



## Relations between Turkey and Russia in the Context of Energy Partnership

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### ABSTRACT

This article discusses issues of modern cooperation between Turkey and Russia in the context of energy diplomacy. The article deals with the issues of formation, development of key moments and important aspects of changing the energy strategy of Turkey and Russia. The main factors contributing to the rapprochement of bilateral relations, including relations on several topical issues of international relations, are identified. The question of the interdependence of the two economies is the main point of this study. As a methodological basis of the study, the authors used the methods of comparative-political and system-functional analysis of international relations and the world economy. The issues of the influence of the interdependence of the economies of Russia and Turkey on the political dialogue between the two countries are considered. The key points in bilateral relations, the main risks, and threats are analyzed. The prospects for the further development of relations are also considered. As threats, the points related to the bloc unity of Turkey and NATO, the status of the Crimea, and questions about the Black Sea straits were highlighted. The current state of relations between Ankara and Moscow are mutually beneficial, but repeated asymmetry is not excluded.

**Keywords:** Russia, Turkey, Energy Diplomacy, Gas Pipeline, Black Sea, Security, Foreign Policy, Cooperation

**JEL Classifications:** F5, O3

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the second half of the last century, the role and importance of the economic factor in world politics have increased, setting the pace for the development of modern international relations.

Today, Russia and Turkey are experiencing a new stage of bilateral relations, the events of recent years in world politics, the isolation of Russia, the complex relations between Turkey and Europe have led these countries to try to build new relations based on pragmatism.

The debate around the “Nord Stream 2” gas pipeline put Russia in a difficult situation, Moscow realizes that the implementation of this project is possible only with the full support of Berlin. Therefore, Russia sees Turkey as a partner through which it is possible to

pursue its energy policy. The unity of the positions of Moscow and Ankara on a number of issues may have an impact on the architecture of modern international relations. The confrontation with Kyiv gives Moscow a desire to minimize gas transit through the given country, but the issue of full suspension will not be considered, due to a number of factors including political and economic issues and questions about cultural commonality (Hill and Taspinar, 2006).

For Russia, the availability of energy resources and the supply of energy resources to the world market increases the importance of energy geopolitics. Turkey seeks leadership in the Middle East, and in the Muslim world as a whole. Not established relations of Turkey with Europe, Ankara strive to solve by putting pressure on it in matters of Syrian refugees. Opponents call Putin and Erdogan’s frequent contacts the union of two dictators. How strong

will the Russian-Turkish partnership be, and will it end with the change of power in both countries, or is the question of political unity a reflection of economic cooperation?

The purpose of this work is to analyze the prospects for relations between Russia and Turkey in the context of the interdependence of their economies, in particular, the energy sector. We will also try to find an answer to the question if the interaction between the two economies can give rise to strategic political cooperation in the modern world, or will one of the less dependent parties seek to asymmetry interdependence.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

As a methodological basis of the study, the authors used the methods of comparative-political and system-functional analysis of international relations and the world economy. The use of these methods allows us to consider the mechanisms for realizing the national interests of states as in the form of an integrated system of interactions between politics and economics.

The principle of historicism was also used, thanks to which it is possible to consider the issues of formation and development of bilateral relations and energy diplomacy of both countries.

### 2.1. Factors Contributing to the Beginning of a Close Relationship between Ankara and Moscow

The issue of the interdependence of the economies of countries and its influence on political relations is one of the important directions of the theory of international relations. The problems of the interdependence of the economies of the two countries and the degree of its influence on foreign policy, national security and the geopolitics of the state are the subjects of many schools of contemporary international relations (Demirbaş, 2001).

While realists argue that interdependence enhances the process of competition and conflict between states, liberal theories argue that interdependence can be the basis for cooperation under certain conditions.

Representatives of the political school of realism believe that dependence can be called “conditional,” since, in their opinion, for the relationship to be mutual, the price of breaking off relations or reducing mutual trade turnover should be the same for both parties.

The assumption underlying this assumption is that relative gain is more important than absolute gain. A party that benefits greatly from interdependence can change the balance of political and military power in its favor. Thus, asymmetric interdependence appears. Asymmetric interdependence is a structural factor that shapes the balance of power in the long run and can be used in the short run.

According to liberal theorists, dependence is not an inevitable element of the conflict, and even under certain circumstances, it promotes cooperation and peace between states. Contrary to a realistic approach that prioritizes relative benefits, the relationship

between interdependence and the essential in a liberal theory is an absolute advantage for the parties.

Growing economic interdependence can coexist with ongoing political conflicts and geopolitical rivalries. However, the opposing positions of Turkey and Russia in the context of the Syrian and Ukrainian crises show, however, that although such conflicts exist and interfere with political relations, they do not significantly undermine the seemingly strong economic relations created so far (Ibragimov, 2018).

The end of the Cold War gave rise to a new stage in relations between the two states, but despite this perception of mutual threat and geopolitical competition, Ankara and Moscow did not allow to fully build mutually beneficial relations in the 90s. In particular, relations were complex in view of the intensification of Ankara’s policy in the Black Sea-Caspian region, which Moscow considered to be a region of purely personal interests. The Caucasus and the Black Sea have long been a region of the frequent clash of interests between Russia and Turkey.

Russia and Turkey have different visions and approaches to solving the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, where Moscow and Ankara took opposing positions (Mikhelidze, 2010). Also, the next knot of contradictions was the Chechen company of Moscow at the end of the last century. Moscow’s suspicions about supporting Chechen militants by Ankara in the 1990s contributed to the growth of mistrust and tension between the two countries (Steshin, 2015).

Normalization of relations between the two states began in the second half of the 90s. Several factors contributed to the rapprochement of the two states, first of all, the change in the balance of power (Russia was losing the position of a military power), the change of power in both states, and geopolitical threats (primarily terrorism and increased US influence in the region after the Iraqi company of 2003) it was decided together.

The Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998 and the default of Russia that followed it contributed to Moscow’s revision of its policy towards Ankara in the first place, and this was also due to the policy of Turkey, which no longer saw a military and political threat in Moscow. Moscow was looking for new partners due to the need to overcome the economic crisis.

V. Putin’s victory in the presidential election of 2000 and the subsequent announcement of the new leader’s intention to improve relations with Ankara contributed to the beginning of a close dialogue between the two countries (Kiniklioğlu, 2001; Kiniklioğlu and Morkva, 2007).

Failures in the EU concerning membership policy in Turkey and internal problems contributed to the change of guidelines and the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party in 2002. The JDP program, which speaks of the idea of “zero problems with neighbors,” was the goal of building friendly relations with neighboring countries, which had a positive effect on relations with Russia (Larrabee, 2010).

The Iraqi company of the western coalition in 2003 created disagreements not only between Moscow and Washington but also between Turkey and the United States. In particular, the unexpected refusal of the Turkish parliament in March 2003 to provide an air corridor for American aircraft heading for Iraq (Gaber, 2013).

Shortly thereafter, Ankara and Moscow began converging their positions on security issues in the Middle East. For the Kremlin, rapprochement with Ankara was aimed at preserving the geopolitical balance in the region and trying to compensate for its losses after the events of 2003 in Georgia and 2004-2005 in Ukraine. And for Ankara, rapprochement with Moscow should have demonstrated a desire to distance itself from US policy in the region, which, in their opinion, would create chaos and instability.

Thus, in the first half of the 2000s, a new era of cooperation between both countries began.

## 2.2. Energy Strategy of Turkey

In the current context of globalization and the increasing interdependence of most states, the question of energy security arises. Turkey's energy balance is more dependent on imports. In this regard, the main factor in the future development of the country was the diversification of energy supply through the search for new suppliers.

Turkey, as a state with a strategic location between the regions of production and the market for energy consumption, plays an important role in world energy policy and diplomacy. The countries of the Middle East region and the Caspian Sea basin are the main producers of energy resources, in this energy region there are about three-quarters of the world's known natural gas and oil resources. European countries see Turkey as a natural bridge and an important factor in the process of ensuring energy security.

Complicated relations between Moscow and Brussels make Turkey an important player in the global energy game. The issue of diversifying Russian natural gas supplies to Europe cannot be resolved without the active participation of Ankara.

Understanding the importance of this situation and changed the strategy of Turkey's foreign policy in the twenty-first century. One of the points of the "Strategic Depth" doctrine, which became the ideological basis of the Turkish "Neo-Ottomanism" foreign policy doctrine, includes questions about the role of Turkey as a country playing a crucial role in the global economy.

Today, Turkey is able to control virtually all channels of the transit of energy resources to Europe, with the exception of Russian projects. But Turkey itself does not have its rich oil and gas fields. The country itself is an importer of energy resources.

The question of the new energy policy has been on the agenda of the Turkish governments since the late 80s. But then, in view of certain difficulties, first of all, the position of the political crises in the country did not allow to fully implement the revision of the energy strategy. Turkey received hydrocarbons primarily natural

gas from Iran, through the Trans-Balkan Pipeline from Greece, and in the form of liquefied gas from Algeria (Flanagan, 2013).

In the early 90s on the agenda of the Turkish foreign policy strategy was not the question of dominance in the Middle East region, Ankara had complex strained relations with the countries of the Arab East (Bilgin, 2009).

After the overthrow of the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the position of Tehran strengthened, and the north of the country, populated mainly by Kurds, almost became independent. To solve the problems of providing its fast-growing economy with energy resources, Ankara strives to become a bridge between Middle Eastern exporters and Western consumers. Despite the proclaimed policy of "zero problems with neighbors," Ankara went against the Assad regime in Syria. Turkey was counting on the speedy departure of Assad and the coming to power of pro-Western or Islamist groups, since official Damascus, under the influence of Moscow and Tehran, hampered the project to transport Qatari and Arabian gas to Europe through its territory. Tehran's position was connected with the reluctance of strengthening its geopolitical rivals in the Gulf, and Moscow does not want to get a new competitor in the European market (Barylski, 1995).

The collapse of the USSR and the independence of the Turkic republics contributed to the revision of the foreign policy doctrine of Turkey. First of all, in view of the cultural and linguistic community with the Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan, the Turkish foreign policy was turned in their direction.

The republics of the former USSR riched with hydrocarbons, in view of the process of disintegration in the post-Soviet space, were looking for alternative ways of transporting oil and gas. Turkey was one of the priorities for the transportation of oil and gas to the European market, bypassing the territory of Russia, which made it possible for Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan to avoid political and economic control from Moscow.

One of the first major projects was the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, which became an essential component of the East-West energy corridor. The first oil from the BTC pipeline was loaded onto a tanker on June 04, 2006, in Ceyhan, and after joining Astana on June 16, 2006, to this project, the geography of the export and project participants expanded. It should be noted that the implementation of this project was painfully perceived in Russia.

In 2011, Turkey gave preference to TANAP, pushing Nabucco into the background. After analyzing the capabilities of the Nabucco and the South European gas pipeline in this context, Turkey has given preference to the South European project. Turkey's relations with Russia have also received priority over its relations with the European Union. Turkey supported the position of Russia in discussions about whether South Stream is really a necessity or whether it is a lever in the hands of Russia against Ukraine (Çelikpala, 2013).

The project of the South Stream, signed by Turkey and Russia, gave Moscow an advantage in the energy confrontation with Ukraine.

According to the project, the South-European gas pipeline will have a throughput capacity of 63 billion cubic meters and allow Russia to supply natural gas directly to Europe through the Black Sea, bypassing Ukraine. Although after the events in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by Moscow, relations between Moscow and Brussels heated up, and the European Commission announced the suspension of this project, in response to this, President Putin announced that the project was completely abandoned, preferring the expansion of the Blue Stream, and the beginning preparation for the implementation of the Turkish stream (Bourgeot, 2013).

### 2.3. Energy Strategy of Moscow

Russia is one of the leading energy powers in the world. Moscow provides not only its internal needs but also largely covers the European energy market with its resources.

Russia has up to 40% of the world's proven gas reserves, 13% of oil reserves, and about 30% of estimated coal reserves. Energy supplies from Russia cover 80% of the needs of Ukraine, 100% of the Baltic states, over 50% of the countries of Eastern Europe (Shafranik, n.d.).

After the collapse of the USSR, the rise in energy prices had a strong influence on the development of Russia as a global player in the global economy. The wealth of energy has led to the formation of political stability and the ambitious policy of Moscow in the international arena. For this reason, energy is one of the factors shaping Russian foreign policy.

Since 1992, Russia's energy policy has passed a certain evolutionary path: from a complex transition period to a modern state, which is characterized as quite pragmatic in contrast to the ideologized Soviet era. A number of factors had a strong influence on the change of priorities in the energy strategy, and the period of fundamental changes falls on the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This period was characterized primarily by the restoration of the country's internal energy potential, and the beginning of building a new state policy on the pragmatic and effective use of the energy trump card in foreign economic and foreign policy purposes.

In the 90s of the last century, the difficult domestic political situation in the country did not allow Moscow to completely revise its energy doctrine. Despite the fact that, even after the collapse of the USSR, Russia remained an important player on the European market, the weakness of the economy, the loss of military power and, above all, the weakness of the political elite did not allow the use of energy potential (Shafranik, 1995).

Time after time gas disputes began to arise between Moscow and Kyiv since at the time of the collapse of the USSR 95% of gas pipelines for the export of natural gas from Russia to Europe passed through the territory of Ukraine.

One of the reasons for the revision of Russia's energy strategy was the "gas wars" with Ukraine, which developed from a default in the mid-1990s to a sharp political confrontation in the mid-2000s. This also contributed to the dynamic economy of the Asia-Pacific region. Russia traditionally perceives the territory of the former

USSR exclusively as its sphere of influence. The desire to maintain its dominance over Kyiv strengthened anti-Russian sentiments in Ukraine. Although at the end of his second term in power, Putin proposed the creation of a single oil and gas consortium of Russia and Ukraine, which would keep Kyiv under his control.

The new energy doctrine of Russia, calculated until 2020, expressed its desire to use natural resources to ensure political dominance on the continent (Yermekbayev et al., 2019a).

Only in the late 1990s, Moscow launched a number of major infrastructure projects designed to diversify the export of its energy resources both in the European and Asian sectors. Among them the commissioning of the Yamal-Europe gas pipelines (1999), Blue Stream (2002), Nord Stream (2011) and the LNG plant on Sakhalin (2009); the launch of the Baltic Pipeline System 1 and 2 (respectively, in 2002 and 2012), the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline with a branch to the PRC (2009); construction of oil export terminals on the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk and Pechora, construction of the Power of Siberia gas pipeline (Borovsky, 2012).

The beginning of the energy cooperation between Russia/the USSR and Turkey was laid back in 1984 with the signing of an agreement on the supply of natural gas to Turkey. But then Turkey considered the USSR as a geopolitical adversary, while supplies were made via the Trans-Balkan pipeline in the amount of 0.4 billion cubic meters (Kalugin, 2015). Close cooperation, rare for the two countries, began with the construction of a gas pipeline from Russia to Turkey along the bottom of the Black Sea. The shift in the focus of Russia's policy toward Turkey in the energy sector includes not only the transportation of natural gas but also the construction of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey.

At the moment, in view of the complicated relations between Russia and the EU, Turkey is the window to Southern Europe for Russian gas.

In 2018, gas exports from Russia to the European market doubled compared with 1991 and amounted to 201 billion cubic meters (Russia's gas, 2018).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Aggravation of Relations as a Test of Strength

After the events of November 24, 2015, relations between the two countries began a new round of confrontation, then the interdependence of the two countries to endure a severe test. In response to Ankara's actions, Moscow imposed asymmetric sanctions. Russia imposed unilateral economic sanctions, a ban on tour operators selling tickets to Turkish recreation areas, announced the cancellation of the visa-free regime between the two countries. Russia also imposed restrictions on a number of agricultural products and announced the cessation of activities of Turkish companies and began the expulsion of workers. But even despite the rigidity in the Kremlin's speeches, the question of suspending the construction of a gas pipeline to Turkey was not included on the agenda of the anti-Turkish sanctions. Turkey



received the support of NATO countries, but Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan accepted the position of Moscow (Svarin, 2015; White and Herzog, 2016).

First of all, Turkey raised the question of the appropriateness of Ankara's actions with respect to the Russian aircraft. Although in the early days of the escalation of relations, the Turkish leadership refused to offer official apologies to Moscow, and a number of high-ranking Turkish officials even claimed that they personally issued an order to liquidate the Russian SU-24.

Turkish business circles understood that the country's economy could be in a difficult situation, and the Turkish media often began to raise the question of whether Russia will block gas for Turkey.

Sanctions did not directly affect the gas flow, the perception of energy security in Turkey. In addition, they began to discuss issues of diversification of Russian gas supplies, the development of nuclear energy and the possibility of restoring energy supplies from the countries of the region. However, the worsening of relations between Riyadh and Doha, and the successes of the Syrian government forces with the help of Russia led to the fact that the prospects for the transit of Qatari gas to Europe via Turkey were unlikely.

To this end, on December 03, 2015, Prime Minister Davutoğlu arrived on a visit to Baku to reach an agreement with the leadership on the acceleration of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP).

The question of the normalization of relations with Israel, which have deteriorated due to the difference in approaches towards the future of Palestine and the Gaza Strip, was considered.

Although Russia reacted painfully to the actions of Ankara and called it "a stab in the back." Moscow realized that the conflict had to be settled since it would lead to multibillion-dollar losses, as well as a loss of the market, to break off relations with Ankara. The interdependence of the two economies became the basis for political cooperation by pushing into the background plan of geopolitical ambitions.

At the end of 2017, Turkey became the second country in terms of supplies of Russian gas, with the primacy of Germany and the third position of Italy (Dynamics, 2017).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Energy diplomacy occupies an important place in today's Russian and Turkish foreign policy. This direction of diplomacy shows its effectiveness both in the region and in bilateral relations.

Russian energy diplomacy has three main characteristics. First, Russian companies of the fuel and energy complex are under state protection. Secondly, the Russian energy policy is focused on a regional basis. Third, the transformation of the comparative advantage in the field of energy into a political and economic advantage.

Russia, through energy diplomacy, conducts its foreign policy. Projects of gas pipelines and oil pipelines, which are and which are planned, are designed to strengthen its influence in the world and the dependence of countries on Russian supplies. Based on this, the European Union and the United States will not allow the "Nord Stream-2" project to earn at full power, without a safety net (Tekin and Williams, 2011).

If the sanctions are not relaxed in the short term, Russia will strive to move to the Asian market. The complex relations between Ankara and Brussels are beneficial for Russia, and given this factor, Moscow seeks to demonstrate Turkey's unity in international affairs, expecting a similar action in return. But in the matter of choosing between the energy partner and the bloc unity, Ankara chose the latter (The UN General Assembly, 2018). This position of Ankara causes concern to Moscow, and possible leverage of pressure may be the support of the Tehran-Baghdad-Damascus Shiite triangle.

Russia and Turkey are cooperating in Syria, but this cooperation can be viewed as a demonstration of the unity of intentions in bilateral political relations since both countries see the future of Syria differently. If Moscow benefits from maintaining the current status quo, which will allow Russia to dominate the European energy market for some time. Ankara seeks to strengthen its influence, by controlling the northern regions of the pro-Turkish militants.

Now Russia and Turkey are experiencing serious difficulties in the international arena, often these difficulties are the result of the geopolitical ambitions of the two states. The deterioration of relations between the two states with the US and the EU pushed Moscow and Ankara to close cooperation (Yermekbayev et al., 2019b).

For Turkey, Russia is a reliable supplier of natural gas for its booming economy. Cooperation with Moscow will allow Ankara to have a trump card in relations with the EU and the United States.

Turkey will strive to diversify gas supplies from Russia, as the events of 2015 showed that interdependence and balance in bilateral relations could be broken in the direction of Moscow's dominance. The current needs of the Turkish economy in natural gas is 53 billion cubic meters. m of them, Russia accounts for 29 billion cubic meters which are more than half. The commissioning of the gas pipeline from Azerbaijan will reduce the volume of Russian supplies by 6 billion m<sup>3</sup>/year, and the connection of Turkmenistan to the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline in the future may reduce its dependence on Moscow (Yermekbayev et al., 2019c).

Turkey is also not interested in the escalation of relations between Moscow and Brussels, in the event of an escalation of relations or matters of NATO expansion to the east, it can take the opposite side to Washington.

The current state of relations between Ankara and Moscow are mutually beneficial, but repeated asymmetry is not excluded, now from Turkey, since Turkey has other levers of influence on

Russia, besides the Crimea, this is the question of the Black Sea straits, because in 2036 the Montreux Convention will expire from 1936, and Ankara will have advantages in possible disputes with Moscow.

As you know, today the ties between Russia and Turkey in the energy sector are determined by the energy security of the two countries. For Russia, the Turkish market is one of the new and promising areas, we consider it obvious that the current international situation around Moscow is beneficial to Ankara.

Ankara's energy strategy provides for the transformation of Turkey into a promising South European energy hub, therefore it is beneficial for Turkey to transport gas from Russia and Azerbaijan through its territory, in the future the possibility of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan joining this project will expand cooperation within the framework of the Turkic Council.

If Turkey has the opportunity to fully develop the proposed gas fields in Northern Cyprus, Ankara is expected to become not only a transit country but also one of the largest suppliers. The energy strategy of Turkey in the long term involves the discovery of ways to transport gas produced from deposits in the Mediterranean and the Lebanese economic zone of Egypt through its territory.

In the context of economic sanctions for Russia, the expansion of the Turkish market has become a guarantee of economic stability. Russia intends to prevent economic competition, since until 2018 Moscow did not allow the construction of the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline, preventing the resolution of the status of the Caspian Sea law. It can be said that other gas projects that have the opportunity to travel through Turkey, especially in Syrian projects, should the situation in Syria and Lebanon stabilize.

One of the possible threats to the energy security of Russia contributed to a possible hindrance to gas supplies from Central Asia and the Persian Gulf through Turkey to Europe and the implementation of Russian projects. The Russian project "Turkish Stream" will allow Moscow to develop the markets of Southern Europe and the Balkans, merging with Anka. Maintaining a symmetrical relationship in bilateral energy communication is one of the priority areas for Moscow and Ankara, it provides for the prevention of possible factors that can lead to asymmetric ones, from Russia it is Turkey's nuclear energy sector, an alternative to the gas of the Caucasus and Central Asia to Russian gas for Ankara. Besides, we consider it possible to include our gas fields in production.

Russia and Turkey are a sign of a dynamically developing strategic partnership, despite the political events of 2015.

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