

The Return of President Putin and Russian–Turkish Relations: Where Are They Headed?

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Abstract

By the time of Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency of Russia in May 2012, the Russian–Turkish *rapprochement* that began over a decade earlier had become a significant fixture of the Eurasian landscape. Nonetheless, numerous questions remain about the nature of the relation, implications for the region of western Eurasia, and its likely future directions. Four general characteristics of the bilateral relation have emerged, and recognizing them enables a deeper understanding of the opportunities and limits likely to be afforded, for Russia, Turkey, and the region: (a) pragmatism, (b) a multivector approach to the bilateral relation, (c) commonalities despite contradictions, and (d) durability even despite episodic antagonism. The Russian–Turkish *rapprochement* has become a defining feature of the Eurasian landscape, but remains an unequal one, on several counts: energy resources, geopolitical strength, military capability, and underlying demographics. Nonetheless, various factors make a deepening *rapprochement* likely: mutual desirability of increased trade, wariness toward the West, Turkey's pursuit of a “no enemies” foreign policy, Russia's interest in regional great-power status, and common interest in regional conflict resolution.

Keywords

Russia, Turkey, Eurasia, Putin, Erdoğan

The Caucasus Cooperation Pact is important. The United States is our ally. But Russia is our strategic neighbor. We buy two-thirds of the energy we need from Russia. That country is Turkey's number one partner in trade . . . No one must expect us to ignore all that. Our allies must adopt an understanding approach.

—Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, September 2008
(*Hürriyet*, 2008)

Background

Relations between Russia and Turkey improved remarkably in the early 21st century, signaling an important shift away from a very long tradition of distrust, regional competition, and frequent outright hostility, including more than 15 major wars between the Russian and Ottoman Turkish Empires from the 17th to 20th centuries. Will this trend continue, and perhaps more importantly—*where are Russian–Turkish relations headed?* Increased attention has been devoted to these changes by policy makers and academicians, particularly since the August 2008 Russia–Georgia conflict.¹ Since 2000, the number, frequency, and earnestness of high-level Russian–Turkish meetings have all steadily increased, with more and more pronouncements from both sides about the significance of the relation and the need to expand it further.

In fact, the Russian–Turkish *rapprochement* of the 2000s represented a significant shift in the regional landscape, and in numerous dimensions: geo-strategically, economically, and even in the realm of cultural exchange and bilateral civil society engagements. One commentator recently offered that the bilateral relationship has become “one of the pillars of security in Europe” (Trenin, 2013, p. 37). Others are not so sure: Flanagan (2013) recently concluded “Turkey–Russia relations have reached a difficult turning point. Both governments are seeking to insulate mutually beneficial economic and energy ties from mounting political tensions, but this is becoming increasingly difficult,” and also offering that the present circumstances are “testing the limits of strategic partnership” (pp. 169, 166). Clearly a number of important questions remain concerning the nature, consequences, and likely future directions of the Russian–Turkish bilateral relation. This essay addresses these matters by exploring four key and defining traits of that relation.

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By the time of the onset of Dmitry Medvedev's presidency of Russia in May 2008, Russian–Turkish relations had been in a near-decade long period of continued improvement; this coincided with robust economic growth in both countries (above 7% average annual growth in each). By the time of Vladimir Putin's return to the Russian presidency in May 2012, several characteristics of the bilateral relation had become apparent. There are four characteristics: (a) pragmatism; the relation is notably devoid of ideological reference points, let alone a grand, overarching theme; (b) multivectored patterns of relations, with several themes having an intertwined nature; (c) a number of commonalities that are not immediately apparent on the surface, but are evident on closer scrutiny; (d) a deliberate, studied durability even in the face of serious jolts that, if the previous three characteristics did not obtain, might otherwise seriously jeopardize the relation. These four characteristics are all intertwined; understanding how they came about, and how they are intertwined, will shed significant light on the present state of Russian–Turkish relations. That light, in turn, will enable a more reasoned assessment of the likelihood of success and progress in various domains of regional and even global concern.

The Russian–Turkish rapprochement is said to have emerged from a “solid base of mutual respect” and led to “something that may be close to a real security community” (Trenin, 2013, p. 37). As we shall see below, this mutual respect has both engendered, and in turn has been strengthened by, the four defining traits of the Russo–Turkish rapprochement noted above. We consider each of these below in some detail, beginning with perhaps the most fundamentally defining trait of pragmatism that, as shall become clear, has derived from the changed contours of Russian and Turkish public opinion, and to some degree also from the shifted nature of political identity in Russia and Turkey.

Pragmatism

Turkey and Russia have based the bilateral relation on a pragmatic, practically effective way of maximizing their mutual advantages while working around their differences (more on this below). Significantly, the relation is built on cooperation on matters that are important to each side, and on which practical progress is possible; it is notably devoid of specific ideological drivers such as Marxism–Leninism, radical Islam or religion in any form for that matter, and perhaps oddly, largely devoid of nationalistic impulses from either side. The focus, rather, is on what works for each side, and from a remarkably straightforward and practical perspective. This trait brings with it numerous advantages for each side, foremost of which is the flexibility and diplomatic openness to mutually pursue numerous ventures in strikingly distinct domains (e.g., tourism, energy, security matters, etc.) without running into snags that might otherwise present themselves if the relation were shaped and conditioned by specific political or even religion-based

ideological frameworks. Such pragmatically based flexibility has in turn served as the foundation for the second trait: a complex, multivectored orientation rather than a single dominant focus.

Pragmatism and Public Opinion in Russia and Turkey

Are improved bilateral relations significant to the Turkish and Russian publics? Although specific points of international relations may not play heavily in the day-to-day political consciousness of the citizenry of either country, it is not likely that the dramatically improved relations between Turkey and Russia in the 2000s could have occurred in the presence of deep and broad patterns of popular distrust or animosity. But they could certainly have been possible in the presence of broadening popular perceptions of diminished threat perception, and this is viewed as the key factor enabling greater Russian–Turkish cooperation by the latter 1990s (Aktürk, 2006). Contemporary evidence does point toward the conclusion that *Turks do not perceive Russia to be a major external threat to Turkey* (Table 1). Russian citizens likewise expressed little if any sense of threat from Turkey in this time period (Table 2). While these data, and those on the subsequent tables, are hardly comprehensive and therefore do not serve as a foundation for firm, definitive conclusions about mass perceptions in Turkey and in Russia, they do provide a small measure of empirical evidence to help explain the larger patterns of Russian–Turkish relations over the past decade or so.

Instead of feeling threatened, a strong majority of Turks (70%) surveyed in 2011 favored *increased political relations* with Russia; 76% favored increased *economic ties* with Russia (Akgun, Gundog̃ar, G̃orgulu, & Aydın, 2011). Moreover, a 2012 survey by Kadir Has University indicated that Turkish citizens rank the United States and Israel as the top countries that are perceived as threats to Turkey; remarkably, Russia is at the bottom of the threat list. The question was posed “Which countries are posing threats to Turkey?” The United States tops the list at 69.9%, Israel is second at 52.8%, and Russia is at the bottom at 30.9% (*2012 Türkiye Sosyal-Siyasal Eğilimler Araştırması*, 2013). These data also demonstrate that the Arab Spring and general turmoil in the Middle East did not have a pejorative effect on Turkish people's view of Russia.

Survey data also indicate that Russian citizens did not feel threatened by Turkey during the 2000s. In *Eurobarometer* surveys, Turkey does not even appear on the list of countries from among which to choose as potential threats to Russia (Table 2). Although “Islamic countries” could have included Turkey in the minds of some respondents, there is no indication that Turkey was reckoned as one such threat; rather, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and so on were more likely viewed as threatening, but this cannot be determined from Table 2.

Table 1. Which Country Poses a Threat to Turkey? (“Türkiye’yi en çok hangi ülke tehdit ediyor?”).

	August 2009	December 2005	October 2004
1. United States	25.45	29.80	28.10
2. Israel	15.64	13.00	10.20
3. France	12.09	11.40	2.50
4. Armenia	10.36	6.00	14.00
5. Greece	7.00	10.20	17.90
6. Russia	6.45	2.80	3.40
7. Great Britain	5.27	7.40	10.00
8. [South] Cyprus	4.82	5.00	9.50
9. Iraq	4.09	4.30	2.25
10. Germany	1.82	0.00	0.00

Source. USAK Dis Politika Algılama Anketi (Foreign Policy Perception Survey), International Strategic Research Organization, August 2009.

Table 2. Perceived Threats to Russian Security.

Do You Think That Any of the Following Countries Could Be a Substantial Threat to the Security of Russia?

	% perceiving some or big threat					
	2000a	2000b	2001	2003	2005	2007
United States	49	45	48	48	49	54
National minorities	44	56	44	47	48	30
Immigrants/refugees					37	24
Germany	15	18	11	11	17	14
Islamic countries				38		
China			22	31		
Iraq	25		18			
EU	23		18			
Ukraine	10		8			

Source. www.russiavotes.org; New Russia Barometer VIII, IX, X, XI, XIV, XV.

Thus diminished threat perception was fundamental for the post–Cold War improvement in bilateral relations, but in and of itself would not necessarily have engendered the continually elevated importance of such relations - other factors were also operative, and those appear to have become increasingly salient as the Cold War antagonisms between Russia and Turkey receded into the past. Increased commercial and general economic relations also occurred simultaneously, and appear to have contributed to the deepening and expansion of cultural ties: 2007 was officially “The Year of Turkey” in Russia, and 2008 was likewise “The Year of Russia” in Turkey. PM Erdoğan previously accepted Putin’s proposal to establish a joint Russian–Turkish University to reinforce ties in an array of domains (*Yeni Şafak*, 2009).

Another indicator for diminished threat perception is the lifting of visa requirements between the countries as of April 2011 (*RiaNovosti*, 2011). Furthermore, increased military-related trade has also materialized, again reflecting diminished threat perception (Çetinkaya, 2009; Holtom, Bromley, Wezeman, & Wezeman, 2013; Kemal, 2008). As Richard Sakwa noted tersely and correctly in 2010, “Russo-Turkish

rapprochement has particular appeal for the Russian military” (Sakwa, 2010, p. 20). This aspect of the rapprochement, however, raises questions about the changing disposition of Turkish foreign policy and its relation with the West.

Turkey’s Quest for Balance: The Triangle of The West, Russia, and Turkey

The Russian–Turkish rapprochement occurred in a broader global context of strained relations with the West in general and the United States in particular, on the part of both Russia and Turkey, although for somewhat different reasons. Cornell and Karaveli perceive a link between Turkey’s relations with Russia and with the West, reflecting an increasingly nuanced balancing act by Turkey (Cornell & Karaveli, 2008). Kiniklioğlu characterizes the Turkish–Russian partnership as “inherently defensive in nature,” occasioned partly by deteriorated relations between Russia and the West, and partly by Turkey’s strained relations with the West in general and the United States in particular: “[u]ltimately, what will

Table 3. How Do You [Russians] Feel About the United States?

	August 99	October 01	March 03	March 04	January 09	March 09	July 09	September 09	January 10
Very good	5	7	3	5	2	2	2	3	4
Mostly good	44	54	35	48	36	44	45	50	50
Total Good	49	61	38	53	38	46	47	53	54
Mostly bad	22	22	37	26	34	31	29	27	25
Very bad	10	5	18	10	15	9	10	6	6
Total bad	32	27	55	36	49	40	39	33	31
Don't know	18	12	7	11	13	14	14	14	15

Source. The Levada Center (formerly VCIOM) surveys, 1999-2010, accessed from www.russiavotes.org.

determine the course of Russian–Turkish relations is the quality of their relationship with the West. Their sense of alienation from the West has brought them closer” (Engdahl, 2009; Kınıklıoğlu, 2006, p. 20).

Significantly, Turkish public opinion about the United States took a negative turn in the 2000s:

[f]ewer than one in 10 Turks (9%) have a positive view of the United States, a drop of 21 points from the already low level in Pew’s 2002 survey. More than four out of five (83%) say their attitude is unfavorable, including 75 percent who feel very unfavorably. (*World Public Opinion*, 2007)

Furthermore, such perceptions were widespread in an otherwise deeply divided society: “[i]n short, all segments of Turkish society as well as the state have become intensely critical of American policies to an extent that has not been seen before” (Güney, 2008, p. 484). Another observer notes that anti-American sentiments among the Turkish public rose to “record levels” in the 5 years after the United States invaded Iraq; while not causative to improved Russian–Turkish relations, Turkey’s domestic climate certainly created more fertile political soil for the Turkish leadership to proceed in doing so (Türkmen, 2009, pp. 109-129).

In Russia, by contrast, no great change in public opinion toward the United States occurred from the latter 1990s until early 2010, with slightly over half the population positively disposed toward the United States, less than one-third negative, and the rest being undecided (Table 3; Levada Center, 2010).

Was Turkey pursuing closer relations with Moscow as a reaction to the increasing strain of relations with the West, and especially with the United States? A variety of views exist on this question, but Aylin Güney views the Turkish–Russian rapprochement as having occurred more or less independently of the rise in anti-American sentiments in Turkey during the 2000s (Güney, 2005, 2008).³ Nonetheless it was clear by the end of the 2000s that Turkey was in search of a new type of balancing act between Russia and the West. This was manifested by the visits of President Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan to Moscow in summer 2009, the reciprocal visit of Prime Minister Putin to Turkey, August 6 to 7, and in the comments of Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu in

June 2009 in Washington, D.C., explicitly calling for such a balance (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009). He proposed that trade with the United States be expanded, as it had been so outpaced by trade relations with Russia. This was said despite the 2008 Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ comment, “the high level of economic relations between Turkey and Russia has become the most important component of our bilateral multidimensional relations” (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010a). Not everyone in Turkey was favorable, however, and some regarded Russia’s behavior toward Turkey as having an element of politically manipulative maneuvering. Given Turkey’s energy dependence on Russia, this is hardly surprising (Kardas, 2009a).

Thus the Turkish leadership sought balance, not only in terms of its relations with Russia and the West, but also in terms of its relation with Turkish *society*, and it is this dimension of the Russian–Turkish rapprochement that is perhaps most often overlooked. How does Russia compare in this regard, and with what consequence for its relations with Turkey? Within Russia, domestic economic and political forces clearly favored closer ties with Turkey; for example, in an interview with *RIA-Novosti* (Russia’s state-news agency) in early 2008, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin offered the following in response to queries about the sources, content, and direction of Russian–Turkish relations:

Economic and trade ties have in the last decade become one of the main engines of development of relations between our countries. In 2007 the reciprocal trade turnover amounted to more than 20 billion dollars. Energy cooperation keeps expanding. The volume of Russian natural gas supply to Turkey in 2007 exceeded 23 billion cubic meters, including 9 billion cubic meters via the unique trans-Black Sea gas pipeline Blue Dream. Good prospects for cooperation exist in the field of nuclear energy. Turkish contract companies are carrying out an extensive scope of work on the territory of Russia. Over the last decade they have concluded contracts worth more than 17 billion dollars. The overall level of Turkish direct investment in Russia exceeds 5 billion dollars. The last few years have seen a noticeable increase of the interest of Russian investors for investing in the growing Turkish economy. A considerable potential for cooperation exists in the area of military-technical cooperation and in a number of other high technology fields.

Question: How are Russian–Turkish ties developing in other fields?

Answer: Bilateral contacts are actively developing in the areas of humanitarian and cultural ties and tourism. In 2007 events and activities were successfully held as part of the Year of Russian Culture in Turkey. A Year of Turkish Culture in Russia is in turn planned to be officially opened in April of this year with the participation of Turkey’s Minister of Culture and Tourism (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008).

Furthermore, Weitz (2010) correctly concluded,

Russia has taken care to cultivate key business sectors in Turkey through enticing offers of energy and commercial partnership. Perhaps more important, however, have been the variables that have been driving Turkey away from the West, including strains with Israel and Washington and, most important, a sense that the EU is not serious about admitting Turkey into its ranks. Ankara will continue to look eastward as long as the EU continues to treat Turkey as a non-European state. (p. 85)

This raises the matter of the changed character of Russian and Turkish *political identity* in the past several decades in a manner that has come to serve as an important aspect of the foundation of pragmatism as a defining trait of the bilateral relations. To that theme we turn.

Political Identity and Civil Society: The Domestic and Foreign Policy Link

Political identity within Turkey and Russia has recently shifted in a manner affecting their foreign policies in general and specifically their bilateral relation. In Turkey, the reduced level of threat perception concerning Russia reflected a profound shift in thinking about national security: the 1997 *National Security Concept* identified threats stemming from radical Islam and Kurdish separatism as paramount (Yanik, 2007). This presented new problems, however, for domestic and foreign politics: could the regime’s “no ethnic minorities” orientation continue indefinitely, and if any openings were made to the Kurds, could their demands be contained? In addition, the meaning of Turkey’s constitutionally mandated “secular state” became problematical in the face of rising domestic religiosity and the threat of radical Islam (Warhola & Bezci, 2010). Given Russia’s experience with Chechnya, both of these points were not small considerations, particularly because the Chechen drive for independence did not begin as a religiously driven conflict, but became one over time (Kelkitli, 2008). In addition, a counterterrorism agreement between Turkey and Russia in 1999 had a dramatic impact on each country’s perception of the other regarding their respective terrorist threats; Russia signed a similar counterterrorism agreement with Azerbaijan in 2003. Such issues of security and identity deeply intertwined domestic and foreign politics because Turkey was simultaneously deepening

its democratic character—an increasingly engaged public that was increasingly religious doubtless effected foreign policy considerations (Bayramoğlu, 2009).

Turkey’s attempted resolution of these two axes of domestic conflict (the nature of secularism and the Kurdish issue) had profound implications for its general foreign policy, and in a way that directly shaped its relations with Russia. Marlène Laruelle identified a shift within Turkey, at least among some Turkish scholars, in the conception of Eurasia itself:

[i]n the 1990s, articles on the Turkish variety of Avrasya systematically criticized Russian Eurasianism; in the early 2000s, the tone changed noticeably. Several Turkish advocates of a more militant Eurasianism called upon their fellow citizens to emulate Russia in developing a specifically Turkish interpretation of this concept. (Laruelle, 2008, p. 7)

Nonetheless, the viewpoint of these advocates was not the only concept of Eurasia to have emerged in Turkey, and two such groups arguably emerged—one of them is more along the lines of “classical” Turkish nationalists who conceive of Eurasianism based on Turkic identity and consider Russia a threat, and the second a more left-leaning group whose “Eurasianism” considers Russia more of a partner than threat.⁴ This second group appears to have prevailed. In any case, however, the Turkish citizenry was increasingly satisfied with the AK Party’s foreign policy: those who “found it successful” rose to nearly 50%, while those indicating “no” dropped from above 52% to 27% from December 2005 to August 2009 (USAK-ISRO, 2009).⁵ Also in 2012, although there was an effect of the turmoil by the Arab Spring, 61.8% “somewhat favored” the AK Party’s foreign policies (*Türkiye Sosyal-Siyasal Eğilimler Araştırması*, 2013).

The shift toward a more “Eurasianist” orientation in Turkey was not only related to the rapprochement with Russia, but within Russia itself a similar shift is argued to have occurred (Laruelle, 2008, p. 7). A generally pro-Western orientation prevailed in Russian foreign policy until early 1996, when the appointment of Primakov as Foreign Minister reflected a shift toward a more Eurasianist orientation (Mankoff, 2012; Tsygankov, 2010). This “Eurasianist” orientation was expressed and strengthened all the more in president Putin’s June 2000 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2000):

Along with certain strengthening of the international positions of the Russian Federation, negative tendencies are in evidence as well. Certain plans related to establishing new, equitable and mutually advantageous partnership relations of Russia with the rest of the world, as was assumed in the Basic Principles of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation . . . [April 23, 1993], and in other documents, have not been justified.

This statement was clearly a jab at the West (particularly the United States) following the NATO bombing of Serbia on behalf of Kosovo in March 1999 and it signaled, among other things, a determination in Russian foreign policy to pursue a more Eurasianist orientation, certainly including the cultivation of closer ties with Turkey. Putin's "Eurasianism" appears to have been somewhat different from that of Primakov's, reflecting the substantial changes in Russia and its foreign policy from the mid-1990s to the inauguration of Putin in May 2000. While both were reactive against Russian dependence on and subordination to the West, Primakov's Eurasianism appears to have been more toward actively cultivating closer ties with major Asian powers, while Putin's was arguably more regionally balanced; Putin's was more toward asserting Russia as a major world power, whereas Primakov's was to build a more "statist" foreign policy from which Russia might resume such status (Tsygankov, 2013, pp. 233-235).

By 2008, Russia had largely recovered from the 1990s' debilitation, and political, economic, and military alignments had shifted substantially in Eurasia; along with a dramatically increased U.S. and Western presence as a result of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the Russian-Turkish rapprochement had by this time progressed far along. Shortly after the 5-day war between Russia and Georgia, president Medvedev outlined five principles to guide Russian foreign policy, evidently intending to update the 2000 Foreign Policy Concept (Reynold, 2008). Perhaps the most germane to this article is Point 3—"no isolation." Given Russia's substantially changed condition in autumn of 2008 compared with the latter 1990s, this only makes sense if one considers the domestic context of Russian foreign policy in general. During the 1990s, survey data from the Levada Center indicated a popular preference for Russia to focus more on domestic considerations and especially on raising living standards, as opposed to building up Russia's place among global political and military actors. By the latter 2000s, however, an overwhelming majority of polled Russians (82%) opined that Russia should "strive to become the most influential country in the world" (ViTSIOM, 2008). In this respect, the Medvedev-Putin point about "no isolation" would strike a responsive chord in Russian public opinion. In any case, however, levels of political efficacy among citizens in Russia are not particularly high, especially in comparison with their perceptions of how much citizens can "control state authorities" in the Western world (Table 4).

Perhaps even more revealing is the very high proportion of Russian citizens who are convinced that they simply cannot "influence state decisions" in their country (Table 5).

In Turkey, the influence of domestic forces on foreign policy appears even more complex than in Russia, but include a stronger civil society⁶ capable of more powerfully influencing the direction of foreign policy than is the case in Russia, and especially since the rise to power of the AK Party in 2002. A TEPAV (2008) survey regarding Turkish citizens'

Table 4. Russian Public Opinion—Citizen Control of State Authorities.
In Your Opinion, How Can Citizens of the Developed Western Countries Control Activity of the State Authorities?

Definitely yes	12
Yes, rather than no	45
No, rather than yes	15
Definitely no	8
Difficult to answer	19

Note. January 2008; N = 1,600.

In Your Opinion, How Can Citizens of the Developed Western Countries Control Activity of the State Authorities?

Practically to the full extent	6
To a great extent	18
To a limited extent	28
Cannot do it at all	39
Difficult to answer	10

Source. Levada Analytical Center, "Russian Public Opinion—March 2008 to March 2009," accessed from <http://webfile.ru/file?id=3745608#>.

Note. January 2008; N = 1,600.

Table 5. "Do You Think That People Like You Can Influence State Decisions in This Country?
Can You Influence Decision in Your Region, City, or District?"

	Country (%)	Local (%)
Definitely yes	1	2
To some extent	12	16
(Total yes)	13	18
Probably not	34	34
Definitely not	51	46
(Total no)	85	80
Don't know	2	2
Total:	100	100

Source. Levada Center, nationwide survey, 26 February to 2 March 2010, N = 1,600; Accessed from http://www.russiavotes.org/national_issues/engagement.php#638

perception toward state services and authorities indicates 66.8% regard the authorities as responsive. Moreover, media and other civil-society-type groups such as TUSİAD, TOBB, and particularly the Gülen movement, may be even more influential in foreign policy than among general public opinion (Aras, 2009; Kirişci, 2012; *The Economist*, 2010). The Gülen movement established Turkish schools in Russia, Central Asian republics, and in Africa. Pressures from various business groups, and specifically TOBB, led the Turkish government to change Turkish currency regulations and initiated opportunities to engage in trade with Russia in terms of the ruble conversion rate (*Hürriyet*, 2009).

Similar to Russia's active expansion of influence in Eurasia, Turkey pursued an active but "zero-problem"

Table 6. Name the Five Countries Which You Would Regard as the Most Unfriendly and Hostile to Russia.

Georgia	41%
Latvia	25%
Lithuania	25
United States	35
Estonia	22
Ukraine	15

Source. http://www.russiavotes.org/security/security_russia_place.php#386

approach to relations with geographically close neighbors (Davutoğlu, 2001). In a speech in Washington, D.C., in 2009, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu offered,

We have to have a new paradigm in approaching our surrounding regions. We should not only have good relations with our neighbours, but also have to have a very proactive policy in our surrounding regions . . . We have to know what is going on in our surrounding regions. Because, as Atatürk said “peace at home, peace in the world,” these are interconnected. Without having peace and order in the surrounding regions, we cannot have peace at home. (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009)

He could have added that without Russian cooperation, “peace and order in the surrounding regions” would not be possible. For Russia, however, a key desire was to build a security zone around itself, part and parcel of its foreign policy for centuries. Some analysts nonetheless continue to view Russia as the problem instead of the solution (Blank, 2008). Given Russia’s desire to minimize the U.S. influence in the Black Sea region, closer relations with Turkey were critical (TEPAV, 2007). Significantly, Russia joined the Turkish-initiated BLACKSEAFOR (*Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group*) at its inception in 2001, and participated in “Operation Black Sea Harmony” in March 2004. Russia is also a member of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

Within Russia, popular support for a deepening rapprochement with Turkey could be practically taken for granted by the Russian leadership, given the persisting, widespread view in Russia that the United States is one of the main troublemakers in Eurasia, if not the world (Table 6). In response to the question, “Do you think Russia has good reason to fear Western countries in NATO?” In all, 62% of Russians polled said “Yes” (RussiaVotes.org, 2010).

We have seen above how the post–Cold War era soon displayed evidence of significant reduction in threat perception, on both sides. By the early 2000s, however public opinion and along with it each country’s sense of regional identity moved well beyond the baseline point of diminished threat perception and toward increasingly deepened and more complex relations.

Thus, the Russian–Turkish pattern of relations that emerged by the time of Vladimir Putin’s return to the Russian

presidency in May 2012 was built on a strong foundation of pragmatism, was increasingly complex and multidimensional, and reflected both substantial support, on each side, among the general public and a shifted nature of each country’s regional identity. The Russian–Turkish *rapprochement* has manifested itself in the cultivation of multiple vectors of relations; to that theme we now turn.

Multivector Orientation

Russian–Turkish relations are not dominated nor even characterized by emphasis on a single dimension of the relation. Each side has deliberately and consciously endeavored to cultivate relations across a remarkably broad array of domains. What are the most important of these dimensions, and what consequence does this trait likely bear for Eurasia?

The developmental pattern of relations since the collapse of the USSR shows a path of cooperation in an increasing number of domains. The main domestic force in Russia behind the improvement of relations with Turkey has been arguably the dominant economic and military interests, pragmatically driven. These would include the Russian state itself, particularly as the main controller of energy resources. The general population of Russia did not view Turkey as a major military threat, nor as a major commercial rival, nor as a culturally menacing “other”; this disposition among the public served as a foundation for the initiation of the bilateral rapprochement and, once it got underway, was further reinforced *by the rapprochement itself*. Nor did the Turkish public regard Russia as a major military, commercial, or cultural threat; rather, it appears to have welcomed an increase in practical ties with Russia, particularly in the areas of trade and tourism. Former Turkish Culture and Tourism Ministry Director Ertuğrul Günay visited Moscow in March 2010 and offered,

We perceive Russia as our partner in every field. Turkey and Russia, both, are two prominent countries in Eurasia. It comes from two big historical empires. We have close relationships in a wide geography. It is not only economic, political and cultural, but in terms of tourism as well. (*Zaman*, 2010)

Significantly, Russian–Turkish relations continued to improve and expand throughout the 2000s even despite the August 2008 Russo–Georgian war (Torbakov, 2008). This conflict led Turkey to revise its Caucasus orientation somewhat, largely due to increasing domestic political pressures, it would appear: Turkish firms quickly established trade ties with Abkhazia, even though Turkey did not formally recognize Abkhazia’s independence from Georgia (Çelikpala, 2010). This revised Caucasus policy also had direct, significant ramifications for its relations with the West and with Russia, with the latter being shaped directly by domestic economic and political pressures (Idiz, 2009).

President Putin visited Istanbul in December 2012 to confer with Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan at the third meeting of the High-Level Cooperation Council (ÜDİK); tellingly, a significant portion of the Russian cabinet attended as well: the ministers of foreign affairs, transportation, energy, economy, culture, and agriculture were all present and engaging their Turkish counterparts. “Many [Russian] business representatives” are also reported to have come along (Kanbolat, 2012). A critical turning point appears to have been the May 2010 meeting of then-President Medvedev and Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, at which time the High-Level Cooperation Council was established. As noted by Kanbolat (2012),

The foundation of current relations between Turkey and the Russian Federation is based on the 1992 Agreement on Essential Components of Relations accord. With the creation and implementation of ÜDİK, however, the relations between these two countries have flourished and increased to a multi-dimensional level.

Turkey’s role in regional energy-resource exploitation and marketing is critical and in some respects is key to Russian–European energy considerations (Saivetz, 2009; Tekin & Williams, 2009). This fact lent a special gravity to the mutual high-level Russian and Turkish visits in the summer of 2009 and has continued to do so ever since. The Western-originated Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline, which opened in 2006, was created in part to reduce Russia’s role in the provision of energy supplies to the West; the fact that the chosen route was through Turkey—amid strenuous Russian objection—only underscores the point. The United States clearly favored and encouraged the BTC. Not coincidentally, Moscow’s interest in improved relations with Turkey intensified as this project materialized. This fact is complicated, however, by Turkey’s need to balance off its aspirations to be an energy corridor with its own dependence on Russia for energy supplies (Saivetz, 2009, 107).

Russian–Turkish activity in the energy sphere also included an element of competition for regional influence that carried the potential to undermine the *rapprochement*. Torbakov (2008) even noted, “[t]he bottom line is that, as far as energy issues are concerned, Turkey’s and Russia’s strategic goals don’t sit well together, and the most recent ‘pipeline battles’ are a good proof of this” (pp. 7–8). His grand conclusion, however, failed to materialize: “[a]s Turkey and Russia reemerge as the leading regional powers, the tensions between the two are likely to grow” (Torbakov, 2008, p. 14). Instead, relations between the two continued to improve even despite the serious strains of the Russia–Georgia war of August 2008. Even Turkey’s cancellation of a natural gas deal with Russia in late September 2011 failed to seriously disrupt the relation that had emerged between the two countries. Soon after the announcement of the cancellation, in fact, Turkish Minister of Energy Yildiz stated that the

“strategic partnership” between Turkey and Russia would not, nonetheless, be affected by a “few contracts” between the two countries (*Hürriyet Daily News*, 2011).

The issue of regional conflict prevention and conflict resolution is critical to Russia and Turkey; their mutual interest and cooperation in this aspect of Eurasian security reflects perhaps one of the sharpest departures from their centuries-long mistrust of each other and episodic outbreaks of outright conflict. As the *rapprochement* of the 2000s deepened, each side frequently expressed the importance of closer cooperation in regional conflict resolution and prevention. The brief but significant Russo–Georgian war underscores the complex interplay of Russia and Turkey in this regard, but does not negate their shared interest in conflict prevention. In this general domain, however, no issue looms larger than Nagorno-Karabakh, and no issue is more complex for the domestic-foreign policy nexus in Turkey. Given Russia’s keen interest in preventing the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute from igniting into full-scale war, engagement with Turkey on this matter is thus critical.

Nagorno-Karabakh is in fact at the center of the complex web of relations among Turkey, Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (Kardas, 2009b; Saivetz, 2009). Since 2009 bellicose rhetoric within Armenia and even more so in Azerbaijan escalated to troubling proportions, with Azeri Defense Minister Safar Abiev warning that a “large-scale war is inevitable” if Nagorno-Karabakh were not returned to Azeri control, adding that “we’re not going to wait another 15 years” for peaceful resolution (Mehtiyeva, 2010). Significantly, these warnings had begun years earlier (*Radio Free Europe*, 2005), and only increased in frequency and urgency thereafter. On March 6, 2010, Turkey sent two high-level diplomats to Moscow for talks on Nagorno-Karabakh, reflecting the Turkish opinion that Russia’s influence was key, and Russian–Turkish cooperation was essential (*Hürriyet*, 2010).

Even though public opinion in Turkey widely perceives Azerbaijan as a “fraternal country,” there are nonetheless misgivings about various Azeri policies. After the Armenian reconciliation protocols, Azerbaijan harshly criticized Turkey, and this did not sit well with Turkish public opinion; also, although it was sometimes claimed in the Turkish press that Azerbaijan demonstrated no effort to support Turkey’s struggle in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere regarding the Armenian Genocide claims (Birand, 2010), in fact there were numerous occasions in which Azerbaijan and the Azeri diaspora worked with the Turkish government in defense of Armenian accusations.⁷ Within Turkey a sense emerged that Washington, as a key Minsk Group member, has other preoccupations regarding foreign policy (the Minsk Group was established in 1992 by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe [the OSCE, since 1994], and is composed of 12 countries, including Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, and is co-chaired by Russia, the United States, and France). Turkey evidently began to see itself as the more

effective mediator, or at least co-mediator, than the Minsk Group per se. For its part, Moscow tends to view itself as the key arbiter—not only of Nagorno-Karabakh, but of the Caucasus region more generally (ViTSIOM, 2009). As one close observer noted even in 2009,

Turkey and Armenia may eventually resort to rejigging the protocols in ways that make them easier to implement. Meanwhile, Washington should muster all its clout to get Azerbaijan and Armenia to shake hands. Russia's cooperation is key. And co-opting Russia means giving it a stake in the peace. (ViTSIOM, 2009)

As part of the Russian–Turkish *rapprochement*, Turkey appears to have come to agree with this assessment, in large measure. This is so even while Russia has cultivated increasingly close relations with Armenia (Kelkitli, 2008), the only Caucasus country in the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Some observers have viewed the CSTO with deep skepticism (Tolipov, 2009), nonetheless Russia and particularly Armenia appear to take it with increasing seriousness.

The Turkish–Armenian border had been closed since 1993 as a result of Turkey's siding with Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On August 31, 2009, the national leadership of Armenia and of Turkey jointly declared the intention to establish formal diplomatic relations (which never previously existed), and begin working on a series of improvements in bilateral relations, including opening the border. Also by late 2009, Russia had been pressuring Turkey to open the border with Armenia (*Milliyet*, 2009). Various civil society forces within Turkey also encouraged this, although much of Turkish public opinion was antagonistic (Sak, 2010). The Erdoğan administration in principle agreed to open the border, signing a preliminary protocol with Armenia on August 31 and further developing it in October 2009. This was done despite serious political opposition at home—and despite previous reluctance to seriously consider the matter. Russia's role in this process was critical. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov was “gleeful” at the signing of the October agreements (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010a), but his glee was not widely shared in Turkey: instead, serious domestic opposition rose immediately. Some was along partisan lines, with the political parties CHP and MHP predictably opposed, and some from within the general public, despite support for normalization from various business-oriented civil society groups. Almost 70% of the population favored parliamentary approval of the protocols, but among this percentage, 35% put withdrawal of Armenian troops from Nagorno-Karabakh as a precondition, whereas 28% listed “retraction of genocide claims” as a precondition. A total of 27% of the population believed the Turkish parliament should *never* approve the protocols (ATAUM, 2010). The fact that Prime Minister Erdoğan persisted reveals both the

significance of the Turkish–Russian relation, and yet also the need to deftly respond to domestic political realities.

Moreover, despite being powerfully encouraged by Russia and some domestic forces, the issue of normalization with Armenia was politically complicated by the Erdoğan regime's need to simultaneously deal with the ongoing Kurdish question (*Interfax*, 2009; Schleifer, 2009). In this regard, however, Turkey could rely on Russia's moral and political support in dealing with internal insurgency that threatened Turkey's cohesion and security similar to the Chechen insurgency within the Russian Federation. On the other hand, some view the Kurdish issue, and the PKK in particular, as an Achilles heel for the Russian–Turkish relationship (Bozkurt, 2011b). Given the interplay between domestic and foreign policy dynamics in Turkey and Russia as outlined in this essay, however, increased cooperation and even collaboration on the Kurdish issue, and separatist insurgency more generally, would seem more likely to continue. The fact that the bilateral Turkish–Russian relation remained unshaken and even apparently undisturbed by the suspiciously Russian-connected assassination of Chechens in Turkey in September 2011 speaks to the depth of both sides—leadership and broad public—to continue pursuing increasingly close, mutually advantageous relations (Vatchagaev, 2011).

The multiple-vectored character of Russian–Turkish relations has become one of the pillars of the final trait, namely durability, discussed below. Before doing so, however, it is useful to explore the third trait, commonality despite several important asymmetries and even contradictions. This trait is particularly revealing about the nature of the bilateral relation and thus calls for a deeper look.

Commonalities Despite Significant Asymmetries and Contradictions

The subtitle of Dmitri Trenin's recent article in *Insight Turkey* posed the question, “Any common ground between Turkey and Russia?” The foreign ministries of each country have no doubt that the answer is yes, and in fact much common ground exists, despite numerous contradictions, asymmetries, and the undeniable weight of centuries of distrust and disaffection.

The Russian commercial website *Turkish News*—which is keen to cultivate deeper, closer, and increasingly numerous ties between the two countries—perhaps characterized matters most succinctly:

It is difficult to describe Russian–Turkish relations in a single word. Modern Russian–Turkish relations are multileveled and therefore contradictory: Russia and Turkey are interdependent economic partners, active participants in cultural dialogue, peace-loving neighbors and yet fundamental geopolitical rivals. The contradictoriness of this relationship is to be found in history itself. From the 17th to 19th centuries our countries

suffered through 10 wars, which led not only to numerous stereotypes in the relationship, but also rich commonality of experiences in everyday life. The Iron Curtain of the Soviet era only deepened the prejudices and impeded the development of mutually beneficial relations, among other things. (*Turkish News*, 2013, authors' translation)⁸

Similarities in Patterns of Contemporary Domestic Politics?

Turkey and Russia share certain similarities as well as significant differences in regime type. While Russia has developed a dominant-single party type of regime (Hale, 2006, Remington, 2008, Remington & Reuter, 2009), Turkey is not generally viewed as having such a regime. Some observers, however, saw evidence of a single-party dominant type of regime developing under the AK Party (Cornell & Kaya, 2008; Musil, 2011). More recently, Tolay and Linden argue that such a regime has indeed emerged in Turkey, with profound foreign policy implications, including principally the pursuit of a more activist foreign policy:

In combination with these changes in Turkey's external environment, changes in the domestic political, economic, and societal spheres might also explain changes in Turkey's behavior toward its neighbors. At the political level, the rise of the AKP and the strong political support it has enjoyed since 2002 are striking developments in a country more accustomed to unstable coalition governments. Structurally, Turkey has entered a period of virtually one-party dominance. The majority position of the AKP in parliament, the absence of an effective public or parliamentary opposition, AKP control of the presidency, and a weakening of the military institutionally and politically give the government substantial power to transform the country. (Tolay & Linden, 2010, p. 7)

In Turkey and especially in Russia, civil society has until recently been throttled by the presence of a rather domineering state (Richter, 2009). Through much of Turkish history, bureaucratic positions were not appointed on a merit basis, but rather on loyalty to the ruling group, as in Russia. Regarding leadership style, Erdoğan and Putin appear to have similar traits and characteristics; while idiosyncratic and not patterned per se, such a consonance of leadership style has arguably served to enable continually improved relations. Kınıklıoğlu (2006) offered,

there is an apparent convergence between Turkish and Russian decision-makers which makes it easier for them to engage. As one Turkish politician noted when it comes to working with each other: "the Russians speak a very similar language." One reason for the resonance of language is the underlying similarity in core political concepts, especially among the leadership in each country. In both countries the political culture assigns a central role to the state. Both sides dwell on the existence of a centuries-old statehood tradition . . . In both countries civil society is a new phenomenon and has not been fully legitimized

in the eyes of the state and public . . . Decades-long criticism by the European Union seems to have bred a sense of exclusion which facilitated such a mutual understanding to come about.

Ziya Öniş has pointed out elements of rupture and continuity in Turkish foreign relations since 2007. Civil society initiatives and engagement in foreign policy have become more significant precisely due to Turkey's democratization of foreign policy making, and public opinion has had a more effective weight on the foreign policy making mechanism itself. At the same time, however, the linkage between foreign and domestic policy has become more complex, with the AK Party government using foreign policy initiatives as tools to consolidate its political base at home (Öniş, 2011). Similar moves have been made in Russia, although the nature of the regime-civil society connection is arguably less democratic and even more oligarchic than in Turkey.

An additional similarity is the fact that each has a preponderance of military power over their immediate, respective neighbors—hence Trenin's (2013) comments on the bilateral relation having become "one of the pillars of security and stability in Europe" (p. 49). Russia and Turkey each possesses significant military capability; each possesses long-standing status as a major actor in Eurasia; and both harbor ongoing desires to shape events of global significance. Nonetheless the relation is also characterized by various asymmetries, including widely variant geographical scope of influence, scale of natural resources, and present demographics. Regarding the last point, it is worth remembering that, although the Russian Federation's overall population is considerably more than Turkey's (142.5 to 79.7 million as of mid-2012; *CIA World Factbook*, 2013), the number of ethnic Russians in the Russian Federation is only about 112 million and declining, whereas Turkey's population is near 80 million and growing. In any case, however, the relation between Russia and Turkey may be a "strategic partnership" but they are not presently nor likely to become a partnership of true equals, despite the fact that their *rapprochement* has altered the geopolitical landscape of Eurasia.

Turkey has at times presented itself as a natural bridge between East and West, as does Russia, and thus necessarily destined to play a role in regional and even global affairs (Kınıklıoğlu, 2006). Yet its capacity to do so is closely related to its relations with Russia; for that, hit-and-miss relations with Russia would not suffice, nor would they for Russia. Instead, durable, increasingly predictable relations were placed at a premium; to that theme we now turn.

Durability in the Relation, Despite Clear Points of Disagreement and Tension

Continually improved bilateral relations are high-priority aspects of each country's foreign policy: the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website offers that they are

“rapidly advancing in all fields”; and “[r]obust and lasting cooperation between the two countries constitutes an important element of peace, security and welfare in the region and in the world.” Similarly, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ official statements repeatedly stress the desire to further cultivate close, cooperative relations with Turkey (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010b; Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010b). In January 2010 then-Russian president Medvedev emphasized the relationship as a “strategic partnership” when meeting Turkish PM Erdoğan. Erdoğan echoed Medvedev’s views: “Our relations with Russia have reached a high point recently. The fields in which we cooperate have begun to diversify. We have cooperation in the fields of politics, culture and commerce” (*Today’s Zaman*, 2010). By 2010 Russian–Turkish relations had moved to a level of “strategic cooperation,” as evidenced by the establishment of the High-Level Cooperation Council, composed of the heads of state of each country, on May 11 to 12 of that year. This degree of cooperation with Russia has been supported by an array of significant groups in Turkey such as the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON, the country’s largest private business interest group), and the Turkish Exporters’ Assembly (TİM), the lead organization lobbying on behalf of exporters (Bozkurt, 2011a). The business community in Russia has done likewise, with full support and encouragement of the Russian state (*Turkish News*, 2013).

The Russian–Turkish *rapprochement* has thus demonstrated to date a pragmatic-based durability and flexibility that, despite contradictions and asymmetries, provides an opening for expansion of the relation to a likely usefulness in other domains, particularly conflict resolution and provision of deeper-based regional security. Neither these authors, nor would it appear that neither Russia nor Turkey, would concur with Flanagan that “the relationship remains more tactical than strategic, as the two countries lack a common political agenda and have more divergent than convergent interests” (Flanagan 2013, pp. 166–167).

President Putin’s comments while in Turkey in December 2012 specifically concerning the Syrian civil war, the patching over of differences regarding the 2008 Georgia–Russia War, and disagreements over the advisability of various energy–corridor scenarios all suggest to us, as they apparently do to the regimes of PM Erdoğan and President Putin, that there is in fact much more convergence than divergence of interests. These include common interests in mutual economic benefit, overarching regional security, constructing identities that use the West as a focal or orienting point, less and less, and a common and apparently very earnest desire to continue increasing cultural interaction.

Conclusion

By the time of Vladimir Putin’s return to the presidency of Russia in May 2012, the Russian–Turkish *rapprochement* that began over a decade earlier had become a significant

fixture of the Eurasian landscape. Four general characteristics of the bilateral relation emerged in this process, and understanding them enables a deeper understanding of the opportunities and limits likely to be afforded, for Russia, Turkey, and the broader region of western Eurasia. These four are as follows: (a) pragmatism, (b) multivectored approach to the bilateral relation, (c) commonalities despite contradictory and even antagonistic aspects of the relation, (d) studied and deliberate durability.

The Russian–Turkish *rapprochement* has emerged as a significant and perhaps defining feature of the Eurasian landscape, but is in some respects an unequal one, on several counts: energy resources, geopolitical strength, military capability, and underlying demographics. Nonetheless, various factors make a deepening *rapprochement* likely: mutual desirability of increased trade, increased wariness toward the West, Turkey’s pursuit of a “no enemies” foreign policy orientation despite being in a bellicose region, common interest in regional conflict resolution, and various domestic political commonalities. Among the last of these is the historical pattern of rather weak civil society in Russia and Turkey. Civil society in *contemporary* Turkey, by contrast, shows evidence of having become significantly stronger, with significant foreign policy implications. In Russia, the regime’s rhetoric about strengthening civil society is not reflected well in the concrete realities of Russian social and political life. Accordingly, the influence of civil society pressures on Russian foreign policy appears to be more restricted to the oligarchic-commercial elements in the state-society nexus, whereas in Turkey genuinely democratic pressures exist. For example, throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, survey evidence indicated that a majority of the population in Russia did not necessarily favor Putin’s approach to the resolution of the Chechnya conflict; he proceeded with the second Chechen war (1999–2005) nonetheless, even more resolutely than had Yeltsin in the first Chechen war (1994–1996). Nonetheless recent evidence suggests that the Russian populace is supportive of the Putin–Medvedev agenda of raising the profile and status of Russia in world affairs. Breslauer’s characterization of Russian foreign policy is here germane and revealing: “[p]ublic mobilization through aggrieved nationalism and anti-Americanism has come to define the self-legitimization strategy of Putin’s authoritarian regime” (Breslauer 2009, p. 375). The above analysis reveals why Russia’s *rapprochement* with Turkey fit so well into this “strategy.”

Curiously, the Putin–Medvedev regime is presiding over a society that appears to be more politically homogeneous regarding implications of Russian–Turkish relations than is the case in Turkey, wherein the Erdoğan–Gul regime faces a potentially more resistant and divided society, not so much over the Russian–Turkish *rapprochement* per se but rather its implications, particularly in foreign policy. This contrast should not be exaggerated, however, and does not appear to present a serious obstacle to the continued cultivation of the

bilateral relation. Nonetheless, the contrast is real and must be taken into consideration when pondering not only the likely trajectory of Russian–Turkish relations, but also the general domains in which those relations can be most reasonably expected to be fruitful.

The knotted question of Armenian relations and Nagorno-Karabakh exemplifies this, as do the political ambivalence of the energy-resource dimension of the bilateral relation, the contraposition of Russia and Turkey in collective security organizations (CSTO and NATO), and more recently, over what to do about the Syrian conflict. As a case in point, the heavy influence of public opinion on the question of whether to allow the United States to use Turkish territory as a staging ground for the 2003 Iraq War suggested, among other things, that the Turkish government is more democratically constrained than the Russian government. Despite some similarities in regime type in this regard and doubtless others, Turkey and Russia are different political creatures in foreign and domestic politics. Those differences, however, are being concretely outweighed by a complementary interest in cultivating more closely cooperative relations. Inasmuch as these relations are more complementary than adversarial, the prospect of positive, joint Russian–Turkish collaboration may be more promising than menacing—for Turkey, for Russia, and the rest of the world.

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1. Igor Torbakov, *The Georgia Crisis and Russia-Turkey Relations* (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation: Occasional Papers, 2008); Dmitri Trenin, “From Damascus to Kabul: Any Common Ground Between Turkey and Russia?” *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter 2013), 37-49. Also, the entire issue of *Turkish Studies* (2009), Vol. 10, no. 1 (March 2009) is devoted to the theme of “Turkey as a Trans-Regional Actor.” See also James W. Warhola and William A. Mitchell, “The Warming of Turkish-Russian Relations: Motives and Implications,” *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, Vol. 13, Issue 5 (Winter 2006), 127-143.
2. The question was phrased thus: “Rusya ile olan siyasi ve ekonomik işbirliği artmalı mı?”
3. Author’s interview (J.W.) with Aylin Guney, February 12, 2010.
4. The authors thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.
5. The question posed was, “*Türk Dis Politikasını Başarılı Buluyor Musunuz?*” (Do you find Turkish Foreign Policy Successful?)
6. The term *civil society* is of course exceptionally broad and encompasses numerous aspects of state–society–citizen

relations; although in some contexts it is used primarily to indicate the presence of more-or-less autonomous subsystems within a society (institutions of various sorts), our usage places more emphasis on the public opinion, or cognitive, dimension of civil society that has enabled Russia and Turkey to cultivate closer, deeper, and more cooperative relations with each other.

7. The authors thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.
8. The original Russian is Определить одним словом характер российско-турецких отношений достаточно сложно. Современные российско-турецкие отношения носят многоуровневый и оттого противоречивый характер: Россия и Турция – взаимозависимые экономические партнёры, активные участники культурного диалога, миролюбивые соседи и принципиальные геополитические соперники. Противоречивость этих отношений заложена самой историей. С XVII по XIX век наши страны пережили 10 войн, которые не только внесли в их отношения многочисленные стереотипы, но и богатый опыт общения на бытовом уровне. Между тем, железный занавес в советскую эпоху надолго прервал возможность обоюдного знакомства и усугубил взаимные предрассудки.

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