words in 2014 which expressed his point of view considering the foreign acts of the US.[[281]](#footnote-281)

*“... strengthening our country, looking at what is happening in the world, in other countries, I want to say to those who are still waiting for the gradual fading of Russia: in this case, we are worried about only one thing - how not to catch a cold at your funeral.”*[[282]](#footnote-282) Within this citation from 2020 Putin showed that he is predicting the opponents’ thoughts.

One of the events that Putin could not predict was the Aircraft Crisis with Turkey in 2015. After this incident, Putin called downing of Russian jet as a ‘stab in the back’.[[283]](#footnote-283)

His predictability blooms from the historical experience and his characteristic as a leader who thinks forward about the future of the state:

*“What is the ultimate goal? We need to understand the state of our country, in economy, political and social sphere, and we need to understand what place we occupy in today's world in this regard. We must clearly understand the main priorities of world development, trends - what will make a particular country great-not in terms of even having nuclear weapons, but in terms of the quality of people's lives, in terms of prospects for self-preservation and development for the future.”[[284]](#footnote-284)*

His dissatisfaction regarding to the rules of the game in the international system is felt by his words that this system is failing to solve existing crises and shows his pessimism about stopping future ones:

*“We can expect a more aggressive nature of practical actions (in politics. - Ed.), including pressure on those countries that do not agree with the role of obedient controlled satellites. The use of trade barriers, illegitimate sanctions, restrictions on the financial, technological, and information spheres-such a game without rules critically increases the risks of unilateral use of military force, that is the danger,”* he said in 2021.[[285]](#footnote-285)

P-4. How much “control” or “mastery” can one have over historical development? What is one’s role in “moving” and “shaping” history in the desired direction?

As mentioned earlier, Vladimir Putin has said that taking steps that will shape the states’ historical development is one of the qualities of a real leader and this will reveal a legacy that will keep him living on even after his death. He is a confident leader who believes that if he does not deviate from his own path in achieving the goals, especially those which concern state’s national interests, he will overcome possible obstacles:

*“They keep trying to show us where we belong. And we do not like this place,”* stated Putin in 2018.[[286]](#footnote-286)

Events occurred since 2014 can be given as an example of this question. The strongly determined attitude during the Crimea's accession to Russia as the result of the Ukrainian crisis, reinforced the fact that Putin was the forerunner of a very important event in the history of Russia in the 21st century. Putin cries out triumphantly:

*“After a hard, long, exhausting voyage, Crimea, and Sevastopol return to their native harbor — to Russia, to their native shores, to the port of permanent home!”[[287]](#footnote-287)*

Putin believes that state’s stability is necessary for its development.

*“If I thought that a totalitarian or authoritarian regime was the most preferable, I would change the Constitution,”* stated Putin in 2012.[[288]](#footnote-288) In 2020, there was a constitutional referendum in Russia which resulted with crucial changes (See Chaper 3.1).

It will not be wrong to argue that Vladimir Putin has a high control/ mastery over historical development of the country.

P-5. What is the role of “chance” in human affairs and in historical development?

The answer to this question can be found in the following words of Vladimir Putin:

*“All these 8 years I worked like a slave on the galleys from morning to night,”[[289]](#footnote-289)*

*“…each of you must find your own way in life, take your own destiny into your own hands. Otherwise, we will not see any luck. Just like that. Only personal initiative and hard work on yourself. That is what I want to call you to,”[[290]](#footnote-290)*

*“Luck is for fools, we are working from the morning to the night.”[[291]](#footnote-291)*

As a result, Putin does not leave his job to chance as a hardworking and visionary leader and argues that other factors other than luck predominate as a driving force of the developments taking place.

*The Instrumental Beliefs in an Operational Code*

I-1. What is the best approach for selecting goals or objectives for political action?

Now, let us continue with examining Putin’s instrumental beliefs- approaches related to his most efficient strategies and tactics in achieving goals.

Vladimir Putin prioritizes the principle of reciprocity in his foreign policy moves. He clearly states in his speeches that he will be pragmatic while developing cooperation relations and responsive to aggressive attitudes. Aware of the seriousness of his responsibility, Putin often avoids flexibility and sharp maneuvers in his political actions. The pessimist perspective urges him to strive for better places than his current position while preparing him for unexpected situations.

*“…Only one thing is important here: we need to approach the dialogue honestly. We need to get rid of the phobias of the past. To get rid of using in domestic political processes all the problems that we have inherited from past centuries, and to look to the future. < ... > We are ready for this, we want it, we will strive for it. But love is impossible if it is declared only by one side, it must be mutual,”* said Putin about Russian-European relations.[[292]](#footnote-292)

*“ … or I am a bad Christian: when they hit one cheek, you should turn the other, but I am not mentally ready for this yet,”* he stated in 2012 about his position towards aggressors.[[293]](#footnote-293)

*“My point is, I would rather be a pessimist who drinks cognac, than an optimist who sniffs bedbugs. Even if the optimist lives a little more happily…”[[294]](#footnote-294)* he said, this point of view significantly affects his approach for choosing goals for political actions.

Putin emphasizes the importance of cooperation in solving international problems and tries to mobilize other actors in the name of improving relations through dialogue. At this point, it is possible to say that he is trying to shift his strategy from conflict to cooperation, especially in the post-Ukrainian crisis era, to repair broken ties.

*“We all know that competition, rivalry between states in world history has not stopped, and does not stop, and will never stop, and contradictions, clashes of interests are in fact a natural thing for such a complex organism as today's human civilization. However, at the turning points, this did not interfere, but on the contrary, encouraged them to join efforts in the most important, truly fateful areas. And it seems to me that now is just such a period,”* stated Putin in 2021.[[295]](#footnote-295)

*“Determination of national interests- it is necessary to solve this issue not with the help of shouts and ultimatums, but with the help of dialogue,”* he said in 2018.[[296]](#footnote-296)

I-2. How are the goals of action pursued most effectively?

To answer this question, Vladimir Putin's attitude towards achieving his goals and the tactics he has developed for an effective and desired results should be examined. Putin is a leader who cares about hard work and planned action. He is focused on overcoming obstacles, whether internal or external, that he faces during the realization of his goals. Criticism that goes against Russia’s national interests does not affect his actions. He also states in his statements that he gets his power from the nation. As long as it aligns with national interests, he pays attention to cooperate in achieving the goals, especially economic ones.

*“If we have existed for more than a thousand years and are so actively developing and strengthening ourselves, does it mean that we have something that contributes to this? This "something" is the internal nuclear reactor of our people, our people, the Russian people,”* he said in 2017.[[297]](#footnote-297) This metaphoric statement underlines features of hard-working, energic, dynamic, smart, and goal-oriented people. These characteristics help Putin and Russia to achieve their national goals.

*“Everything that prevents us from moving forward must be cleaned, discarded,”*[[298]](#footnote-298) stated Putin in 2018, expressing the fact that all the obstacles to the development and goal achievement should be overcome.

Finally, Putin tries to describe his leadership type- after the question is he “a hawk” or “a dove”- as follows:

*“I am a dove, but I have very powerful iron wings.”*[[299]](#footnote-299) This statement shows that as a dove, Putin wants to express his will to resolve international conflicts without the threat of force, at the same time by assurely protecting his position and interests.

I-3. How are the risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted?

*“I am the richest person not only in Europe, but also in the world. I am rich in the fact that the people of Russia have trusted me twice to lead a country like Russia,”* stated Vladimir Putin in 2008.[[300]](#footnote-300) Within these words, again it is visible how he determined to make Russia greater in terms of his responsibilities against people. The path of success is full of obstacles and risks, especially where there are a lot of clashing interests in the international arena. He accepts these risks in order to answer to people’s interests. Putin pays attention to the rationality and with this, risks are calculated and controlled:

*“A statesman must have a head. To build interstate relations, we need to be guided not by emotions, but by the fundamental interests of our countries.”* [[301]](#footnote-301)

One of the crucial examples that comes to mind regarding to “risk” in international relations is about the usage of nuclear power. Regarding to this issue, Putin said:

*“We do not have a pre-emptive strike in our concept of using nuclear weapons. Our concept is a response to a blow. Well, yes, but then the aggressor must know that retribution is inevitable, that he will be destroyed. And we will become the victims of aggression. We will go to heaven as martyrs, and they will just die. Because they will not even have time to repent."…"It will be a global catastrophe for the world, too. But as a citizen of our country and as the head of the Russian state in this case I want to ask one question: And why do we need such a world if there is no Russia in it?”.*[[302]](#footnote-302) These words reflect that he is able to close his eyes and still act on such a risky issue.

Generally, it can be said that Putin does not avoid taking risks in order to remain loyal to the national interests and to show Russia’s power to the world. His tactics basically develop in line with his goal and there are no big deviations from it which automatically answer this question as “Putin possesses a high-risk acceptance”.

I-4. What is the best “timing” of action to advance one’s interests?

Vladimir Putin, as he has often stated in his statements, values time very much and demands that actions be carried out without delay from other government employees. He attaches importance to the implementation of new projects or changes actively and without hesitation. Thanks to his foresight and rationality, he is careful to make his moves in the international arena at the right time.

According to BBC, Putin used 14 times during the last 20 years the words “there is any minute to waste”[[303]](#footnote-303). For example:

*“Life constantly presents us with new challenges, new difficult tasks, and we still have to work hard to solve them. There is no time to waste,”* he stated in 2018.

In this way, in addition to the principle of starting action without delay, he sees it strategically important to act first in critical situations:

*“If a fight is inevitable, you must hit first,”* stated Putin in 2015 regarding to Russian army’s fight against terrorism in Syria.[[304]](#footnote-304)

I-5. What is the utility and role of different means for advancing one’s interests?

One of the means to utilize Putin’s interests is a harsh language which used with or without damaging actions in order to deter a powerful opponent. The intensity of his language (in a scale of conflictual and cooperative words) is frequently high. This language is expected to serve by heightening the opponent’s estimates of one’s strength and determination and/or by weakening the mass support for his policies.[[305]](#footnote-305) Here are some examples:

*"Whoever offends us will not live for three days"* said Putin in 2000 about Russian-IMF relations.[[306]](#footnote-306) (Threat & Punishment)

*“They keep trying to show us where we belong. And we do not like this place,”* stated Putin in 2018.[[307]](#footnote-307) (To oppose)

*“We will not negotiate (with the Baltic States) on the platform of any territorial claims. They will not get the Pytalovsky district, but the ears of a dead donkey,"* Putin said at a meeting with the Komsomolskaya Pravda team in May 2005, referring to Latvia's claims to the Pytalovsky district.[[308]](#footnote-308) (To oppose)

*“Much more can be done with politeness and weapons than with politeness alone,”[[309]](#footnote-309)* said Putin during his visit to military exhibition in 2014. During this period of time Russian- Western relations were highly tense because of Ukrainian crisis and Crimea.

3.2.2- Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Belief System

*The Philosophical Beliefs in an Operational Code*

P-1. What is the “essential” nature of political life? Is the political universe essentially one of harmony or of conflict? What is the fundamental character of one’s political opponents?

The orientation to other political actors reshapes Erdogan’s belief system about the nature of political life.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan frequently states that there is injustice in the nature of political life. He states that the great powers focus on their own welfare and interests rather than providing support to the underdeveloped countries in need of aid, while international organizations are incapable of finding an effective solution. Erdogan strives for Turkey to be a state that invites others to cooperate. Turkey possesses a voluntary and even mobilizing role in solving regional and international problems in such an environment.

*“All these double standards and these ambivalent approaches show us that the feeling of justice is the biggest deficiency in solving the problems we face. You know, as said Gencebay (famous Turkish singer), "Let this world sink down", definitely yes, let this world sink down. Because there is no justice. If problems are not approached from a holistic perspective, if there is discrimination even between problems, there is no sense of justice,”* stated Erdogan in 2014.[[310]](#footnote-310)

*“While one side of the world lives in a high level of prosperity and luxury, it is unacceptable that hunger, poverty and ignorance prevail on the other. While a lucky minority of the world discusses digital technology, robots, artificial intelligence, and obesity, it is very painful that more than two billion people live below the poverty line and close to one billion people live below the hunger line. If each of us is not safe, we cannot turn our backs on the fact that none of us will be safe,”* he said during the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly.[[311]](#footnote-311)

Furthermore, by saying his famous motto "The world is bigger than five", he suggests that the structure of the United Nations Security Council should be changed in order to bring solutions to the existing problems:

*“I say that there should be a Security Council where all belief groups are represented, and where all continents and the whole world are represented. And there should not be temporary members, all members should be permanent members…. Let us make the world a livable, just, and peaceful place for all. As Turkey, we are working to build a better world with all our neighbors from east to west, north to south, near and far, and all our allies. We have always been open and ready to cooperate in this regard, and we will continue to be open from now on… We do not see foreign policy as a zero-sum game. On the contrary, we believe that a win-win balance can be established in foreign policy on the axis of mutual respect, common values, ​​and common interests,”* he described his foreign policy and goals in 2016.[[312]](#footnote-312)

Erdogan, who behaves friendly and inviting in the search for a fair solution that concerns the whole world, also underlines the threats and dangers against Turkey. Sometimes Erdogan portrays the image of Turkey as an excluded or as a being treated unfairly country which brings his speeches to pessimistic atmosphere. He describes his opponents as unfriendly and insidious:

*“In this country, a number of dark forces from time to time tried to draw a route to politics with dirty scenarios and dirty games and some provocations,”* he stated in 2010.[[313]](#footnote-313)

*“For 100 years, we have been struggling not with the problems we have produced ourselves, but with the problems that are designed for us, our lands, our countries, and we are paying heavy prices for these problems. Those who covet the wealth of this geography unfortunately do not want stability, peace, and solidarity in this region. Some states know very well that the more blood flows in this region, the more oil they will acquire and the more power they will gather, and they are doing their best to make more blood flow,”* said Erdogan in 2015.[[314]](#footnote-314)

Turkey’s long European Union membership process is also criticized by Erdogan. He sees EU’s attitude to Turkey as unfair:

*“There is no second country among the EU member states that has been kept on the fence for 50 years. When we evaluate the EU acquis in the 27 EU member countries, most of them are actually far behind us in terms of democracy, freedoms, and economics. Despite this, there are countries that have been made EU members by political decisions.”[[315]](#footnote-315)*

Erdogan also has a confident attitude to combat the negativity, obstacles, and threats he faces:

*“As Turkey, in recent years, we have been subjected to a multifaceted smear campaign with an international dimension, and now you are unfortunately looking at the economic situation in my country, certain parts of the Western world are trying to show at their media that our economy has collapsed, declined, etc. No matter what you do, no matter what titles you throw, Turkey is on its feet, and it will continue to follow its path by strengthening,”* Erdogan stated in 2019.[[316]](#footnote-316)

*“While Turkey’s friendship is valuable, its hostility is severe as well. Even losing Turkey's friendship is a price in itself,”* said Erdogan to Israel in 2010.[[317]](#footnote-317)

So, it can be said that Erdogan’s view on political nature is quite suspicious and cautious as long as he sees unfairness and highly pragmatic actors which are not determined to make changes in this system. For him, there are states to cooperate in order to establish his win-win strategy as well as the states which do not have much desire to work with Turkey. Erdogan sees his opponents as obstacles to his targets and often defines them unfriendly and insidious.

P-2. What are the prospects for the eventual realization of one’s fundamental values and aspirations? Can one be optimistic, or must one be pessimistic on this score; and in what respects the one and/or the other?

Recep Tayyip Erdogan is a leader who frequently expresses his understanding of service to the Turkish people and put forward many projects. His authority and popularity have strengthened after his duty of Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. He made visible changes in the city and after he gained the trust of the people. At this point he has started to say that he takes his power from the nation. Since entering Turkish politics, he has faced many obstacles and opponents. In such an environment, he has become the most important decision maker in Turkey today, with a determination that can be called combative and even stubborn. Here are some quotes of Erdogan regarding those issues:

*“If I cannot come to power alone, I will quit politics,”* stated Erdogan in 2007 before the elections where his party JDP was participating.[[318]](#footnote-318)

*“We have established the brotherhood, solidarity, law and democracy that Turkey craves. We fought gangs, we fought tutelage, we achieved these successes. We will not compromise on gains and we will not allow Turkey to go backwards. My party strongly maintains its resolve on this issue and will maintain,”* he said in 2014.[[319]](#footnote-319)

*“Attacks from inside and outside to block our country strengthen our resolve to fight and further increase our determination,”* stated Erdogan during his speech for The Republic Day of Turkey in 2020.[[320]](#footnote-320)

Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan is one of the leaders who affectively and freely reflect and protect his values and aspirations. At this point, his religious and ideological values are also reflected in his speeches and form the foundations of his political belief system. Malaysian leader Enver Ibrahim claimed that Erdogan is the most effective leader of Islamic world.[[321]](#footnote-321)

*“The most important problem of the Islamic world is sectarianism. Terrorists who commit hate crimes in the name of Islam or under the guise of Muslims benefit most from this problem. We have only one issue: Islam, Islam, Islam. We cannot accept the shadowing of Islam,”* said Erdogan in 2015.[[322]](#footnote-322)

Erdogan’s nationalism can be characterized as follows:

*“Nationalism is to enlarge the country, to increase the reputation of the country, to produce services to the nation. Nationalism is to produce projects, to produce plans, to develop the economy, to bring a vision to domestic and foreign policy, to glorify national values, to keep the national culture alive, and to preserve the values that make us who we are. Nationalism is to build roads, to open schools, to build hospitals, to build houses, to connect cities and houses with natural gas, to lay high-speed train lines, to open a horizon to Turkey, to open a bright door.”[[323]](#footnote-323)*

His trust regarding to empowerment of Turkey with the lead of his fundamental values and aspiration is high and it can be claimed that Erdogan in those terms is optimistic enough.

*“Turkey has shown its greatness to the whole world with its determination in the face of all the troubles. The operations that are intended to be performed on Turkey have melted in the face of the power of the nation, and after that it is doomed to melt. By overcoming existing problems and advancing the processes that have begun, now we have to focus our energy on a strong economy, a strong foreign policy, and the construction of a strong and prosperous society, rather than on artificial problems inside,”* stated Erdogan in 2015.[[324]](#footnote-324)

*“There is no Turkey whose agenda has been determined, there is a Turkey that sets the agenda. This is how everyone should know.”[[325]](#footnote-325)*

According to his statements, it can be argued that Erdogan thinks optimistically in realizing his fundamental values and aspirations.

P-3. Is the political future predictable? In what sense and to what extent?

Erdogan is a leader who places emphasis on honesty in politics. He expects this from the states with which Turkey communicates and has relations. However, from a general perspective, it would not be wrong to say that he has some difficulties in predicting other actors’ moves. After negative consequences, Erdogan criticize those actors as follows:

*“We want to improve our relations with our allies in a way that is befitting the spirit of the alliance. We are members of NATO. Then it is impossible for us to accept that other NATO members have done us wrong. Because you are a member of NATO, you are a strategic partner of NATO, and then you will be spoken about imposing sanctions. That is not understandable. That is not a partnership,”* stated Erdogan about Western countries who aimed to impose sanctions against Turkey.[[326]](#footnote-326)

One of the most crucial cases that Erdogan could not predict was the Community of Fetullah Gulen’s betrayal to Turkey. This community had a huge institutional web in Turkey in many spheres such as education, business, and religion. They were supported by government, but this community led a coup attempt in Turkey in 2016. Aftermath, it was redefined as “Fethullah Terror Organization” and Erdogan apologized from Turkish people that he could not foresee their aim:

*“I apologize from my Lord, and I apologize to my nation. Because we made a mistake.”[[327]](#footnote-327)*

It can be argued that Recep Tayyip Erdogan believes that the predictability of political future in terms of the other actors’ behaviors is low.

P-4. How much “control” or “mastery” can one have over historical development? What is one’s role in “moving” and “shaping” history in the desired direction?

Erdogan is preparing a challenge to major projects and investments for the country's prosperity, especially considering the advantages of Turkey's geopolitical position. Since his time as a mayor, he has done a lot of work in the name of serving the people, such as building housing, hospitals, and schools. The 3rd Airport and Canal Istanbul projects have been developed in order to further strengthen the international position of the country. At the same time, in order to meet the energy needs of the country, the first nuclear power plant project in Turkish history is being established with the initiative of Erdogan and his counterpart Vladimir Putin. Erdogan is known in the international arena with the assistance it provides to countries in need, as well as for its work to develop its own country. Aid and infrastructure works made to Somalia and moves such as opening the door of Turkey to Syrian citizens escaping the war can be cited as examples. Erdogan himself believes that by getting public support, he can reach historical developments.

*“The Germans have one journal. They put four pictures on the cover. My picture is one of them. The cover is titled as ‘Leaders who shape the world.’ Alhamdulillah. As the son of this nation, I will continue this service until my last breath,”* answers Erdogan to Der Spiegel magazine which called him ‘autocrat’. [[328]](#footnote-328)

Finally, the most important goal of Erdogan and Turkey’s ruling party JDP, is 2023 goals which touches lots of spheres in Turkey’s historical development and aims to make it one of the ten strongest states in the world:

*“The most critical juncture of our 2023 targets, which is an expression of Turkey's rise to the top league in every field from democracy to economy, is the elections to be held in the same year. In our congresses, we determine the cadres that will carry our party to the 2023 elections and will hopefully achieve the victory we will once again at the ballot box. I know that every friend of mine who works in our organizations is aware of such a historical responsibility. The sparkle in your eyes, the excitement in your hearts is the reflection of your determination to contribute to the construction of a great and powerful Turkey. I praise my Lord for granting me the way and companions like you do.”[[329]](#footnote-329)*

P-5. What is the role of “chance” in human affairs and in historical development?

Looking at the statements and actions of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, it can be seen that there is no place for a chance in his belief system. It can be argued that he believes that he can reach historical developments by working hard, gathering supporters, and relying on the help of the Lord, as he mentions in many of his statements:

*“Brothers and sisters,*

*We are sufficient for us, and Allah is sufficient for us. By Allah's leave, our brotherhood has provided Turkey with very valuable services so far, and we will continue to provide them after that... To become a great state, we have to make great transformations,”* he stated in 2015.[[330]](#footnote-330)

*The Instrumental Beliefs in an Operational Code*

I-1. What is the best approach for selecting goals or objectives for political action?

Erdogan follows active and flexible policies towards achieving his goals, and he develops strategies to cooperate with actors with similar targets.

*“As Turkey, we always express that we are in favor of winning together with our interlocutors, with whom we do business and cooperate. Our goal is win-win…”* Erdogan stated in 2018 during the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly.[[331]](#footnote-331)

Keeping the range of cooperation wide and versatile allows him to overcome the obstacles that stand in his way by opening alternative doors.

*“We strive to implement our active and entrepreneurial foreign policy vision on global and regional issues. In particular, we base our positions on principles rather than problems with the countries that are closely related to us, such as Syria, Iraq and Iran. We have made progress in our relations with Russia as required by the interests of our country…. In the coming period, we will increase our tempo in all areas, expand our horizons, strengthen our maneuverability. In order to achieve our 2023 goals, we will increase the gear even more, let alone abandon our projects,”* he described his foreign policy strategy in 2018.[[332]](#footnote-332) Beside of strengthen ties with Turkey’s neighbors, Erdogan is also focused on countries such as Asian Pacific, Latin America, Africa and on cooperation with the organizations such as BRICS, African Union and ASEAN as well.

He also states that he has an understanding that avoids conflict apart from some red lines:

*“We are never a country that pursues tension, especially conflict, neither with its neighbors nor with any other state. Together, we are fighting for the peace, prosperity, well-being of our entire region and the world. But this does not mean that we, as a country and nation, will remain silent in the face of the violation of our rights, laws, and sovereignty. As we do not violate anyone’s rights, we will not allow anyone to violate ours,”* Erdogan stated in 2020.[[333]](#footnote-333)

I-2. How are the goals of action pursued most effectively?

Recep Tayyip Erdogan is a leader who wants to "conclude" the goals he has set within the framework of authority loaded by public support, hard work and rationality. Knowledge is important but the usage of it and smartly behaving is more important for him. With this characteristic it can be said that Erdogan is a target-oriented leader. During the process he prefers to cooperate with other actors if it is possible.

*“My philosophy is: read, think, apply, conclude. Now we have to implement this. Let us read, think what we read, apply what we think, let us realize what we do. Now, in this process, we need to think about it, not to read dry information, we have to apply what we think, and then follow this and get the result of where we are, where we have come, what we are doing. And our Teacher Erbakan (Necmettin Erbakan- 23rd Prime Minister of Turkey, the founder and leader of several prominent Islamic political parties) always said: 'intaç, intaç, intaç', in other words, result, result, result,”* stated Erdogan in 2021 during “Library Interviews” with Turkish youth.[[334]](#footnote-334)

He frequently emphasizes in his statements that the authority of the leader should be supported by the people.

*“Do you want to govern Turkey, do you want to be in power, do you want to be a prime minister or president? If people believe in you, trust you, support you, provide opportunities, then you will come to rule and do what you want to do,”* he said in 2015.[[335]](#footnote-335)

He expressed that his dynamism in politics is coming from rationality and experience.

*“Politics is unemotional, politics is a work done with wisdom, science and experience. That is why, politics is the art of ruling people, politics is the art of ruling the nation.”[[336]](#footnote-336)*

I-3. How are the risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted?

Erdogan is a leader who thinks that in order to become a great state, it is necessary to achieve great success and risks must be taken in the way. He also states that some risks must be taken because of humanitarian and religious responsibility. He tries to be cautious and flexible in his strategies while taking risks, while fulfilling Turkey's policy without being affected by other factors.

*“Economy is a risk; politics is a risk. Actually, life is a risk. If you do not take risks, you cannot achieve success ... Today, Turkey has switched from a static foreign policy to a dynamic one. The curtain between Turkey and the world has been lifted, its horizon has expanded.”[[337]](#footnote-337)*

*“Death cannot do anything to those who kill death, we need to know it this way. For those who fear fear, fear cannot do anything, we need to know it this way. If we are afraid, if we leave Somalia alone with its own destiny, tomorrow our ancestors will ask us to answer for it, our martyrs will ask us to answer for it, God asks us to answer for it. This is the responsibility of being a great state, and we are not and will not be afraid,”* he stated in 2015.[[338]](#footnote-338)

I-4. What is the best “timing” of action to advance one’s interests?

Recep Tayyip Erdogan often emphasizes that it is necessary to use time very well in order to achieve the goals.

*“We have no time to lose. Our journey is long, our duty is heavy. First local elections, then presidential and parliamentary elections will be held until 2019 we have to evaluate the time very well. May my Lord make our way clear,”* stated Erdogan in 2017 during the meeting of the JDP.[[339]](#footnote-339)

He tries to fulfill his promises to the people by giving clear dates and deadlines for important projects. One of them is the aforementioned 2023 targets. Active policies are followed in order to bring them up to the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic.

Emphasizing that politics is a matter of wisdom, Erdogan knows the importance of timing while taking critical steps and is aware that serious consequences will be encountered otherwise. Just like it was with Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETO).

*“The real fight against FETO was only in our time. But we were late, so we paid the price,”* stated Erdogan in 2018.[[340]](#footnote-340)

I-5. What is the utility and role of different means for advancing one’s interests?

When looking at Erdogan's rhetoric in general, it is seen that the intensity of his words is around Promise / Support on positive relations, while in negative relations they can be included in the categories of Oppose and sometimes Threaten. Because of his sense of service to the nation, which is at the center of his political agenda, it is common for Erdogan to make promises during his public speeches in order to strengthen trust. In addition, the leader who follows the developments in the partner countries does not lack the words of praise and support to them in his statements.

*“We worked day and night with all our strength to fulfill our promises to the nation. If today Turkey is a source of strength and hope not only within its borders but also outside its borders, we owe it to our struggle together with our nation,”* he stated in 2020.[[341]](#footnote-341) (Promise)

*“Our brother Azerbaijan liberated the Armenian-occupied territories with an epic victory and opened the doors of a new era in the region. After that, our priority is to help establish security and stability in Karabakh and to eliminate the destruction left by the 30-year occupation together,”* he expressed in 2021 his thoughts regarding to Nagorno-Karabakh crisis. [[342]](#footnote-342)(Support)

On the other hand, when he encounters negativity or obstacles in domestic and foreign policy, Erdogan uses words under the categories of Oppose/ Resist and sometimes even Threaten during his speeches while adressing his opponents.

*“We strongly condemn Israel's heinous attacks on Masjid Al-Aqsa, our first Qibla, every Ramadan. As Turkey, we will continue to be on the side of our Palestinian brothers in all cases* *and conditions,”* stated Erdogan in his tweet about Israeli- Palestinian crisis.[[343]](#footnote-343) (Oppose- Israel, Support- Palestine)

*“The European Union gave us 3 billion euros… We will open the doors (borders), let them (the EU) think of the rest,”* threatened Erdogan due to his complain about the EU’s insufficient support concerning Syrian refugees.[[344]](#footnote-344)

Following table summarizes this part and gives a framework of Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s belief systems.

Table 2: Brief description of the operational codes of Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Philosophical and Instrumental Questions | Vladimir Putin | Recep Tayyip Erdogan |
| P-1: The nature of political life, fundamental character of the opponent. | Believes in Russia’s greatness. Suspicious because of internal and external threats. Opponents can be dangerous. At the heart of political life, there is “conflict” and “injustice” rather than “harmony”. Open to cooperation but the attempts should be mutual. | Believes in bright future of Turkey. Political nature is full of different interests and conflicts. Both internal and external opponents are unfriendly, insidious and a threat to Turkey’s development. The international arena is unfair and most of the countries are not presented enough. International organizations are not effective, and the UN Security Council should be reorganized. |
| P-2: Optimism or pessimism regarding to realization of fundamental values and aspirations. | Optimist | Optimist- cooperation oriented |
| P-3: Predictability of the political future. | Moderate predictable | Low predictable |
| P-4: Control over historical development. | High | High |
| P-5: Role of “chance” in human affairs and in historical development. | There is no role of chance, Hardworking and rationality bring a human to his/her target. | No place to chance. Goals are reached by hard-working, gathering supporters and with the help of the Lord. |
| I-1: The best approach for selecting goals or objectives for political action. | Prioritizes reciprocity in relations. Less flexible and avoids maneuvers. Dialogue and cooperation are a priority but if there is no other option the conflict is unavoidable. | Flexible and multi-faced foreign policy. Cooperates with the states with similar targets. Tries to avoid conflicts besides some red lines (for example- national security). |
| I-2: How are the goals of actions pursued most effectively? | Hard work and planned action. Being rational and goal-oriented. Changes should be done; obstacles should be overcome. | Public support, hard work, experience, rational attitude. Being target-oriented. External suppression should be ignored. |
| I-3: How are the risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted? | High acceptance. Risks are acceptable because of the responsibilities to people and national interests. | Moderate acceptance. For a great success risk should be taken. Also, sometimes because of religious and humanitarian reasons. At the same time, flexibility helps to avoid or soothe negative consequences. |
| I-4: What is the best “timing” of action to advance one’s interests? | Values time, the timing is important, work should be done without delay. In critical situations better to act first. | Time should be used very well. Sets deadlines to his goals. |
| I-5: What is the utility and role of different means for advancing one’s interests? | Smart, self-confident, and often harsh language. | Promise/ Support in positive;  Oppose in negative relations. |

**3.3- Agent or Structure? Empirical results of content analysis**

In the last part of Chapter 3 of the thesis, the cases from Chapter 2 are linked to the results obtained from the content analysis and supported with the belief systems of the leaders. The results are analyzed in order to understand to what extent the leaders affect the relations between Russia and Turkey. Furthermore, the answer to the question of whether agents or structures are more influential is examined. About 100 primary sources were used for content analysis. These primary sources are the statements and interviews of Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan mostly gathered from the official government websites (kremlin.ru/ tccb.gov.tr). These sources were selected by their worthiness in reflecting the state position and leader’s outlook. Furthermore, sources that directly picture interactions among Russia and Turkey were included. NVivo program was used to support the analysis. Word clouds of the statements were used in this part in order to provide a clear scheme to the reader.

*Military-Economic Cooperation*

At the heart of the dynamic thrive of relations between Turkey and Russia in the early 21st century there is an economic cooperation established as a result of the meetings of two states’ leaders and their strong diplomatic dialogue. When we look to the history of both states, it can be seen that their economy has been liberalized late and they had difficulties in joining the world market. While the Turkish economy concentrates on industry, construction, trade and tourism, Russia's economy shines in the energy, precious metals, trade, and heavy technology fields. Along with the initiative of the leaders, the atmosphere of competition and insecurity from ancient times is dispersed, and relations entered into a new and positive stage. To institutionalize these relations, the High- Level Turkish-Russian Cooperation Council has been established. The rapprochement of politicians has ensured the rapprochement of the public, and Turkish and Russian businesspeople put signature to joint agreements and projects. Apart from this, the mutual trust of the peoples has increased, which showed that the number of tourists visiting Turkey from Russia broke records. In the second chapter of the thesis, 3 events from energy and military fields are given as “cases”. Along with the TurkStream and Akkuyu projects, the purchase of the Russian air defense system S-400 has created important turning points in Turkish-Russian relations in this field.

Graph 2: Vladimir Putin’s Word Cloud Regarding to Military-Economic Cooperation with Turkey (NVivo)[[345]](#footnote-345)



If the military-economic relations between Turkey and Russia would be examined based on the belief system of Vladimir Putin, his statements, and the interviews, it can be said that he sees Turkey as an economically valuable and reliable partner for Russia. Within Russia’s dependence on energy income, the sanctions imposed on it seriously shake its economy. As stated before, although Erdogan defined the referendum held in Crimea as unlawful, he did not participate in the sanctions of the Western world against Russia and even criticized them as being too harsh. Vladimir Putin, aware of the importance of the partnership with Turkey, declared that Turkey would "regret" after the Aircraft Crisis, but later added that he did not say these words to the Turkish people. In addition to the fact that the relations were seriously deteriorated, the "I wonder if Russia cuts the natural gas" concerns in the minds of the Turkish people did not reflect the truth, and Russia has still continued to import products such as white goods from Turkey. From this perspective, it can be said that there is an interdependency relationship between the two states, which neo-liberals defend, as well as the fact that Turkey is a more dependent side. However, this phenomenon of interdependency was not enough to form strong political ties as neo-liberals advocated.

Based on Putin's speeches and statements, it is possible to say that he views the cooperation with Turkey positively and that wide-ranging projects are predictable in the future. The transformation of the South Stream project into Turkish Stream as a result of the deteriorating relations with the Western world has shown that Turkey can be both a prime and alternative partner for Russia. Putin's comment about Erdogan as "a man of his word" also strengthens the argument that he sees Erdogan as a reliable partner which is suitable to his leader picture in which he attaches importance to honesty and seeks the principle of mutual affords in relations. Transporting Russian natural gas to Turkey, which is one of its biggest exporters, and to Europe as it was targeted in the South Stream enabled Russia to hit two birds with one stone thanks to this maneuver.

On the other hand, the Akkuyu project is a good opportunity to reflect Russia’s success in the nuclear and strengthen the image of a strong and developing Russia that Putin has given importance to. Although this project was criticized by the internal dynamics of Russia due to its unprofitability for country and hesitations about Turkey’s payments, it did not cause a change in Putin's determination.

Finally, selling S-400 to Turkey is a symbolically important development for Russia. Selling its military equipment to a NATO country caused a worldwide attention as well. At this point, this is significant because of Russia's success in bringing Turkey closer to itself while pushing it away from its Western allies, rather than the income it earned from the sale. This event is also in line with the strategies that Russia has developed due to its unwillingness to see a country in the region which equipped by NATO and possesses contrary policies.

Graph 3: Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Word Cloud Regarding to Military-Economic Cooperation with Russia (NVivo)[[346]](#footnote-346)



It can be said that Recep Tayyip Erdogan's multi-faceted and cooperative foreign policy has given Russia a distinct importance in the economy field. Efforts are being carried out and bearing fruit in line with the goal of placing Turkey in the top 10 among the strongest economies of the world. While many parts of the world experienced a contraction in their economies due to the devastating effects of the coronavirus epidemic, Turkey was less affected and saw an expansion in its economy. With the aim of the realization of the 2023 goals, which coincides with the centenary of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, it is also a matter of strengthening Turkey economically. Starting off in his political life with the principle of serving the nation, Erdogan is aware of the importance of strong cooperation with other states in achieving these goals. Although Turkey has alternative partners in the region, Russia has become the collaborator in the projects implemented in the early 21st century. In addition to breaking records in the fields of trade and tourism, solutions have also been brought to Turkey's foreign dependency in energy and are still being introduced. TurkStream project has enabled Turkey to access Russian natural gas at the most affordable prices, and with the presence of the European branch of the project, the country's geopolitics has been further appreciated.

Nuclear energy alternative has been preferred as a solution to natural gas and oil lack. Despite Turkey's demand for many years, this opportunity, which was not provided to it by the West for a number of reasons, was provided by Russia with the signing of the Akkuyu project. Turkey is focused on manufacturing technologies beyond purchasing them. For this, it also demands the purchase of technology and information in the agreements it has made. Accordingly, more than a hundred Turkish students have been sent to Russian universities in this field in order to increase the knowledge to work at the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant.

Another good example of this is the purchase of the Russian air defense system S-400. Because, as the Turkish Minister of National Defense is also underlined, Turkey is in pursuit of not only the equipment but also of joint production. At this point alone, the reaction of the Western states, especially the United States of America, is critical. Erdogan continued his determined stance by saying “We are not a tribal state” to these countries which were opposed and behaved menacingly from the very beginning of the process, and he did not give up to purchase the S-400s, despite the US’ threat of canceling the delivery of the F-35 war aircrafts. As a result, the US decided to impose sanctions against Turkey within the scope of CAATSA. Aftermath, Erdogan evaluated Russia's SU-57 military warcrafts against F-35 fighter jets. The absence of a fruitful solution from the West to strengthen Turkey's air defense, which became a need within the scope of the fight against terrorism (especially when sides could not agree on the purchasing and joint production of Patriot air defense system), an alternative orientation to Russia was realized. This is not a simple orientation because Russia perceives NATO and NATO perceives Russia as a threat based on historical facts. Considering the Turkey-Russia relations, it was not possible for Turkey to effectuate military cooperation with Russia directly due to its NATO membership. In this regard, in the absence of Putin's willingness and Erdogan's determined attitude, such a shopping is not possible, even if it regards to defensive measures. Based on Erdogan's statements, it can be inferred that he sees Putin as a valuable "friend" and describes him as one of the closest partners in the development of Turkey.

The sincere atmosphere, which can be observed in the light of the statements and interviews of both leaders, and their clear attitude towards external factors make it possible to make a description that the future of military-economic cooperation in Turkey-Russia relations will remain.

*Syrian War*

The hottest conflict of the early 21st century that has provided the political and military interaction of Russia and Turkey is undoubtedly the Syrian war. The war has started in 2011, and since then both Turkish and Russian leaders took this issue into their agenda. It is possible to come across this issue in their public addresses, press statements, government meetings, dialogues with defense ministers, bilateral visits, etc.

At the beginning of the event, both states determined their positions in line with their national interests. Leaders have determined strategies that are appropriate for their positions, taking into account the interests of the state. Later, both states have directly involved to the war within their armed forces.

Graph 4: Vladimir Putin’s Word Cloud Regarding to Syrian War (NVivo)[[347]](#footnote-347) 

It is possible to evaluate the position of Vladimir Putin in the Syrian Civil War in the light of his speeches and interviews. Putin determined a tactic not to lose his active strategic partner in the Middle East after sensing the impact of foreign forces in the civil war that broke out in Syria, as in Libya and Iraq. Possible regime change in Syria poses a risk for Russia. The situation of the military bases Russia established in Syria and the future of the relations between the two countries could become uncertain. Even more, the seeds of terrorism, which are flourishing as the result of void authority and which Russia entered into struggle against decades ago, could be planted in this region, which became very unstable as a result of the Arab Spring. With this war, new opportunities were born for the ISIS, the terror organization that substantiated its activities all over the world. The war had to be resolved to ensure the security of the region. On the other hand, the victory of the Russian-backed regime would significantly increase Russia's activity in the region, and it would be able to pursue an ever more active policy in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean Sea. Under the umbrella of international law principles which call for protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria with combating one of the most fundamental problems of international relations- terrorism, Russia has directly involved in the war by declaring its position with the side of Assad regime and backed it with soldiers and equipment. In this process, Vladimir Putin, the leader of Russia, shared the reason for the interventions to be carried out in Syria with internal dynamics, dynamized the actors who have an active role as the defense minister in order to organize military operations, established close dialogues with Bashar Al-Assad and his regime, and carried out effective moves such as developing strategies in order to maintain the balance in the region and became the main representative of Russia in the Syrian War. Changing the balance in the region with its military forces upon the Syrian regime's "request for help", Russia drew the attention of Turkey, which expected the war to be in favor of the opposition. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the relations of the two states, which have intensified with diplomatic dialogue and cooperation especially in the economic field, have entered to an extremely sensitive period.

Graph 5: Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Word Cloud Regarding to Syrian War (NVivo)[[348]](#footnote-348)

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Açıklama otomatik olarak oluşturuldu

Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s role and strategy in the Syrian Civil War can be evaluated from the statements and interviews given by him. Turkey's significant geopolitical location is being at the same time the source of problems that have persisted throughout history. While Turkey is positioned in a kind of ring of fire in its region, it is also a bridge between Asia and Europe, a transit passageway. When the conflicts in the Caucasus and the Middle East brighten, it evolves into a buffer zone between Europe and the crisis center. It is not possible for Turkey to follow a policy away from the problems happening around it, to isolate itself. Recep Tayyip Erdogan frequently comments and expresses that the borders drawn after the First World War reveal the problems, that humanitarian disasters were experienced as a result of the Middle East plans of the Western states, and that international attempt to solve the Syrian Civil War, especially the United Nations’ efforts, was insufficient and unsuccessful. Erdogan's main focus on the Syrian crisis is on two issues: the regime's massacre of civilians, and the region's explosion of terrorism. While the relations between Turkey and Syria were on average before the civil war, the ties broke after the beginning of the war. The Turkish government has taken a position against the regime, considering that the Syrian regime has lost its legitimacy from public persecution. Millions of people had to leave Syria as a result of regime’s the anti-opposition operations which results with serious deaths of civilians and destruction of the cities which makes them uninhabitable. As a result of the active, multi-faceted and humanitarian policy implemented by Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party government, Turkey welcomed 4 million Syrians. Peace in Syria and the restructuring of the country are essential for these people to return to their homes. The Turkish leader frequently mentions this issue in his statements and interviews on the Syrian Civil War.

As for the issue of terror, it is necessary to pay attention to two groups here: ISIS and PKK-PYD. Turkey is one of the countries which has affected from the massacres caused by ISIS. In this case, it is quite understandable why they joined the international coalition against ISIS. On the other side, since 20th century Turkey has been fighting against PKK, especially in the southern and eastern borders, which threatens national security of the entire country, and the authority void in Syria has fed the PYD, the Syrian branch of this organization. This problem became a major obstacle for Turkey’s development and prosperity- which are the topics that Erdogan pays attention and feel responsible for. In order to bring solution to this issue, to establish the security of the region, and to start the process of returning of Syrian refugees, Turkey also militarily involved in the Syrian Civil war. In this process, Erdogan, by emphasizing on humanitarian factors and terrorism, engaged in activities in order to gain support from the people and international public opinion, mastered the role of initiator for organizing operations, and became the main representative of Turkey in Syria.

As a result of years of warm contacts and blossoming partnership, Turkey and Russia attempted to suppress their historical counter-regional interests in order not to damage bilateral relations, however, the Syrian Civil War put an end to this situation. It would not be a surprise if these states, which are positioned at two opposite poles, to come across each other at the battlefield. Eventually, the Aircraft Crisis occurred, in which the tension reached its peak and as a result, all relations were severed. Prior to the incident, the Turkish side was expressing its discomfort with Russia's operations that caused Turkmen’s death in the northern Syria. When the incident broke out, Turkey stated that the unidentified military aircraft continued to violate the Turkish border, despite being warned several times. President Erdogan did not give the order to shot down the plane. While Prime Minister Davutoglu gave the order not to allow the infringement of Turkish airspace, the order to shot down the plane was given by the Air Force Commander. As a result of the incident, Putin commented that "we were stabbed on our back", and he added that Russia did not pose a danger to Turkey and that it would not be possible for the Turkish side not to know that the aircraft belonged to Russia. Sanctions were imposed by it to Turkey. While the Aircraft Crisis can be considered as an event that took place against the will of Erdogan and Putin, it was the result of the efforts of the two leaders to restore the completely broken relations. The Russian side expressed that they did not see Turkey as an enemy and presented their demands for the restoration of relations. Turkey accepted this offer. Relations began to warm up again as a result of President Erdogan's excuse letter. This time, Turkey carried out its military operations in Syria with the conformity of Russia, joint patrols were initiated in the region, and finally, towards a peaceful solution, the Astana process has started with Iran’s inclusion. Turkey, Russia, and Iran agree that only regional actors should play a role in the resolution of the Syrian Civil War, and they also play an active role in the initiative of the establishment of a constitution under the United Nations, which encompasses the interests of all parties in the name of achieving lasting peace.

It is seen that Erdogan and Putin frequently uttered their positions described above in their speeches and interviews they gave during the development process of the Syrian Civil War. The frequent use of the words ‘Turkey’ by Putin and ‘Russia’ by Erdogan reflect that they see each other as active and important actors in this process. As a result of this motion of the leaders and their valuing and respecting each other despite all negativity, they came together to negotiation table in order to find the solution of the crisis. The fact that these two states, located at different poles, restored their dialogues and relations despite such a contradistinction, especially the Aircraft Crisis, is something that can only happen with the initiative of the leaders. As described in the previous part of Chapter 3, Putin and Erdogan are the leaders who care much about the development of the countries they govern, believe in mutual attempts to establish cooperation ties in order to achieve goals together, criticize the dominance and unfairness of the West, and dedicated to build the future of the state without external affect. These common points of the leaders bring them together despite serious cracks in their national interests and different concern of regional problems which can be noticed during the Syrian War case. Finally, it can be argued that the destiny of the Russian-Turkish relations in this case is highly dependent on their leaders will.

*Other Regional Conflicts*

-Crimea

The Crimean crisis is one of the regional problems in which Russia and Turkey’s positions distinguish. The peninsula strategically important for the purpose of dominating the Black Sea since the imperial times, was occupied by both, Russian and Ottoman empires. Crimea, which was officially merged to Ukraine during the time of the Soviet Union, gained autonomy status. In the 21st century, after the protests that started against the government in the capital of Ukraine and dragged the country into the civil war, it was subjected to the intervention of Russia. Crimea was merged to Russia as a result of the referendum, which was not recognized by the international public. The resistance movement in the east of Ukraine is still remaining. For Putin, who defines the Ukrainian nation as Russian, the existence of the parties who argue that relations with Russia should deteriorate is surprising. Again, knowing that the West was supporting this crisis, only made his attitude even harder.

Graph 6: Vladimir Putin’s Word Cloud Regarding to Crimea (NVivo)[[349]](#footnote-349)

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Açıklama otomatik olarak oluşturuldu

Graph 7: Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Word Cloud Regarding to Crimea (NVivo)[[350]](#footnote-350)

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Açıklama otomatik olarak oluşturuldu

It is possible to determine the positions and effects of the two leaders in their statements and interviews. On the Russian side, the unification of Crimea and the Russian Federation is seen as a great success especially when we remember Vladimir Putin’s high ability to shape the historical development in his belief system. Putin, who looks to Crimea as a family member who has been abroad for many years and then returned back home, has not taken a step back in his attitude in this incident, nor does it seem to be. Despite not being recognized in the international arena and the continuation of Western sanctions, Putin's certainty continues, and every year March 18 is celebrated as the Day of Unification of Crimea and Russia in Russia. During these days Vladimir Putin participates in the ceremonies and gives speeches. In addition, Russia is settling in Crimea with investments and projects, for example the establishment of the Kerch Strait Bridge, and using the Black Sea for its strategic plans.

On the other hand, in his statements, Recep Tayyip Erdogan underscores the fact that this new status of Crimea is not recognized by Turkey and states that the referendum is unlawful. The crucial point of the Crimean Crisis for Turkey is the Crimean Turks living on the peninsula. It has always been important to Turkey that the Crimean Turks live in peace, security, and prosperity. Before the Ukrainian civil war, investments were made in the region and ties were strengthened by mutual interactions. After the annexation of Crimea, Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Vladimir Putin to guarantee the rights and security of the Crimean Turks. In addition, Turkey has the intention to improve its relations with Ukraine. In parallel with this, the meeting of the presidents took place in April 2021. Erdogan repeated that he do not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea, but urged Russia and Ukraine to solve their problems within peaceful way.

In this process, Erdogan and Putin having different views on the Crimean issue did not polarize them enough to cause conflict and negatively affect their relations. If the wills of the parties arise, Turkey is in a position to assume the role of mediator in the resolution of the crisis. In this case, roles of Erdogan and Putin are crucial.

-Nagorno-Karabakh

Another regional dispute concerning Turkey and Russia is the Nagorno- Karabakh problem. This problem, which emerged during the Soviet Union times, remained dull for a long time and resurrected in 2020. Turkey, as a peace-seeker in the South Caucasus and defining Azerbaijan as its brother country, and on contrary Russia, which wants to remain good relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan, but is strategically closer to Armenia, are became two important actors that opened the way to the solution after the war that broke out in 2020.

Graph 8: Vladimir Putin’s Word Cloud Regarding to Nagorno-Karabakh (NVivo)[[351]](#footnote-351)

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Açıklama otomatik olarak oluşturuldu

Graph 9: Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Word Cloud Regarding to Nagorno-Karabakh (NVivo)[[352]](#footnote-352)

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Açıklama otomatik olarak oluşturuldu

Unlike the Soviet government, Putin did not opt to directly assist Armenia in the 2020 war with military support. According to the collective defense agreement between Russia and Armenia, sides must support each other in case of aggression to their territories. However, Nagorno-Karabakh is not an Armenian territory, and the status of the lands that Azerbaijan acquired during the 2020 war are Azerbaijani territories which were already occupied by Armenia. Putin said that they would directly involve to back Armenian side only if the Azerbaijani armies intervene to the Armenian territories. For Putin, the leader of Russia, who joined as the third party in the signing of the ceasefire as well as with status of mediator, stopping the deaths is the main issue that needs to be addressed. At his statements, beyond who is right and the position of Russia, he focuses on stopping the war and ensuring a permanent and peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Putin gives the examples of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Crimea by stating that the people should determine their own destiny. Stating that Turkey's direct support to Azerbaijan is not contrary to international law, Putin remained neutral on this issue and did not criticized Turkey’s intervention. After the ceasefire, soldiers from the Russian peace force were sent to the Azerbaijani lands.

On the other hand, Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused the Minsk Group of the failure and bringing Nagorno-Karabakh issue to this level. Failure to take the necessary steps to resolve the crisis has led the parties to a hot conflict. In this crisis, Turkey was openly on the side of Azerbaijan. In contrast to the relations with Armenia that have not restored over the years, Azerbaijan is the brother country of Turkey in the South Caucasus with the slogan "one nation, two states". In his statements, separate attention should be given to the people who were migrated from the occupied regions. Defining the war in 2020 as a victory achieved together with Turkey's support and reflecting the happiness in his statements, Erdogan also stated that whatever necessary will be done in order to ensure stability in the region. Referring to the failure of the Minsk group to resolve the crisis over 30 years, he said that Azerbaijan and Turkey have "found a solution to deadlock" together.

As a result of the joint decision of Putin and Erdogan, it was decided to establish a Turkish-Russian Joint Observation Center in order to control the ceasefire in Azerbaijan, to record the violations, to examine the complaints and problems of the parties and to take measures to prevent violations. Both Russian and Turkish soldiers are on duty here. The Nagorno-Karabakh crisis has been one of the examples showing that both leaders were the most important actors who could act together in terms of ensuring stability and security in the geography where Russia and Turkey are located by finding a solution by playing an active role.

The table below summarizes the conclusions with answering the question: Agents or Structure?

Table 3: Agents or Structure? Cases from the early 21st century Russian-Turkish Relations

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Cases** | **Roles of Agents and Structures** | **Agents or Structures are more influential?** |
| Military-Economic Cooperation | Role of the structures: States need to gain economic strength in today's world in order to achieve prosperity and development. Both Turkey and Russia are making strategic collaborations in order to complete their deficiencies by reading the missing parts correctly. Due to their mutual driving force of "exclusion by the West" originating from the history, both Russia and Turkey are exposed to being isolated in the international arena and being ignored in terms of their national interests. This situation brings them closer to each other. Two states with an imperial past are competing to ensure their domination in the region. However, this does not prevent them from developing strong economic ties. While Turkey is trying to complement its lack especially in the field of energy, with projects it realizes jointly with Russia, Russia is implementing its political tactics by pulling a NATO country to its direction.  Role of the agents: Leaders are gone in the flow due to the factors mentioned above. The importance of the leaders' role can only be emphasized in the acquisition of the S-400 systems. Here, the determination of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has a more independent and multi-faced foreign policy understanding rather than the classical western-oriented foreign policy of Turkey, was effective. | Structures |
| Syrian War | Role of the structures: Clashing regional interests brought early 21st century Turkish-Russian relations into the extremely fragile situation. Historical motives reflect Turkey's dominance in the Middle East and Russia's dream of accession to the warm seas. While Turkey was directly involved in the war within the scope of humanitarian foreign policy and the fight against terrorism, Russia joined the war by supporting the Syrian regime against terrorism. Both states fought against the Islamic State (ISIS). They were dissatisfied with America's involvement in the war and stood on the people's determination concerning the fate of the country. They tried to be in a decision-making position for the region’s security as Turkey, Russia, and Iran by trying to keep the West out.  Role of the agents: Structural factors pushed the two states to diverge. The Aircraft Crisis broke the ties hard. Nevertheless, as a result of the leaders' perception that the friendship of the two countries was more valuable than hostility, and the steps they took to restore relations, everything normalized in a short time like 9 months. In this way, while Turkey had the opportunity to realize its ambitions in the region, Russia did not have to make big concessions from its position. The cooperation of the two states resulted in the retreat of America from the region, which neither wanted a presence. The initiatives of the two leaders helped bring the Syrian War to the negotiation table while further developing Russian-Turkish relations. | Agents |
| Crimean Crisis | Role of the structures: Historical background shows that the Crimean Peninsula is strategically very important for both, Turkey and Russia. The states’ rivalry in this region was always high enough to bring them to war.  Role of the agents: Despite historical aspects, the Turkish side remains passive and does not intervene in the crisis, and does not join the West to impose sanctions on Russia. Turkish leader Erdogan’s decision is determinative here. | Agents |
| Nagorno-Karabakh War | Role of the structures: It was in the common interest of the two states to exclude the Western states from the solution of this problem. They wanted to make the decisions themselves in this geography. Both states are wishful to be a dominant voice in the Caucasus region. Turkey and Russia are historically rivaling in this region.  Role of the agents: As in the Syrian war, despite not being on the same front, with the intention of cooperation and the attempt of joint decision-making in problem solving and regional security building plus with the trust to each other resulted in Putin and Erdogan’s mutual role-playing as agents in the peace-making process. | Equally effective |

**CONCLUSION**

The task of Chapter 1 was to express the idea of leadership in international relations, to explore concepts and methods which are helpful to reach the results of the research. It should be noted that the idea of leadershipis not completely ignored in the international relations studies. Although many scholars are prone to explain the state behavior through interdependency, the anarchy of the IR system, the identity of the state, etc. still there are studies that are concentrated on individuals and their characteristics. Those studies are properly explained in the first chapter. The pros and cons of this type of study are examined and the best methodology for scientifically measured data is presented. As the result, this study expressed that the role of leaders in foreign policy matters.

The agent-structure dilemmain the international relations is the theoretical dilemma that was selected as the main concept of the research and has a variety of broad and extensive opinions. The second part of the first chapter emphasizes on this dilemma and the possible solutions are put forward by neorealists, world-system theorists, and structuration theory. Despite some deficiencies of the structuration theory, it’s main claim is the significance of focusing on both, agent and structure, while explaining events in IR which is highly acceptable. Both factors should be opened to discussion and considered as “problematic”. Only then, this dilemma can be solved. The solution of agent-structure dilemma, even the process of it, is pretty useful because it brings international relations theory to a new level. This research concentrated on the fact that both agent and structure matters and both of them should be included in an investigation of state behavior.

The third part of the first chapter shows how operational code analysisis helpful in order to scientifically understand and reveal the belief system of the leaders. Such analysis reveals leaders’ philosophical and instrumental beliefs which means recognition of their view of political nature and its predictability, how they see their opponents, what is the role of chance and time, their belief in themselves, and whether they feel capable to realize their values and make a contribution to the historical development of the country. Operational codes or in the other words, belief systems, are useful to draw leaders’ identity in politics and evaluate the steps taken by the state with finding causal connections with the leader. The historical evolution of this analysis is expressed in detail in case to show the reader wide research agenda for operational code analysis which can be made as qualitative and/or quantitative research. The main conclusion to this part is that operational code analysis should not be neglected in the international relations research agenda since it proved to be useful and possesses a high possibility to investigate leaders’ characteristics at-a-distance and reach their effect on domestic and foreign politics.

Finally, “other methodologies: process-tracing & content analysis” are included in Chapter 1 since both are effective instruments in achieving the results of the study. Process-tracing shows the effectiveness in explaining causalities of the historical events. Content analysis proves itself as an efficient method in analyzing textual sources (speeches and statements of the leaders). Content analysis proved itself at giving useful results together with operational code analysis. Those two methods helped to reach the aim of this research. As a result, I can argue that both methods gave fruitful results and can be used in similar studies in International Relations research.

The main tasks of Chapter 2 were to find out the milestones of Russian-Turkish relations since the early 21st century, describe the main cases in which state leaders may have effect, and finally determine the main positions of Russia and Turkey in such cases within linking them to causes. Bilateral relations are described briefly and chronologically[[353]](#footnote-353). This study mostly focused on political and military-economic relations, but diplomatic and social relations were considered as well. Cases have been selected analyzing the dynamics of relations from 2000 until 2021.

The milestones of the relations are found at “Military-economic cooperation”, “Syrian War”, and “other regional conflicts (Nagorno-Karabakh & Ukraine). Those cases are selected because their significance in shaping Russian-Turkish relations in the 21st century unquestionable (they are trend topics of international relations scholars, journalists, political scientists, historians who specialized in those relations. Also, the number of statements of state leaders considering those cases are remarkably high comparing other cases). Those cases are the main topics of the speeches, statements, and interviews of the leaders which are used for Chapter 3.

Since the 2000s relations between Turkey and Russia increased rapidly. There were official visits not only at the ministries level but also at the presidential one. Many documents were signed to strengthen peaceful relations and strategic partnership. The attempt to institutionalize the relations can be seen in the establishment of the High-Level Russian-Turkish Cooperation Council. Both countries have tried to eliminate different interests in the region in order to maintain those relations. Diplomatic visits led to economic cooperation especially in the energy, trade, and tourism spheres. Until the Arab Spring event, Turkish-Russian relations were as bright as they were in the 1920s. After 2011 relations started to change and have become more fragile. Interests of Turkey and Russia in the Middle East are quite different and as the result, both countries found themselves in opposite fronts. Since then, relations were both hot and cold and this situation is still valid during our days. This characteristic brings us to define Russia and Turkey as “frenemies”, which means that while possessing friendly attitudes, still being rivals and expecting hatred from each other at the same time.

The third chapter begins with an examination of the powers and responsibilities of the heads of state of the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation, especially in the field of foreign policy. It is clear here that both constitutions provide a wide range of action for leaders. I examined how two leaders, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin, who were especially emphasized in the study, gained a longer and more effective presidency with the constitutional changes carried out in the 21st century. These advantages have enabled them to be more effective in foreign policy as well.

The second part of Chapter 3 starts with an application of the operational code method to Vladimir Putin and continues with Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The belief systems of both leaders are revealed within answering Alexander George’s ten questions. The nature of political life is described as conflictual and contains injustice according to both leaders. They share the view that their states are under internal and external threats and their opponents are unfriendly and insidious. This makes them think suspiciously regarding the nature of political life. However, Putin’s focus on making Russia greater and Erdogan’s aim to reach the historical development goals of Turkey make them feel responsible and increase their trust in the state and people. Both leaders are complainant about the attitude of the Western powers to their countries. While cooperation is desirable, there are obstacles concerning the Western ignore to national interests of Turkey and Russia which makes the establishment of a sincere atmosphere of the relations harder. Erdogan’s complaint about the ineffectiveness of international institutions such as the UN Council (regarding international prosperity and security), Minsk Group (about Nagorno-Karabakh dispute), and the European Union (because of their unwillingness to give membership to Turkey and reluctance to provide efficacious solutions to Syrian refugees) should be also underlined here.

Both leaders are showing optimism to realize their fundamental values and aspirations. This makes them be more confident in showing an effective role to be in the history pages of their country. For example, Vladimir Putin’s achievement being a leader who led to the unification of Crimea and Russia definitely shaped Russia’s historical development. Predictability over the political future is moderate for Vladimir Putin and low for Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Both leaders believe that there is no place to chance and hard-working, rationality and experience will bring them success. Erdogan additionally puts attention on public support. Timing is crucial for them. They ready to accept risks in order to achieve their goals. While Putin prefers to be stable in his moves, Erdogan has a more flexible political understanding which provides him to have maneuvers in case of undesirable consequences. Both leaders agree on the resistance to Western suppression. Putin and Erdogan believe in the effectiveness of rhetorical means and use language to influence other actors.

The final part of Chapter 3 finalizes this study by taking into account operational codes of leaders and content analysis results of their statements and linking to the cases introduced in Chapter 2 in order to find causalities and measure effectiveness of agents and structures in bilateral relations.

Since the interests of the two states intersect in the military-economic field, structural factors predominate in the cooperation carried out here. Because the Russian and Turkish leaders are caught up in the flow of events, except for providing the necessary conditions such as diplomatic dialogue. Only in the S-400 air missile system purchasing deal, the Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan's agreement with Russia by taking a decisive attitude outside of Turkey's usual NATO-based military defense policy reflects the effectiveness of the agent.

While the Syrian war pushes two countries’ relations under question, it is undoubtedly clear that structural factors work here as well. As a result, Turkey and Russia have historical national interests in the Middle East region. These interests diverge at most points. However, the initiative of the leaders was to normalize the relations, as a result, a common solution was agreed on and they sat at the negotiation table by leaving the USA outside as they both wished.

Under the title of ‘other regional conflicts’, the Crimean crisis shows an important example of how agents are more effective than structures. Without a doubt, the Crimean Peninsula has historical and strategic importance in terms of both Turkey and Russia. Turkey does not recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea, for the reasons such as the security of the region, good relations with Ukraine, and the importance given to the Crimean Turks. Despite this, no concrete step has been taken to specify this position, and relations with Russia have not been affected as well. At this point, it is possible to argue that the tactics of Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan at this issue are more influential than structural factors on bilateral relations with Russia.

On the other hand, the Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020 shows how both agents and structures are shaping bilateral relations of Russia and Turkey. At this point, structural factors such as Turkey and Russia’s will to eliminate Western decision-making about the issue and two states’ geopolitical concerns and competition shaped the course of relations. However, the role of leaders should not be ignored as well. Again, like during the Syrian war, Turkey and Russia were not on the same front and despite that, did not face a serious confrontation since leaders were wishful to remain in good relations. Finally, they decided to establish the Turkish-Russian Joint Observation Center to act equally effectively in bringing solutions in order to build the peaceful future of the region.

According to the results obtained, the development and future of relations between Turkey and Russia are of great importance to their leaders that cannot be ignored. At this stage, while examining the bilateral relations, examining the leaders on the other hand will reveal an effective analysis. The use of more than one method at this stage will play an active role in achieving the desired results. By taking these points into account, it is important for future studies to use other effective leadership analysis methods to develop this research, to enrich the study with quantitative data, to move the relations part out of the high politics framework, especially to social areas. The importance of the relations between Turkey and Russia in the international arena, showing the possibility of establishing cooperation in every field despite the two powers' historical contests and conflicts, and underlining that this can be achieved especially with the initiative of the leaders, shows that the other opposing actors of the world can catch the same momentum. The effective development of politics and diplomacy in order to achieve the balance between national interests and international peace and prosperity will make the world a better place in every field, reduce concerns about the international arena and reinforce the future perspective with as little pessimism as possible.

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**APPENDIX**

**Appendix 1: Evolution of the dynamics of Russian- Turkish Relations (2000-2021)**

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| **11 September 2001: Terrorist attacks in the USA** | Both Russia and Turkey had close relations with the West at the early 2000s. Especially Turkey was remarkably close to become a member of the European Union. This level of relations with the West was unprecedented in Turkey’s recent history.[[354]](#footnote-354) After the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Organization in New York, both Ankara and Moscow have stated that they are ready to fight against international terrorism.[[355]](#footnote-355) Russia in general supported USA’s anti-terrorist policies. The developments in relations of Turkey and Russia with the West, affected positively their bilateral relations. When Turkey rejected a proposal, which allowed US troops to operate from Turkey during the war with Iraq, pushed Turkey to more independent position where it can act more multi-dimensionally. This helped Turkey and Russia built stronger ties.[[356]](#footnote-356) |
| **16 November 2001: “Action Plan Between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation on Cooperation in Eurasia”** | The first attempt in development of Russian-Turkish relations in early 21st century was the signature of “Action Plan Between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation on Cooperation in Eurasia” in 2001. This document created framework of the cooperation and mutual interests. With the new approach based on diversifying cooperation and relations in tourism, economy, energy fields and regional security issues, the relations reached the new and deeper level. Both countries expressed the will of establishment of the stabilization in following regions: The Black Sea region, Mediterranean region, Balkans, Iraq, Central Asia, Afghanistan, South Caucasia, Middle East, and Cyprus.[[357]](#footnote-357) Sides were not only oriented on bilateral relations, but they decided to develop strategies about international issues concerning both countries.[[358]](#footnote-358) |
| **3 November 2002: The Justice and Development Party has become leading political party of Turkey** | Turkish-Russian relations gained a new shift after Vladimir Putin’s consolidation of authority in Russia plus The Justice and Development Party has become a leading political party of Turkey in 2002.[[359]](#footnote-359) Under the control of the new leaders who took power in both countries, a new era has begun, in which centralized and powerful single-party governments were established. The historical ‘rival-enemy’ understanding of each other was abandoned, Turkey and Russia became ready to aim cooperation and see each other as strategic partners. Two states, preferred to concentrate on economic cooperation, focus on spreading friendship in Eurasia, and keep neutral about issues which can lead to sharp separation of their own interests.[[360]](#footnote-360)  The JDP has established Turkey’s multi-vector foreign policy in which Russian Federation possessed a key role. In December 2002, the chairperson of JDP Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Moscow and met President Vladimir Putin. Aftermath, two sides expressed their will to develop the relations and stable politic dialogue between Russia and Turkey has started. JDP, established stable governmental atmosphere in Turkey being only one leading party, which gave them opportunity to take political decisions in easier way. Russia and Turkey’s foreign ministries got closer and started to discuss issues in South Caucasus, Cyprus, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Middle East.[[361]](#footnote-361)  From a general perspective, it is observed that the field of Russian-Turkish relations expanded, political dialogue increased, social relations became widespread and mutual trust was tried to be strengthened in the early 21st century. It can be claimed that in the 2000s, both countries made good use of the opportunities they faced.[[362]](#footnote-362) |
| **24 December 2002** | The leader of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party Recep Tayyip Erdogan met President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. |
| **2003** | In 2003, there were official visits of the Foreign ministers of Turkey and Russia. |
| **23-26 February 2004: President Vladimir Putin and the minister of foreign affairs Abdullah Gul met in Moscow. They signed 4 protocols.** | Abdullah Gul came to Moscow with Turkish business elites and attended to business-forum. They discussed bilateral economic and military-technical cooperation. Also, topics such as passage of the Straits and fight-against-terrorism were included.[[363]](#footnote-363) |
| **5-6 December 2004: President Vladimir Putin met his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Necdet Sezer and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara. During the visit, the Joint Declaration on the Intensification of Friendship and Multidimensional Partnership was signed by the Presidents of both countries.[[364]](#footnote-364)** | Vladimir Putin’s visit was the first official visit of the President of Russian Federation to Turkey after 32 years. Strengthening friendship between Russia and Turkey was the primary aim of this visit.[[365]](#footnote-365) |
| **10-12 January 2005** | Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and some Turkish businesspeople visited Moscow and met President Vladimir Putin. [[366]](#footnote-366) |
| **17 July 2005: President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan met in Sochi.[[367]](#footnote-367)** | The meeting lasted for four and half hours and the leaders discussed cooperation in fields such as economy, energy, military, and regional politics. |
| **17-18 November 2005** | Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi participated in the official opening of the Blue Stream Gas Pipeline.[[368]](#footnote-368) |
| **2006-2007: Official visits** | During 2006 and 2007 there were more high-level visits in order to strengthen bilateral relations and develop cooperation in different fields. In June 2006, Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer visited Moscow. Chairpersons of the parliaments of both countries also met during this period of time. Foreign Ministers Sergey Victorovich Lavrov and Abdullah Gul met several times as well.[[369]](#footnote-369)  2007 was declared as “Russian Culture Year” in Turkey. Aftermath, Russia declared 2008 as a “Turkish Culture Year”. 2010 was the 90th anniversary of diplomatic relations and many scientific and cultural activities were held in both countries. Such steps brought relations to more intense position, because not only politics, but intellectuals and individuals were included in those interactions.[[370]](#footnote-370) |
| **2008: Conflict in South Ossetia. The Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform was an initiative to bring peace to Caucasian region brought by Turkey. Despite Russian support this initiative could not bring fruitful solutions.** | Tenses between Russia and the West rapidly increased when Russia invaded Georgia in August 2008 to support South Ossetia separatists. This situation in neighbor country worried Turkey too. Georgian War showed that Russia will not hesitate to use hard power when it comes to defend its interests regarding to close regions.[[371]](#footnote-371) But, during this period, Russia and Turkey were cooperating in the field of regional security as well. Both countries acknowledge that without stability reached in South Caucasus there is no way to speak about security of Eurasian region. With Turkish Premier Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s initiative, The Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform was established in which Turkey, Russia, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan were included. The platform, which was brought to the agenda as a regional structure, has been criticized for its allegations that it put Russia forward despite its aggressive position.[[372]](#footnote-372) Although it is a good example of Turkey’s constructive attempt to increase trust among member states, this initiative could not bring fruitful solutions.[[373]](#footnote-373) |
| **13 February 2009: President Dmitry Medvedev met Turkish President Abdullah Gul in Moscow. “Joint Declaration between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation on Progress towards a New Stage in Relations and Further Deepening of Friendship and Multidimensional Partnership” was signed.[[374]](#footnote-374)** | The new shift of Russian- Turkey relations occurred after official visit of Turkish President Abdullah Gul to Moscow at the beginning of 2009. Sides exceed from bilateral cooperation to strategic partnership after Presidents Gul and Medvedev signed “Joint Declaration between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation on Progress towards a New Stage in Relations and Further Deepening of Friendship and Multidimensional Partnership” in Kremlin.[[375]](#footnote-375) Two countries signed 12 documents in order to strengthen relations in economic, energy, science, and cultural spheres.[[376]](#footnote-376) |
| **12 May 2010: Russia and Turkey have established the High-Level Cooperation Council after signatures of the declaration by Russian President Medvedev and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.[[377]](#footnote-377) After Medvedev’s visit to Turkey around 25 treaties signed.[[378]](#footnote-378)** | The most important developments were the signature of a deal regarding to construction of nuclear power plant Akkuyu in Turkey and 30 days visa-free regime for Turkish and Russian citizens. Presidents Medvedev and Gul discussed economic cooperation, security issues (including global terrorism) and regional issues (South Caucasus, Black Sea region cooperation, Iran nuclear program, and Middle East).[[379]](#footnote-379)  One of the most crucial steps in institutionalization of the relationship was the establishment of The High-Level Cooperation Council. This mechanism acts as the guiding body in developing strategies in order to take bilateral relations into a new level and solve the problems quickly. The Council which meets annually, is multidimensional and discusses not only political, trade and economic projects but also facilitation of cultural and humanitarian cooperation among two countries.[[380]](#footnote-380) Under the Council, there is a Joint Strategic Planning Group in which foreign ministries of the countries discuss international issues, a Joint Economic Commission where economic issues are discussed, and a Turkish- Russian Social Forum in which attendance of civil society representatives is strengthen interaction among two states’ people.[[381]](#footnote-381) |
| **2011: With Arab Spring, bilateral relations have started to crack. President Vladimir Putin visited Turkey on December 3, 2012 and met Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.** | In 2010, Turkey has started to lose hope being a full member of the European Union. With the decline of relations with the West, Russia and Turkey’s paths started to converge.[[382]](#footnote-382) Although countries became closer after being considered as ‘outsiders’, relations became more fragile after 2010. Arab Spring changed crucially the international atmosphere and civil war in Syria brought Turkey and Russia into a new position in their strategic relationship. States were not that neutral about their own interests anymore, and they found themselves in opposing sides, trying to achieve balance of power on the ground. Russia became a supporter of President Bashar Assad, recognizing him as the only legitimate actor in Syria. On the other hand, Turkey backed ‘moderate Islamist opposition’ against Assad who in Ankara’s view, lost his legitimacy long time ago due to his harsh treatment to the opposition.[[383]](#footnote-383) This confrontation damaged Turkish-Russian relations significantly.[[384]](#footnote-384) On 18 February 2013, Russia adopted new foreign policy concept. According to it, Russia became more emphasized on its role in global economy and security, while spread of its unique civilization’s values around the world became even more important.[[385]](#footnote-385)  For Moscow, events in Syria were more crucial than in the other countries affected form the Arab Spring. From the Soviet times, Syria is Russia’s one of the most important military partner in the Middle East. Russia has a naval base in Tarsus since 1971 and two countries has strong trade connections.[[386]](#footnote-386)  Turkey’s foreign policy was reshaped by Ahmet Davutoglu (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey between 2009-2014, Prime Minister of Turkey between 2014-2016) who focused on Turkey’s responsibilities in the Middle East to restrain the dominance of West.[[387]](#footnote-387) According to Davutoglu, Turkey is at the ‘Out of the West’ civilization axis. Turkey’s hinterland is the Middle East. Turkey, as a successor of the Ottoman Empire, with its historical and geographical depth and responsibilities, is a significant actor in international relations.[[388]](#footnote-388) The JDP’s foreign policy radically changed after 2011. Ahmet Davutoglu’s foreign policy during the Arab Spring was the most (neo)revisionist foreign policy of Turkey since establishment of the Republic in 1923.[[389]](#footnote-389)  As the result, both Russia and Turkey realized that they are able to compete with the “Western hegemony”.[[390]](#footnote-390) |
| **2014** | Russia announced the TurkStream pipeline project in December 2014 in order to decrease natural gas transit through Ukraine and enhance security of supplement to Turkey which is Russia’s second biggest gas client after Germany. This decision was made after cancellation of the South Stream project, which aimed to supply Europe with Russian natural gas. Recession of the relations and West sanctions on Russia caused this cancellation. TurkStream project also was frozen during 2015 jet crisis. In October 2016, after normalization of Turkish-Russian relations, sides signed a deal on TurkStream.[[391]](#footnote-391)  Turkey has also negative views considering Russian intervention to Ukraine. Turkey’s view according to the referendum held in Crimea on 16 March 2014 is far from good. Ankara defined it as unlawful and illegitimate and underlined that Turkey will not recognize annexation of Crimea by Russia.[[392]](#footnote-392) |
| **24 November 2015: Russian aircraft Sukhoi Su-24 was shot down by Turkey near to Syrian border** | Tensions among Turkey and Russia sparkled when Russia decided directly intervene Syria in late September 2015. The downing of a Russian military jet by Turkey at Syrian border on 24 November 2015 completely destroyed the relations. Turkish F-16 fighter shot down Russian aircraft Su-24 on the grounds of violation of Turkish airspace.[[393]](#footnote-393) Since Korean War, it was the first NATO member who downed Russian military aircraft.[[394]](#footnote-394) After this, Russia applied sanctions against Turkey which resulted with the lost billions of dollars. Moreover, Turkey lost its effectiveness in Syrian War because of Russian S-400 air missile defense system which blocked Turkish planes to Syrian airspace.[[395]](#footnote-395) Plus, Russia accused Turkish government of having connection to terrorist organization ISIS. According to Kremlin, Turkey made a deal with ISIS for oil trade.[[396]](#footnote-396) |
| **2016: Normalization of relations after Russia has started to lift sanctions against Turkey** | Normalization process has started after President Erdogan’s letter of apology to the family of the Russian pilot on 27 June 2016. According to Russian authorities, President Erdogan was showing the condolences from the death of the pilot and he is ready to do whatever is possible to improve Turkish-Russian relations.[[397]](#footnote-397) After the coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016, Vladimir Putin expressed his full support to Erdogan which helped relations to improve again. Erdogan’s first overseas trip after the coup attempt was to Russia on 9 August 2016. Following months showed the partial restoration of agreement of visa-free movement between two countries, restrictions on Turkish companies were lifted and many other bans and embargos were ended. On 10th of October, the Intergovernmental Agreement was signed for the establishment of TurkStream gas pipeline. Moreover, Turkey got support from Russia to launch military operation in Syria named “Operation Euphrates Shield”.[[398]](#footnote-398) |
| **19 December 2016: The Russian Ambassador to Turkey Andrei Karlov was assassinated by an off-duty Turkish police-officer** | The case happened after protests in Turkey against Russia who supports Bashar al-Assad, President of Syria, and involved to Aleppo. Aftermath, Presidents Erdogan and Putin had a phone call and agreed that it was a ‘provocation’ aiming to harm relations of Turkey and Russia.[[399]](#footnote-399) |
| **30 December 2016: Ceasefire in Syria after Turkey, Russia, and Iran’s meeting** | The initiators of ceasefire in Syria were Turkey, Russia, and Iran. |
| **23 January 2017: The first of the Astana talks which aim to bring peace to Syria has started. Representatives of Syrian Arab Republic, Syrian opposition Turkey, Russia, Iran, and the UN have participated.[[400]](#footnote-400)** | The Astana talks were done in atmosphere where Turkey felt estranged from the United States because of their support for the People’s Protection Units (YPG) in Syria. YPG is considered by Turkey as the Syrian branch of PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party), with which Turkey is in a war for decades. Astana talks resulted with the draft for de-escalation zones but crucial disagreements concerning the future of Syria and Assad, future of the Kurds and Turkey-backed opposition were still existed. Turkey and Russia possess different views regarding to counterterrorism. While Russia considers Islamic extremism as the number one security issue, it fights both moderate and radical Islamists. YPG is the red line for Turkey, and they emphasize on countering this threat. Despite Putin’s will to keep his leverage over the Kurdish parties, Turkey took actions against YPG only after reconciliation with Russia.[[401]](#footnote-401) Turkey and Russia agreed on the creation of demilitarized buffer zone in Idlib in September 2018. After Turkish-Russian reproachment over Syria, Turkey softened its position against Assad and officially announced the start of low-level contacts with Damascus.[[402]](#footnote-402) |
| **2017: Turkey signed Russian missile deal (to supply Russian S-400 air defense missiles).** | Being a NATO member, Turkey signed a deal with Russia to buy S-400 surface-to-air missile-defense systems. Although the officials of the US warned Turkey, Erdogan announced in March that Turkey would receive the S-400 missile systems soon. This attempt shows that Turkey’s security cooperation with Russia is intensifying regardless Turkey’s position in NATO.[[403]](#footnote-403) |
| **April 2017: The minister of foreign affairs of Turkey Mevlut Cavusoglu said that Turkey has not make choice between USA and Russia.** | Turkish Foreign Minister Cavusoglu, in his review about Syrian war, underlined that Turkey is not obliged to make choice between the US and Russia. Turkey must follow its balanced policy. Also, he criticized that two superpowers compete over dominance of YPG (Turkey recognizes YPG as a terrorist group).[[404]](#footnote-404) |
| **2018: Russia criticized US for sanctions to Turkey because of Andrew Brunson case. Turkey did the same for sanctions imposed on Russia because of Crimea.** | In 2018, Russia did not leave Turkey without support regarding to Andrew Brunson case. Andrew Brunson is accused of spying for FETO (Fetullah Gulen’s Terrorist Organization) and PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) both considered as sources of terror in Turkey. He was arrested and sentenced to 35 years in prison. This caused crisis between the US -which claimed that Brunson is innocent- and Turkey.[[405]](#footnote-405) Sanctions were imposed by the US on Turkey. Russia criticized the US for those sanctions over Turkey.  It should be remembered that Turkey was not one of countries which imposed sanctions on Russia over Crimean crisis. Turkey also criticized them as being too harsh.[[406]](#footnote-406) |
| **August 2019** | Erdogan visited the International Aviation and Space Salon in Russia (MAKS-2019). There, he invited Vladimir Putin to the Aerospace and Technology Festival in Istanbul. Russian aircrafts Sukhoi SU-35S and SU-57 flew to Turkey to be exhibited in Teknofest. [[407]](#footnote-407) |
| **September, November 2020- Turkey and Russia became mediators in Nagorno Karabakh conflict of Armenia and Azerbaijan.** | Other regional conflict considering Turkey and Russia is the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. Turkey pursued a pro- Azerbaijani line and acknowledged Baku’s legitimacy over disputed territory. On the other hand, despite being Yerevan’s chief arm, military and credit supplier, Russia decided to stay neutral to both sides of the conflict.[[408]](#footnote-408) |
| **8 January 2021** | TurkStream gas pipeline was officially launched by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin. [[409]](#footnote-409) |

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347. Most frequently used words given in red color. “Syrian, everyone, very, of Turkey, process” were the most repeated words in Putin’s speeches considering Syrian War. Bold black color shows secondarily frequent used words: “I want, of course, of Russia, will be, president, political, our, necessary, job, security, we will”. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
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349. Most frequently used words given in red color. “Crimea, to Crimea, to Ukraine, Russia, today” were the most repeated words in Putin’s speeches considering Crimea. Bold black color shows secondarily frequent used words: “Federation, necessary, Russian, people, Sevastopol, Everyone, together, our, I want”. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Most frequently used words given in red color. “Crimea, Ukraine, Ukrainian, continue, strategic, together, Turkey” were the most repeated words in Erdogan’s speeches considering Crimea. Bold black color shows secondarily frequent used words: “we believe, country, Turkish, investment, defense, big, billion, our brothers. Russia, bilateral, significant, speeches, mutual, new, invitation”. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. Most frequently used words given in red color. “Russia, Armenia, Karabakh, sides, between” were the most repeated words in Putin’s speeches considering Nagorno-Karabakh. Bold black color shows secondarily frequent used words: “Actions, Turkey, Azerbaijan, life, view, conflict, question, year, Prime minister, relations, people, national, necessary, together, Minsk, can be”. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. Most frequently used words given in red color. “Turkish, Turkey, Azerbaijan, big, terrorism” were the most repeated words in Erdogan’s speeches considering Nagorno-Karabakh. Bold black color shows secondarily frequent used words: “our brothers, time, Caucasus, time, world, valuable, world, government, Arab, army, Azerbaijani, economic, Karabakh, Islam, significant, occupation”. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
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