

An Assessment on The Future of Ongoing Turkish-Russian Relations: “Clash of Interests or Convergence of Interests”

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ABSTRACT:

Several civilizations have taken place throughout the history of Eurasian region. Great struggles have occurred as well as great alliances have been set up among them. Within that framework, one of the important affiliations has been between the Turks and Russians. They have confronted almost two hundred centuries during the Ottoman Empire and Tsardom Russia. During the Cold War, the relations have been at its lowest level due to the ideological clashes. But in the post-Cold War, Ankara and Moscow have tried to establish a unique relationship. Especially after the coming into the power of Vladimir Putin in Russian Federation and Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey at the beginnings of 2000s, they have intensively been working to bring this relationship into a multidimensional one by defining it as a strategic alliance. Very different outlooks on recent Ukraine and Syria Crises increase the tensions between them. On other hand, one should remember that they have an increasing interdependence to each other in various fields. The fate of Ukraine and Syrian Crises will be the decisive factor both on the future of Ankara-Moscow relations and these two capitals' relations with their allies in the next years.

Keywords: Turkey, Russian Federation, Balanced Interdependence, Eurasianism, Ukraine, Syria, Energy.

INTRODUCTION

Turkey and Russia has had a place in the international European political system since 16th century. The collapse of Soviet Union and the independence of its fifteen successor states have provided Turkey opportunities and some risks to its Northern and Southern regions. Therefore, Turkey's relations in Post-Soviet region have brought fundamental advantages to the Turkish economy and intensified its geopolitical importance and prestige. Historically, Turkey has a geopolitical significance for the countries in the regions.

As an ally of NATO, it was a geopolitical actor to the Western bloc as a strong member in close geography to the Soviet Union. However this evaluation was disappeared with the collapse of Soviet Union. Turkey has regained its strategical significance for its location between large energy markets and energy producers. Therefore, it has a strategic position for energy transit routes between the Middle East, Russia and the Caucasus and the large energy

markets of Europe and the West as well.¹ Turkey is going to confront geopolitical ambiguity in its affairs with Russia and Middle East and Eurasian regions. Turkey ought to pursue balanced and moderate policy in Eurasia and the Middle East due to further economic interests through trade and investment. Pragmatism has played a decisive and important role in the enhancement of Turkish-Russian affairs. Particularly energy, trade and economic issues continue to determine the agenda of the relations between two countries. The probable rapprochement in the economic and energy issues within the context of a common understanding of regional cases in Eurasia is going to contribute multi-dimensional corporation between Turkey and Russia in the near future.

Within that perspective, the first part of the article examines the Russian Eurasianism and Turkey in which stress on main parameters of Russian Eurasianism and its approaches regarding Turkey. The second chapter contains Russian Federation's position in Turkish Eurasianism approach is elaborated clearly by means of geopolitics theory. The third part of article mentions on the two significant geopolitical crises which are influencing current Russian-Turkish relations explicitly the Ukrainian Crisis and Syrian Crisis.

1. RUSSIAN EURASIANISM AND TURKEY

1.1. The Fundamental Parameters of Russian Eurasianism

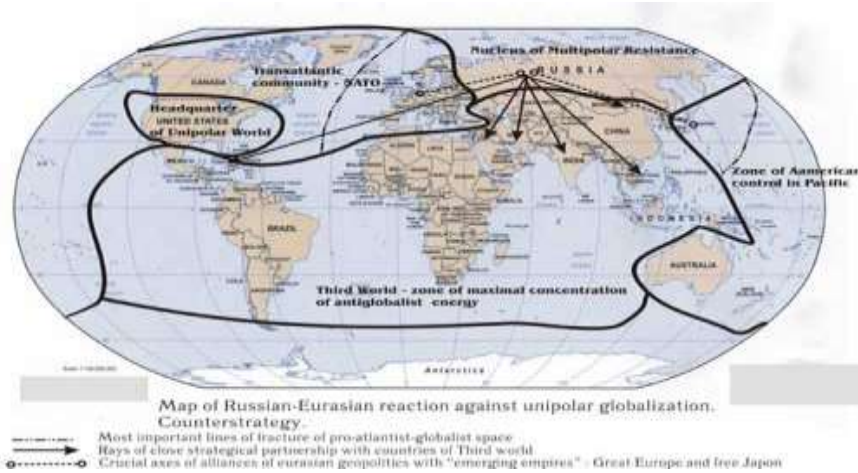
According to Aleksandr Dugin, one of the leading intellectuals of Russian Eurasianism, the geopolitical analysis can be separated into three fundamental dimensions namely history, strategy and geography. Also the discipline defining the reality of the world as the discrepancy between “*Land Civilization versus Sea Civilization*” should be named as “*Geopolitics*”. This represents a major approach and all other forms applied within the context of geopolitical method in a more detailed way in the examination of several questions arising from this principle.² For Dugin, the historical struggle between Sea and Land has finally turned out to be the clash between Atlanticism and Eurasianism in our era. This is not just at the level of “Great Game” but also at the level of “**Very Great Game**”. In the final analysis, the geopolitics is the science on the clash of civilizations. Dugin considers that the clash of civilizations is separated from the global approach and the main field of our interest is the concept of “super or great powers.” Contrary to the civilizational approach prioritizing the moral orientation and the significance of geographic place, the medium dimension of geopolitics moves with the reality of concrete political kinds specifically states or blocs. In this context, the pushing factor of civilization takes the form of real existing states together with the related political, administrative, economic, strategic and military institutions. In the first dimension, when citing Eurasianist and Atlanticist poles is a very good approach, certain states move in the name of those poles. To Dugin, the most influential representatives of these two poles are Washington and Moscow in today's world.

The issue proposed by Chopard in the “Great Game” belongs to this dimension. In terms of “Very Great Game or The Civilizational Approach”, the vital issue for both of civilizational models' global sovereignty is the control of coastal lands of Eurasia. The most important parts of this coastal region are Europe in the West, Middle East in the South, Islamic Republic of

¹Ali Tekin, Iva Walterova, “Turkey's Geopolitical Role: The Energy Angle”, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 14, No: 1, Spring 2007, p. 84.

²Aleksandr Dugin, *Rus Jeopolitiği: Avrasyacı Yaklaşım*, trans. Vügar İmanov, (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2010), Sixth Edition, pp. 341-344.

Iran, India, China and Japan in the Far East – in the wider meaning, the Pasific Basin-³ The Atlanticists – firstly London, now Washington- wish to separate the coastal region located at the main land from the axis of Eurasia pole in other words; the real Russian lands. On the other hand, the Eurasianists try to break this rigorous siege, to make the forces of coastal region as their strategic partners, in other words; try to include them inside the continental bloc. In that manner, the Eurasia will have reached to “Warm Seas” and have the ability to globally challenge to Atlanticism. Thus, such kind of a continental unification predominantly makes the Eurasia as the privileged one and by this way the downfall of Atlanticist civilization will be indispensable. Therefore, the Very Great Game is composed of the joint formation of Berlin (The Capital of Europe), Moscow (The Capital of Eurasia) and Tokyo (The Capital of Pasific Basin) Axis with Russian-Iranian Axis. If there have not been deep-rooted historical paradoxes between Turkey-Iran, China-Japan and Federal Republic of Germany-France, theoretically, the Russian-Turkish, Russian-Chinese and Russian-French Axes could possibly be included to these axes.⁴ The becoming operational of Russia-Germany-Japan-Iran axis is the long-term geopolitical necessity of whole Eurasianist strategy and this necessity is independent from the substantive situations of the concerned states. According to the principal evaluations, such kind of structuring of continental alliance is the most concrete and the perfect one. If this can be realized, this means the radical and irreversible win of Land over the Sea as the establishment of Eurasianist order in the world. The alliance of Moscow with Berlin (in the wider context; Europe), Tokyo (the Pasific Basis) cannot be classified as the coincidence of historical moment. For Dugin, it should be named as destiny. It is possible to try to discard this as long as possible, but sooner or later it makes its influence feel completely. Dugin underscores that this represents the main assumption of the classic type – Orthodox type- of geopolitics. To underestimate this assumption is only probable with the rejection of this science.



Source: <http://images.evrazia.org/images/map-4-small.jpg>.

In the current circumstances, neither Tokyo nor Berlin has the ability to carry out geopolitical lines on their own and for Dugin; they have to obey Washington's will. In the Very Great Game, these two countries can/should find their places within the Eurasianist Bloc. The global victory of Eurasia will not be realized otherwise. However, in the current situation, these two capitals are the assistants of Washington in the Very Great Game and to Dugin, they

³ Sina Kısacık, “Aleksandr Dugin’e göre 21. Yüzyılda Rusya’nın Avrasya Politikası Nasıl Olmalı?”, *Uluslararası Politika Akademisi*, March 31, 2013, accessed February 29, 2016 from <http://politikaakademisi.org/2013/03/31/aleksandr-dugine-gore-21-yuzyilda-rusyanin-avrasya-politikasi-nasil-olmali/>.

⁴ Mesut Hakkı Caşın, Giray Saynur Derman, *Rus Dış Politikasındaki Değişim ve Kremlin Penceresinden Yeni Ufuklar*, (Ankara: SRT Yayınları, 2016), pp. 214-219.

have no other options. The only country both its potential and real terms available is the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁵ Dugin underlines that Kremlin should chase after close multi-dimensional relations with Tehran and in the resolution of whole problems. In general, when Kremlin pursues its concrete policies in Balkans (Serbia-Kosovo), in Asia (Afghanistan, the Asian countries of Commonwealth of Independent States), Iraq in the Middle East and South Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia, it has to move in dual logic. Dugin believes that the Russian Federation has to be aware of the real and open differences of Berlin and Tokyo. It can be inferred from that when Kremlin responds to the completely anti-Russian initiatives of Washington, it can have an apprehensive approach on the countries that have to be as strategic partners sooner or later though they are now locating at the opposite site of middle-sized Great Game. The same issues can also be discoursed for Russian-Chinese axis. A clear rapprochement of geopolitical positions between Beijing and Moscow can openly be seen in the recent times. Nevertheless, this is a temporary and not a lasting alliance. In the "Great Game" article of Chopard, he picturizes the real situation in the medium geopolitical dimension. It has to take into consideration such ongoing of the events. But in this case, it is necessary to learn the right placement of data of "Middle Dimension Geopolitics" into a more comprehensive theoretical framework.

The Eurasianist School together with its instruments, methods, history and classics and so on accept the guidance of geopolitics' data and within that context, it views the fate of Eurasia identical with Kremlin's fate.⁶ Therefore, everything is acceptable which provides the strengthening of civilizational dominance of Eurasia, the being powerful of Russia and its freedom, to implement its historical duty with victory. For Dugin, everything that helps this mission is good; everything that prevents this is bad. The Germany-Russian Federation-Japan-Iran Axis is the objective guarantee of Eurasia's victory which means an absolute necessity. Dugin highlights that this is not a kind of an abstract sympathy toward Germans, Iranians or Japans. Same factors are valid for Japan, German and Iranian Eurasianists as well. They are well aware of geopolitical logic and they wish to set up tight alliances with Kremlin via using every possible tool. To Dugin, it is unnecessary for them to feel a special sympathy to Russian Federation. Dugin underlines that the great war of continents happen in very deep and serious levels that is not appropriate to the feelings and fears of humans.

For Alexandr Dugin, the Caspian oil pipeline projects are critically important within geopolitical manner. The strategic plans of White House represent the formation of a geopolitical zone that unifies the Caspian with the Turkish shores of Black Sea. That zone should be under the hegemony of Moscow and Tehran. Dugin thinks that this situation dictates the foundation of a "Caucasian State or few states", under the influence of Ankara or directly Washington. This means the more orientation of Baku to Ankara's sphere of influence within the framework of ethnic identity. The construction of pipelines forces the ending of Kremlin's influence in the Caspian-Black Sea Zone. Dugin stresses that this is one of the very critical geopolitical aims of White House.⁷ Given the limitedness of world oil reserves, Washington is successful on the continuation of world hegemony through controlling oil and its transportation to developed countries. Soviet Union has not attached special importance to Caspian oil due to its preference of developing the resources in the North Eurasia. Within this milieu, the strategic

⁵ Alaeddin Yalçınkaya, "Sovyet Sonrası Rus Siyasetinde Avrasyacılık" in *Putin'in Ülkesi: Yeni Yüzyılın Eşiğinde Rusya Federasyonu Analizi – Siyasal Sistem, Ekonomi, Güvenlik, Dış Politika*, ed. İrfan Kaya Ülger, (Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık, 2015), pp. 77-79.

⁶ Dugin, *Rus Jeopolitiği: Avrasyacı Yaklaşım*, pp. 345-346.

⁷ Efe Çaman, Kenan Dağcı, "Rusya Federasyonu'nun Sovyet Ardılı Bölgeleri Algılayışı: Avrasyacılık Stratejisi ve Rus Dış Politikası" in *Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Üzerine 3. Uluslararası Mavi Karadeniz Kongresi: Uyuşmazlık Çözümü, İşbirliği ve Demokratikleşme, 15-17 October 2012, Sakarya Üniversitesi, Adapazarı*, eds. Yıldırım Turan, Alaeddin Yalçınkaya and Ertan Efeğil, (İstanbul: Gündoğan Yayınları, 2013), pp. 63-73.

target of global struggle between Atlanticism and Eurasianism, in the current circumstances, is to control over the Caspian and Caspian-Black Sea Region. Dugin thinks that the general characteristics of the geopolitical situation in the whole Caucasia region forces Moscow to restrain its strategy. The foremost condition of this strategy is to move against Washington and its satellites' plans; in other words all the projects and orientations which can be defined as "Atlanticism". This condition has to be at the top priority. It has to be counteracted against Atlanticism by not just confronting face to face but also making artificial cooperation under the view of ensuring joint peace initiatives with it. Moving from this condition, Moscow has to strengthen its bases in the Caucasia. Especially, apart from the mechanically remaining from Soviet times, the pro-Kremlin tendencies based on the new power lines have to be taken into account. Within that context, it is an obligation to foresee and the constituting factors of the centralist function after the possible dissolution of these regions' direct dependence on Moscow have to be calculated.



Source: <http://c.o0bg.com/rw/Boston/2011-2020/WebGraphics/Ideas/BostonGlobe.com/2014/03/Eurasian/bigrossia.jpg>.

2.1. The Approaches in Russian Eurasianism regarding Turkey

According to Dugin, it is conditional to accept that great components of Turkish ethnic identity constitute the fundamental view of Ankara's geopolitics. This factor has also taken place in the basis of Turks' historical rise which set up a great world empire – now the Turkey preserves its vital centre. Nomadic empires have generally been seen as the unifying factors of whole Eurasia continent. As put forward by Halford Mackinder – the founder of geopolitics - these empires were the glorious illustrations of the waves of land brigands.⁸ Actually this expansionist and unifying manner coming from the inner parts of the continent and being maximum far away from coastal lines or encircled with Cold Ocean areas close to transportation is named as "Eurasianism" in geopolitics. In this context, Dugin highlights that the foundational basis of Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey can be traced back to "Pure Eurasianism". As the philosophy of geography, the geopolitics does not accept the concept of progress. This Eurasianist level has never vanished despite the fact that it has formed a source of supremacy in the history of statism of Turkey and in the current circumstances, has greatly lost its power. When it is closely examined, the Pan-Turanism concept is the reflection of this view. Actually, just the emphasis on racial factor and historical Russophobia (anti-Russian sentiments) and the usage of this ideology by the third parties for interim aims make this target actually a relative one.

⁸ Dugin, *Rus Jeopolitiği: Avrasyacı Yaklaşım*, pp. xiii-xiv.

If it was possible to correct Pan Turanism within the Eurasianist context, this would be suitable for a coherent and non-contradictory model of Turkey's geopolitics. For Dugin, the Ottoman geopolitics primarily forms the second dimension in the geopolitics of Turkey.⁹ At that point, the total change of Turkish thought materializes and there comes into forefront the intricate ethnic and cultural structure of the territories conquered by the Islam factor and Turks. In that manner, one can mention the centuries-based historical geopolitics of Islam and symbiosis of the geopolitical system of Mediterranean and Middle East. Both the geopolitics of Islam and Middle East-Mediterranean Basin are completely different subjects that the land and sea vectors strongly intersect. The Ottoman Empire had ruled this geopolitical unity for centuries. These nomads, thanks to the foundational energies of their empire as well as their pure but tough military morals, had been successful in melting this very different mass into a single geopolitical system. But the Turks itself, setting up hegemony over the great lands from Maghreb to Balkans and Caucasia, were gradually accepting the geopolitical dispositions of the civilizations that they conquered. It is necessary to carefully and comprehensively evaluate the geopolitical history of the Ottoman Empire. In reality, this might help in coming into the agenda of much important and attractive info for geopolitics.

To Dugin, the third main level in Turkey's geopolitical history can be regarded as national or post-imperial period. The geopolitical thinking of empire's administrative staff regressed into a narrow nation-state. Dugin stresses that when the Turks formed the ethnic core of imperial administration, the national base was representing harmony with geopolitical, social and religious aims.¹⁰ It is known that the modern Turkey was founded on the strong will of Young Turks and on the supremacy of tough military base integrated with the secularism and nationalism principles. But this nation-state formation consolidated with such kind of a military-political establishment had to completely impose a brand-new geopolitical line anymore. Later on Ankara could not claim leadership on Islamic world. Because, the majority of other Muslim countries supported and even provoked by Great Britain were founded as a result of anti-Turkish nationalist policies. In that sense, Dugin underlines that Turks have lost their imperial functions and have been encircled with old and new enemies' namely Arab countries, Russia, Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Iran. That situation would necessitate the external support. Ankara has oriented to the Germany as a non-aligned geopolitical ally in the first half of XXth century. Nevertheless in the post WWII period, Washington has performed the role of "external liver" for Republic of Turkey.



⁹ Yalçinkaya, "Sovyet Sonrası Rus Siyasetinde Avrasyacılık", p.79.

¹⁰ Sina Kısacık, "Aleksandr Dugin'e göre Ankara için Yeni Avrasyacılık", *Uluslararası Politika Akademisi*, April 8, 2013, accessed March 1, 2016 from <http://politikaakademisi.org/2013/04/08/aleksandr-dugine-gore-ankara-icin-yeni-avrasyacilik/>.

Source: [http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-kEq9opvBz-I/UGjKNCFvXqI/AAAAAAAAADMM/INSj0ErZrml/s1600/Russia Balkans Caucasus 800.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-kEq9opvBz-I/UGjKNCFvXqI/AAAAAAAAADMM/INSj0ErZrml/s1600/Russia+Balkans+Caucasus+800.jpg)
g.

In terms of geopolitics, this means the transition from great geopolitics (continental and imperial) to small geopolitics (conditional and pragmatist) for Ankara. It has to be taken into consideration that the entrance of NATO – Atlanticist Bloc in content- will be confronted with the coming into the picture of deep geopolitical effects constituting actually the Turkish history in terms of conceptual, historical and civilizational manners.¹¹ To Dugin, these factors are undoubtedly terrestrial-based and Eurasianist. Even if alliance with NATO resolves the tactical issues, the type of nation-state and military-democratic-secular regime cannot be the basis of wide scale geopolitical reality. In other words, if Ankara wants to be an important player in the Great Game, she has to re-comprehend the meaning of its history as well as has to find concrete and reliable partners having wide range geopolitical projects that Ankara might agree on. Dugin underlines that the most significant/attractive issue for him is the existence of Eurasianist tendencies in Turkey.¹² He, however, considers that not only Ankara and Moscow can reach daily joint interests on that basis but also Russian-Turkish struggle around Black Sea and Caucasus can be ended and it can be developed a new multipolar project for the whole continent within the context of strategic re-structuring at the same time. As a nation-state and a member of NATO, Ankara is sufficiently a rival for the Eurasia Project. Such kind of Turkey and Russian Federation do have more geopolitical paradoxes than joint targets. At that point, it is imperative to be realist and calmly examining the situation.

Ankara's support to Chechen separatists to a certain extent, old Turkish-Armenian confrontations, supporting of anti-Russian atmosphere in Baku, all the factors regarding the construction of Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline are openly in line with the parameters of Atlanticist and anti-Eurasianist strategies.¹³ During that time, Moscow automatically follows a traditional system of engagements ranging from the strengthening of relations with Tehran, supporting primarily of Armenians, lobbying in favour of Greeks on Cyprus, establishing warm relations with Kurdish rebels and Islamist traditionalists. But these situations happen in tactical levels. *The Neo-Eurasianist Project* completely targets a very different thing. For Dugin, the Neo-Eurasianism offers the conceptualization of current conditions in the global scale. Dugin states that "We are now on the verge of a unipolar world directly controlled by Washington and the foundation of global Atlanticist Empire under the hegemony of Anglo-Saxon political, economic and religious values." In the geopolitical sense, this represents the global victory of sea and global defeat of land in which the victims of new world order will be not only the political-strategic interests of continental states but also all values and norms that are not included in non-dualist/inward-oriented culture (Procrustes).

In the current manner, no one is able to win this struggle alone and for Dugin, as long as the people and beliefs attest on which one of their values are better, the cylinder of globalization will disregard all differences and characteristics of people, races, religions and cultures within the context of "A Single Humanity". Also in that level, both the ones voluntarily cooperate with White House and the ones daring to challenge the probable global

¹¹ Yalçınkaya, "Sovyet Sonrası Rus Siyasetinde Avrasyacılık", p.80 and Dugin, *Rus Jeopolitiği: Avrasyacı Yaklaşım*, pp. 372-373.

¹² Özgür Tüfekçi, "Another Last Eurasianist: Davutoğlu's Eurasianist Rhetoric", *Caucasus International*, Vol. 2, No: 3, Autumn 2012, pp.105-109.

¹³ Mesut Hakkı Caşın, *Novgorod Knezliği'nden XXI. Yüzyıla Rus İmparatorluk Stratejisi*, (Ankara: Atlas Kitap, 2015), pp. 696-697.

dictatorship will be damaged in an equal manner. Dugin is of the opinion that “*in order to defend our identity, we have to set up a serious geopolitical alliance with ones even if they have been our competitors or enemies*”. He further states that after the realization of the value of empire-founding thinking by Turkic people in their history, the Russian Federation is totally ready to collaborate with Turkey. Dugin mentions that the Eurasia is wide enough and its richness will be sufficient for everybody. He emphasizes that if the thought of 21st century’s being as the “American Century” materializes, the joint land might be lost. Lastly Dugin underscores that if this century is labelled as “Americanism/Americanist”, this represents the death of Eurasia. Because according to the main law of geopolitics, Atlanticism as a sea civilization is the direct contradiction of Eurasianism.¹⁴

2. RUSSIAN FEDERATION POSITION IN TURKISH STRATEGIC THINKING / EURASIANISM

“There is a need to embark on a new vision in order to have the Eurasia region regain its historical importance... If peace and welfare do not reign in Eurasia, it is not possible to make peace and welfare reign in the world, either. This region can export peace and welfare to the rest of the world... The western and eastern ends of Eurasia should be reconnected...”

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, February 5th, 2010.

The political discourse of “Eurasia” or “Eurasianism” does mean the statement between European and Asian people in the history and future of Russian Federation. According to Russian Eurasianism point of view, Russia ought to institute economic and political integration upon Eurasian region. Thus, Moscow puts an aim to place Eurasian identity instead of Soviet identity that could not have been constituted on Soviet basin. The thought of Eurasianism has been considered by Turkish thinkers for a long time. During 1990s, the affairs between Russia and Turkey had been troubled because of reshaping of geopolitical structure of Eurasia following the collapse of Soviet Union.¹⁵ Although Turkey has determined her foreign policy path on European Union (EU) integration, the ties with East territories and its history should not be ruled out. With this perspective, the Eurasian policy of Turkey has taken a place from top of Turkish foreign policy parameters.

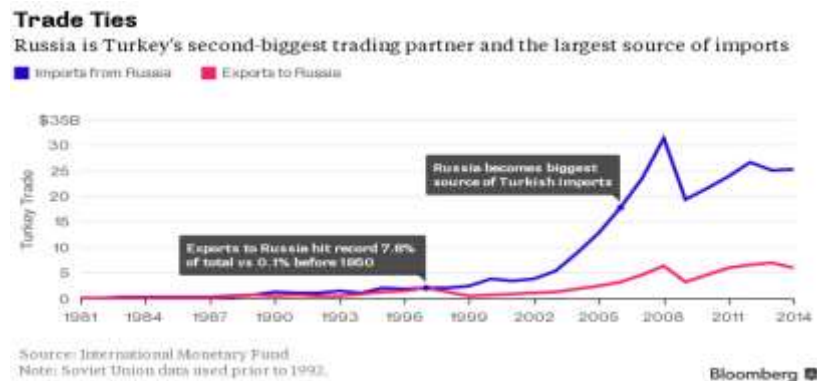
Turkey and Russia have entered into rivalry in strategic geographies which are Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans. Until Russian aircraft was shot down by Turkish F-16s due to the violation of Turkish airspace many times in spite of various warnings, Ankara had made enhancing affairs with Russia. Furthermore, the trade with Russian Federation has started to improve and Turkey tend to establish deep rooted financial and energy ties that led to way for cooperation on political and security cases. Turkey and Russia have proclaimed strategic partnership in 2010 which included high level cooperation council, annual summits and joint strategic planning group charged with advancing economic, political, and cultural and security cooperation.¹⁶ However economic cooperation has been one of the important pulses between two countries. For instance, Russia was Turkey’s second trade partner after Germany. In addition, cooperation in military base was processing until aircraft crises. It is important to point out that Turkish-Russian figures ought to be analysed significantly and particularly to study the role played in Neo-Eurasianism ideology. As it is known that Eurasianism is a

¹⁴ <http://politikaakademisi.org/2013/04/08/aleksandr-dugine-gore-ankara-icin-yeni-avrasyacilik/>.

¹⁵ Marlene Laruelle, “Russo-Turkish Rapprochement through the Idea of Eurasia: Alexander Dugin’s Networks in Turkey,” *The Jamestown Foundation*, April 2008, p.3, accessed April 4, 2016 from http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/Jamestown-LaruelleRussoTurkish_01.pdf.

¹⁶ Hasan Kanbolat, “Davutoğlu in Moscow: New era in Turkish-Russian Relations”, *Cihan News Agency*, January 24, 2012, accessed April 7, 2016 from <https://www.cihan.com.tr/en/davutoglu-in-moscow-new-era-in-turkish-russian-relations-612920.htm>.

Russian ideology that emerged in 1920s and 1930s and restructured right after the collapse of Soviet Union, which asserts that Russia's mission is in Asian territories. Alexander Dugin who has been a famous Geopolitics and Neo-Eurasianism thinker stresses on that Russian-Turkish dialogue has to be more visible and gaining fresh insights into the networks enhancing the new alliance between Ankara and Moscow governments. Russian Federation was Turkey's principal partner since 2008. Mutual trade between two countries reached to 30 billion dollars in 2011 in spite of the fact that energy imports of Turkey had approximately of this trade volume.¹⁷ Russia has been named as a Turkey's third biggest export market that consists of textiles and some consumer products. Furthermore, tourism between Turkey and Russia has expanded and grew further with the beginning of visa free travel after April 2011.¹⁸



Source:

http://www.zerohedge.com/sites/default/files/images/user3303/imageroot/2015/11-overflow/20151128_turk1.jpg.

The understanding of Turkish Eurasianism has been lacking in basic principles and theories; that's why it cannot be an alternative for new expansion and is not substantially sufficient for being ideology and strategy. Eurasian Union that is in the context of Turkish Eurasianism has an ideological potential for Caucasia, Middle Asia, Ukraine and Black Sea regions because there has been economic advantages for Turkey's national interests. Another significant reason is Russia and Middle Asia region promise a great financial and commercial opportunities and a chance to gain new strong markets as well. The understanding of Eurasian Union has a potential for finding out a permanent solution in conflictual regions as a part of Turkey's national interests over the geography. Another significant factor to Turkey's interest on Eurasia is she can be bridge between Western and Asian actors in order for latter's integration with the international system. Therefore, Turkey ought to collaborate with Russia in various political and economic headlines instead of clash of national interests.

¹⁷ The Observatory for Economic Complexity, "Countries – Economic Complexity of Turkey: Visualizations", accessed April 7, 2016 from <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/tur/>.

¹⁸ Stephen J. Flanagan, "The Turkey-Russia-Iran Nexus: Eurasian Power Dynamics", Center for Strategic and International Studies, The Washington Quarterly, Winter 2013, p.167, accessed April 4, 2016 from https://csis.org/files/publication/TWQ_13Winter_Flanagan.pdf.



Source: <http://sendika10.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/lavrov-putin-erdogan-davutoglu-osman-orsal-reuters.jpg>.

The position of Russian Federation has been shaping with energy perspective in Turkey's Eurasian strategy. Particularly, bilateral energy affairs represent some mutual interests but also competitive. As it is known that, Turkey is an energy dependent country that seeks to balance its necessities for secure supplies from Russia with its request to be a critical energy terminal between supplier and demanding countries. Turkey's perspective towards Russia is reducing its unilateral dependency on Russian natural gas and oil through diversification drives.¹⁹ Caspian Basin and Black Sea region are vital geographies for Turkey's Eurasian strategies that design the Turkey's ambition to play a key role in expanding the East-West energy corridor. However Russian Eurasian perspective does not show any coherence with Turkey's point of view. Moscow wants to control the energy from Black Sea and Caspian regions in order to not lose energy monopoly in energy market.



Source: http://3.bp.blogspot.com/ufXoXpdMDkA/VZ3VuNFNVFI/AAAAAABZE/DK4pcaKDPak/s1600/Turkey_Russia_2.png.

¹⁹ Tuncay Babali, "The Role of Energy in Turkey's Relations with Russia and Iran," *The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Discussion Paper at the Workshop on The Turkey, Russia, Iran Nexus: Economic and Energy Dimensions*, Hosted by the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey, Ankara, Turkey, March 29, 2012, p. 2, accessed April 4, 2016 from http://csis.org/files/attachments/120529_Babali_Turkey_Energy.pdf.

Moscow tend to use Turkey's excessively dependence on its own energy sources to place pressure on Turkey to disgrace the TAP-TANAP and block intentions to link between Caspian area gas producers and European markets. Azerbaijan and Turkey have been collaborating on exposing named as Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) aiming to bring Caspian gas through the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) to the Turkish-Greek border and from there to South-Eastern Europe via Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) and regional routes.²⁰



Source: <https://global.handelsblatt.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Where-our-natural-gas-comes-from-01-655x393.jpg>.

3. THE TWO GREAT GEOPOLITICAL CRISES SERIOUSLY AFFECTING CURRENT TURKISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

3.1. The Ukrainian Crisis

Prior to mention the impacts of this crisis on the current Turkish-Russian relations, one has to put forward the significance of Ukraine and the brief background of ongoing crisis.

After the official downfall of the Soviet Union in December 1991, one of the states that gained its independence was Ukraine. In the post-independence period, Ukraine has been a playing field between the Russian Federation and the West given Kiev's geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic importance.²¹ Also due to the changes in the administrative staff of Ukraine several times since the independence, the country has been stuck between Moscow and the West. In November 2013, the then President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych did reject to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union and suspended the preparation committee working on this deal by showing the national security as the main reason. After that he did negotiate and signed a \$15 billion agreement with Kremlin. The pro-Westerners have not accepted this initiative of Yanukovych and organized demonstrations against him. Then, as

²⁰ Kim Younkyoo, Stephen Blank, "The New Great Game of Caspian Energy in 2013-2014: 'Turk Stream', Russia and Turkey", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2016, p. 38.

a result of several events, Yanukovych has forced to resign from his post. In addition to this, the crisis has spread to other parts Ukraine namely Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. Since that time, the tensions between Kremlin and the U.S. led Western Bloc have been escalated thanks to the mutual embargoes and rigid statements.

Ukraine, positioned in the passageway of the Eurasia's steppes, requires following a versatile continental catchment area policy in linkage with acquiring one side at Europe and one other Asia. It holds the capacity of turning out to be a power thanks to its being a strategic transit way of energy, its demographic composition and the military capacity. The geographical location at the land linkage area of Europe-Asia en route East-West and Baltic-Black Sea channels on the South-North route does make Kiev an important balancing factor. Ukraine is also a very significant country for due to its geostrategic location between Russia and "Real Europe."²² In Russian strategic thinking, the Ukraine's lands have been viewed as a crossing area, a strategic barrier and a buffer zone separating the foreigners and Russian in the whole history. Also Ukraine represents one of the largest countries of Europe with area of 603.000 kilometer-square and 45 million-population and the second most significant country of Eastern Europe following Russian Federation. Moreover she, as the member of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) since 1992 after gaining its independence in 1991, is regarded as the third largest country in the CIS following Russia and Kazakhstan. It holds critically significant seaports name Odessa and Sevastopol as well as thanks to its military strength and geography, it represents as one of the countries that can challenge the Russian Federation. The following factors can explain the Ukraine's importance for Moscow;²³

1. Three quarter of Russian natural gas exports is provided from Soviet pipeline system located at Ukraine,
2. Ukraine is also a source of nourishment for Russia,
3. In the geopolitical sense, the Eastern Ukraine is the heartland of Russian industrial complex,
4. Dnieper River, a central transit route for Moscow's allies, is not streaming into Western Russia but to the Eastern Ukraine,
5. The Black Sea Armada positioned at Sevastopol Harbour does represent the sole real armada of Russia that can be benefited in warm seas and
6. Majority of Russian-originated population takes place approximately to the Ukrainian borders. Furthermore, Kremlin's passage can be easily constrained at the North Caucasia.

²¹ Murat Necip Arman, Hikmet Mengüaslan, "Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası Çerçevesinde Ukrayna Krizi", in *Avrupa Birliği'nin Dış İlişkileri: Bölgesel Politikalar, Bölgeler ve Uluslararası Aktörlerle İlişkiler*, ed. Uğur Burç Yıldız, (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2015), pp.68-77.

²² Tolga Bilener, "Ulus-Devlet Olma Sürecinde Ukrayna", in *Değişen Dünyada Rusya ve Ukrayna*, ed. Erhan Büyükkakıncı, (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2004), p. 311.

²³ Fevzi Yıldırım, "Russia-Ukraine Intercourses within the Geopolitical Power Centers in the 21st Century/ 21. YY'da Rusya ve Ukrayna'nın Jeopolitik Güç Merkezleri Bağlamında İlişkileri", in *Mavi Karadeniz Kongresi: Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum - Çatışma Çözümü, İşbirliği ve Demokratikleşme / II. Blue Black Sea International Congress on Politics, Economics and Society: Prospects of Conflict Resolution, Cooperation and Democratization*, eds. Alaeddin Yalçinkaya, İsmail Numan Telci and Derya Değer, (Ankara: Barış Kitabevi, 2012), p. 185.



Source: <http://theglobalstate.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Ukraine-Map.jpg>.

Theoretically and discursively, the Eurasianism is built on the radical use of power in most of the geopolitical strategies that will be applied within the foreign policy toward Turan geography. In that sense, it is suggested that Moscow should benefit from separatism and ethnic problems with a vengeance. When all these things are done, it is emphasized the holding of *Great Power/Derjavnost* approach as the authoritarian and statist culture of Russia within the context of the future policies.²⁴ That kind of point of view is seen as Eurasia's future. It can be understood from this assumption that such kind of a geopolitical picture drawn by Eurasianists will presumably separate some of Russia's neighbours as "enemies" and "friends". For instance, states having borders with Russia namely Baltic States, Poland, Turkey and Azerbaijan are "unacceptable neighbours" for Eurasianists due to the policies followed by these states. The Eurasianist theories seen as "Russia's Mission" are presented as an ideological and doctrinal program pursued within the post-Soviet land. In Vladimir Putin's Eurasianist understanding, at first, there exist two geopolitically central lines and Moscow's priorities in that regard. The main aim in the Eastern Line is not to allow Belarus out of Russia's control and in parallel with this, to re-establish Russian control over Ukraine against the NATO enlargement and the political and economic influence of the EU. The target in the Southern Line in which Central Asia and Caucasia takes place, is to bring Moscow's position into an advantaged one by saving Kremlin from the weaknesses of its Achilles' Heel. In that sense, it has to be taken into account that a dual strategy is carried out in Russian foreign policy toward the realization of these targets. The first one is to bring these regions economically dependent to Kremlin in that the economic control will be culminated in with the political control. Secondly, Russia aims not to lose its control over these regions and therefore not to tolerate the direct access by an external power that is mostly the United States through at least cooperating with other regional powers over these regions in the near term.

Within that context, the relationship between Kyiv and the Western world should be briefly discussed in order to better understand the ongoing crisis. From the independence to the mid-1990s, Leonid Kravchuk, the then president of Ukraine, has pursued a foreign policy by not taking into account the relations with the European Union very much. But after 1994, Leonid Kuchma has issued a Strategy Document for the Integration with the EU under his multidimensional foreign policy approach.²⁵ The Partnership and Cooperation Treaty signed with the EU was approved in 1998 and started to participate TACIS Programme. Ukraine did become the member of Council of Europe in 1995. During that time, Kyiv has also established relations with NATO and participated to the Partnership for Peace Programme. In 1997,

²⁴ Sezgin Kaya, Meşdi İsmayilov, "Rus Avrasyacılığı ve Jeopolitik Bir Varlık Olarak Doğu Algısı", in *Rusya'nın Doğu Politikası*, ed. Sezgin Kaya, (Bursa: Ekin Yayınevi, 2013), pp. 31-32.

²⁵ Mission of Ukraine to the European Union, "Ukraine-EU Relations: Historical overview", accessed March 30, 2016 from <http://ukraine-eu.mfa.gov.ua/en/ukraine-eu/relations>.

NATO-Ukraine Commission was set up and then Kyiv has begun to take place in NATO's military exercises and peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo.²⁶ As it can be seen from these developments, Ukraine has established affiliations with the Western institutions and has added the European dimension to its foreign policy in the first ten years of her independence. Nevertheless, these activities of Ukraine should not be perceived as a challenge or break-up from Russian dimension because Moscow has also been in same type of relations with her Western partners.

The post-2003 term in which Ukraine-West relations has intensified symbolizes actually the time frame that the Western states have attached special importance to the Black Sea region. When the U.S. policies are closely examined in this term, it can be seen that Washington has developed policies toward this region and has made several initiatives for establishing influence in the Black Sea region after its activities in the Middle East and Afghanistan.²⁷ Especially after the first ten years of independence, the White House has abandoned "First Russia" Approach while developing relations with these states as well as has followed policies that would provoke Russia using post-Soviet countries or would underestimate Kremlin. Washington has set up military relations with these states, primarily with Georgia, organized joint exercises and sent economic and military assistance. U.S. has also supported the Colour Revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia with the target of forming governments in these countries to corroborate Washington and integration with the West. In addition to this, she has openly provoked the Russian Federation through the request to widen the Operation Active Endeavour to Black Sea by alleging the security gap in this region. The White House has also come into forefront the memberships of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO in NATO 2008 Bucharest Summit. But this has failed due to not getting support from Germany and France. Besides this, within the security document published by Ukraine in 2010, it has been stated to follow the policy of not entering into military alliances meaning the membership to NATO is out of question.²⁸



Source: <https://ktwop.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/nato-expansion-image-mike-faille.jpg>.

In that process, one of the most important issues for Ukraine has been its relations with the European Union. The Union has begun to constitute policies regarding its new neighbours

²⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, "Distinctive partnership between Ukraine and NATO", accessed March 30, 2016 from <http://mfa.gov.ua/en/about-ukraine/euroatlantic-cooperation/ukraine-nato>.

²⁷ Fatih Özbay, "21. Yüzyılın Başında Karadeniz'in Artan Jeopolitik Önemi ve Türkiye-Rusya İlişkilerine Etkileri", in *Dünya Jeopolitiğinde Türkiye*, ed. Hasret Çomak, (İstanbul: Hiperlink Yayınları, 2011), pp. 56-57.

²⁸ Richard Norton-Taylor, "Ukraine drops 'unrealistic' plans for Nato Membership", *The Guardian*, May 27, 2010, accessed March 30, 2016 from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/may/27/ukraine-drops-nato-membership-plan>.

located at Caucasia and Central Asia named as former Soviet Union in 2000s.²⁹ On the contrary to the situation in 1990s, the EU has not neglected this region anymore and has developed several initiatives and policies arranging its affiliations with close neighbours including Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Russian Federation and Trans-Caucasia. The Union has bilateral projects with the regional countries within the context of bilateral partnership and cooperation agreements, economic assistance programs, trade relations and different framework programs. In the post-2004 period, in addition to these bilateral programs, the EU has started to initiate multilateral and regional programs.

The first program of EU is *European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)*. With this initiative, developed in 2004 and including Algeria, Armenia, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, and Palestine under the occupation, Syria and Tunisia, the Union has aimed to enhance relations with its 16 close neighbours. Within the milieu of ENP, Ukraine has signed Action Plans with the EU members and has been watched out by implementation committees and sub-committees.³⁰ The second program developed by the EU toward the former Soviet geography has been “*The Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative*.”³¹ The main aim of this initiative is to develop the cooperation of the EU with the countries ranging from Black Sea to the Central Asia. The central cooperation subjects encompass democracy, respect to human rights, good governance, security, resolution of frozen conflicts, energy, transportation, environment, maritime policy, fishery, trade, research and education linkages, employment and social relations, regional development and the advancement of cross border cooperation. The Black Sea Synergy countries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Turkey and Russian Federation. The Black Sea Synergy Policy has been designed as a complementary initiative by the EU to the enlargement process with Turkey, to the strategic partnership relations with Russia and also to the Neighbourhood Policy.

The third policy developed by the Union is the *Eastern Partnership* started in the 2009 EU Prague Summit.³² By this policy it has been aimed to develop relations between EU and Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia. The Eastern Partnership envisages the preparation of cooperation agreements and comprehensive free trade arrangements and therefore the integration of these countries with the European economy gradually. With this policy, the European Union has projected to set up relations with the non-governmental actors in these countries namely civil society organizations, parliamentaries, regional and local administrations. For that aim, the Union has formed many sub-commissions. Ukraine has positively responded to all of these policies and has tried to strengthen the European dimension of its foreign policy in the post-independence period. But the golden term in these relations has been the realization of Orange Revolution and coming into the power of Viktor Yuschenko in Ukraine.³³ After that, Action Plans have been prepared with Ukraine at the end of 2004 and EU has published two National Programmes in 2007 and 2009, a Country Strategy Document (2007-2013), the Country Report (2004), four reports and three action plans on the implementation and progress of Neighbourhood Policy. In November 2009, EU-

²⁹ Fraser Cameron, *An Introduction to European Foreign Policy*, (London: Routledge, 2007), pp.107-108.

³⁰ European Commission, “European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations”, accessed March 30, 2016 from http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/overview/index_en.htm.

³¹ Esra Hatipoğlu, “Avrupa Birliği’nin (AB’nin) Karadeniz ve Güney Kafkasya Siyaseti (2000-2013)”, in *Hazar’dan Karadeniz’e Stratejik Bakış*, ed. Okan Yeşilot, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2014), pp. 91-93.

³² Jeanne Park, “The European Union’s Eastern Partnership”, *Council of Foreign Relations Backgrounders*, March 14, 2014, accessed March 30, 2016 from <http://www.cfr.org/europe/european-unions-eastern-partnership/p32577>.

³³ “EU-Ukraine relations: A geopolitical test”, *Euractiv*, February 10, 2012, accessed March 30, 2016 from <http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/linksdossier/eu-ukraine-relations-a-geopolitical-test/#ea-accordion-timeline>.

Ukraine Cooperation Council has adopted EU-Ukraine Union Treaty and has negotiated the Deep Free Trade Agreement and signed this agreement in 2014 after the crisis in Ukraine.



Source:

http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/02750/3011EUROMAP_2750077b.jpg.

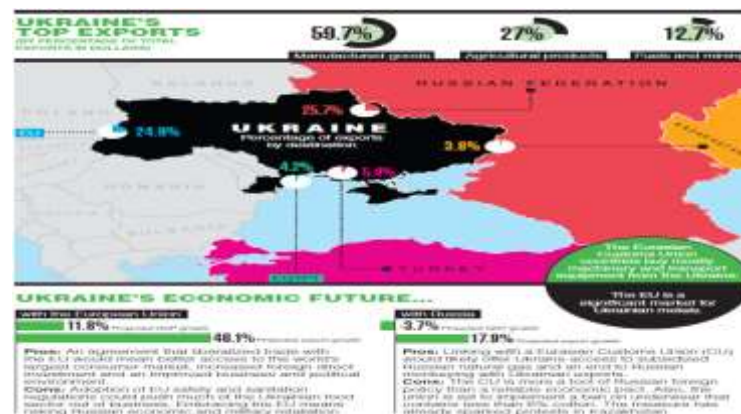
When the Ukraine-West relations is observed, it is clearly seen the progress when compared with the previous term. In this term, even Ukraine has applied to NATO membership. But Kyiv's Western policies have to be evaluated in duality. Primarily, Ukraine's integration with NATO has ended up due to the Russian opposition. On the other hand, the Western policies of Kyiv have continued because Kremlin has not objected to the relations of Ukraine not including membership perspectives as long as Moscow protects its superior position. The latest crisis in Ukraine has turned out to be so deep in relation with Moscow's opposition to the Union Treaty and Deep Free Trade Treaty put forward by the EU.

The Kiev's declaration on freezing of the preparations of the commission for Partnership Agreement with the EU one week before the EU Eastern Partnership Summit to be held in Vilnius on November 28-29, 2013 has surprised the international actors. Although the signing of this agreement is dependent on the implementation of economic arrangements prerequisite for Kyiv, the suspension of this preparation commission with the reasoning of national security has created disappointment in Europe, satisfaction in Kremlin and shock effect in third parties. This situation has paved the way for protest demonstrations of pro-Europeans in Ukraine. But this has been an outcome of several processes. As aforementioned, the Eastern Partnership and Partnership Agreement is not "a waiting room" in the process ending up with the membership.³⁴ The countries do not have the membership perspectives. However, the Eastern Partnership does not form a barrier on the way to the membership. Despite the fact that the countries including in this partnership do not have same targets in their relations with Brussels, their joint target is to strengthen relations with the EU. Given this factor, the Eastern Partnership has been a response of Brussels to the wills of those countries. By this initiative, Brussels has targeted to form a good-governed, composing of friend countries, having high welfare and stable region in the direction of several targets ranging adoption of EU rules and implementations by these states in their domestic policies.

The EU Association Agreement projects the empowerment of cooperation via Common Foreign and Security Policy, Justice and Home Affairs, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade

³⁴ Please see, "From Eastern Partnership to the Association: A Legal and Political Analysis", edited by Naděžda Šišková, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, accessed April 1, 2016 from <http://www.cambridgescholars.com/download/sample/61723>.

Area, Environment, Transportation and Education.³⁵ Together with the signing of Association Agreements, the countries within the Eastern Partnership have to adopt and implement legislations extending from environment to trade and consumer rights in line with EU Acquis Communautaire. Also, the countries signing Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with the EU are responsible to pursue 350 EU legislations within a ten year period. The economic outcome of this agreement within the context of countries signing Association Agreements is to include in a 500-million consumer market and an economic system worth of €12.9 trillion. On the other hand, it has to be pointed out that there exists another alternative before Ukraine which is named as Customs Union composed of 170-million consumer market and total worth of €1.4 trillion with the participation of Belarus and Kazakhstan under the leadership of Kremlin.



Source: <http://www.canadianbusiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Ukraine-infographic.png>.

The main request in the protest demonstrations started in November 21, 2013 was the signing of an association agreement with the Union. As this request was not met, a deal on covering \$15 dollar-financial aid and discount on gas price was signed between Putin and Yanukovich in December 2013. Besides, the adoption of omnibus bill including several legislations stretching from taxation to freedom to assembly has resulted with the second wave of protests. In addition to pro-European groups, the ultra-rightist radical groups and parties have participated to these meetings.³⁶ The joint request of these groups was the early elections. Given the fragmented structure of Ukrainian opposition has paved the way for the unsuccessful efforts for the continuation of Yanukovich's posts. When the protests were intensively ongoing, Yanukovich has offered the Prime Ministry to Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Vice Prime Ministry to Vitaly Kličko in order to decrease the tension. The German, Polish and French Ministers of Foreign Affairs have also attended the meeting among Yanukovich, Yatsenyuk (leader of Motherland Party), Kličko (the leader of Udar – Punch Party) and Thahnybok (the leader of Svoboda – Freedom/Liberation). On the other hand, as a result of the negotiations in which the Human Rights Commissioner from Russia also participated, an agreement including almost all of the requests of the opposition has been signed. But the other parties and groups not attending this conference have rejected the deal and decided to continue their protests. Therefore, the only article coming into the effect was the re-functionalization of 2004 Constitution meaning the return to parliamentary system.

³⁵ Çaşın, *Novgorod Knezliği'nden XXI. Yüzyıla Rus İmparatorluk Stratejisi*, p. 406.

³⁶ Habibe Özdal, Hasan Selim Özertem, Kerim Has, Mehmet Yegin, "Ukrayna Siyasi Krizinde Rusya ve Batı'nın Tutumu", Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu, Analiz No: 28, March 2014, accessed April 1, 2016 from http://www.usak.org.tr/images_upload/files/analiz_28_2014_Ukrayna.pdf, pp.3-4.

The new administration has started to implement politically determinant important decisions thanks to the Parliament's having of its old power, the resignation of 60 deputies from Yanukovich's Party of Regions and the opposition's getting the majority in the parliament.³⁷ After that, very rapid developments have been experienced in the Ukrainian politics. The discharging of Yanukovich, the releasing of former Prime Minister Yuliya Timoshenko, the decision to make the early presidential elections on May 25, 2014 and the dissolution of Berkut – the special police force of Ukraine -, the cancellation of the Law on Minority Languages have occurred just within the two days. When the new administration has established on February 27, 2014, Arseniy Yatsenyuk has become the Prime Minister. Since then, Moscow has concentrated its efforts on Crimea via benefiting from political and military factors with the intention of regaining to keep its advantageous/privileged position in the Ukrainian policy through following a more proactive policy. After the constitution of pro-Western government, important initiatives have been seen in order to end the political turmoil in Kyiv. However, the developments occurred in the Eastern part of Ukraine – especially in Crimea – has deepened the concerns regarding the fate of Ukraine.



Source:

http://www.alternet.org/files/styles/story_image/public/story_images/7316606d707d8e48b13d4c28823130f4a0c05839_0.jpg.

The Moscow's interest to Crimea can be traced back to the long struggle of Russian Empire's will to access the Black Sea region during Catherina the Great Administration (1762-1796). This struggle has resulted with the signing of Küçük Kaynarca Treaty in 1774. In 1783, Crimea has become the part of Russian Empire. For centuries, the Black Sea Region has formed a very significant place for Moscow due to its being the cornerstone to the Straits, Dardanelles and the Mediterranean.³⁸ These have also constituted the main parts of Russian target to reach into the warm seas. For long years, the approach of Kremlin toward the Straits and the Mediterranean has followed a dual strategy varying according to its power and influence at those times. When the Russians have believed in their relative weakness, they have approached to the Mediterranean and Turkish Straits issue within the context of national security and they have pressurized the Turkish government to prevent the entrances of foreign ships to the Black Sea. The relatively powerful Russian governments have aimed to pass the Straits and control the Mediterranean with the intention of harming the French influence in Middle East as well as threatening the British accession to India.

³⁷ "Timeline: Ukraine's political crisis", *Al-Jazeera*, September 20, 2014, accessed April 1, 2016 from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/03/timeline-ukraine-political-crisis-201431143722854652.html>.

³⁸ Alaeddin Yalçinkaya, "Karadeniz Politikalarında Anahtar Bölge: Kırım", in *Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Üzerine 3. Uluslararası Mavi Karadeniz Kongresi: Uyuşmazlık Çözümü, İşbirliği ve Demokratikleşme, 15-17 October 2012, Sakarya Üniversitesi, Adapazarı*, eds. Yıldırım Turan, Alaeddin Yalçinkaya and Ertan Efeğil, (İstanbul: Gündoğan Yayınları, 2013), pp. 119-120.

Following the October 1917 Revolution, Russia has been withdrawn from WWI, declared the secret international agreements in the pre-revolution period and searched for participating into a new political system in order to initiate a new term. The newly established Soviet government has stayed committed to its protectionist approach toward Turkish Straits till the end of WWII.³⁹ Soviets have supported Turkey against the Western powers on this issue. However, Soviets moving from its WWII victory as a catalyst has demanded a military base on the Turkish Straits in 1946. Although Soviets have been unsuccessful on making this demand accepted to Ankara, they have continued to work on setting up an unchallenged navy commissioned to access Mediterranean in the Black Sea.

The extra importance attached by Moscow to the naval power after coming into the force of Vladimir Putin has been visible in several national security, foreign policy and military doctrines in recent years. The Putin Administration has adopted many strategic doctrines throughout these years. Among them, the Russian Naval Doctrine 2020 declared in July 27, 2001 has a very important place in that regard.⁴⁰ According to this doctrine, Russia has been one of the most significant naval powers due to its own historical and geographical position and its ability to access the three oceans around the world. The doctrine putting special importance to the naval power of the country enlists a set of measures enabling the continuation of Russian superiority and enables the movements of Russian naval fleets around the world. This doctrine defines the Sevastopol as a key military base for the Black Sea Fleet in which this base's rent will end in 2042. Alexander Fedotenkov, the deputy admiral of Black Sea Fleet, has underscored his country's intention to stay in Sevastopol after 2042 on May 11, 2013. In addition to the Russian naval base in Sevastopol, Moscow has established new bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia following 2008 Russian-Georgian War in order to consolidate its hegemon position in the Black Sea. From Ankara's point of view, the Russian presence in the Mediterranean/Black Sea has turned out to be a more disturbing factor in the light of Moscow's decisions to station naval fleets in Crimea and Georgia. This doctrine has also brought a new perspective to the traditional naval strategy by emphasizing the sea routes in the exportation of Russian energy resources. The Nord Stream in the Baltics, South Stream and Blue Stream in the Black Sea do epitomize the practices of this Russian naval strategy.



Source: http://didafpq4qto6w.cloudfront.net/ie/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2015/01/goldcore_bloomberg_chart2_15-01-15.png?810a68.

³⁹ Alastair Kocho-Williams, *Russia's International Relations in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), p.89.

⁴⁰ Ruslan Pukhov, "Russia's Naval Doctrine: New Priorities and Benchmarks", *Valdai Discussion Club Opinion-Highlights*, August 17, 2015, accessed April 3, 2016 from http://valdaiclub.com/opinion/highlights/russia_s_naval_doctrine_new_priorities_and_benchmarks/.

For the past twenty years, the Russian governments have taken many steps to renew its own traditional naval strategy in line with the changing global conditions and its strategic targets. On the contrary to this transformation process, the Black Sea region has progressively turned out as a central region within the context of global and regional competition.⁴¹ Additionally, this region has historically been one of the hotspots of Turkish-Russian competition. In the post-Soviet era, the traditional competition between Ankara and Moscow has been parallel with a closer collaboration and bilateral relations. When the Russian military bases in Sevastopol and Abkhazia mean negative developments for Ankara, Turkey's superiority in the Black Sea, close bilateral relations between Ankara and Georgia as well as Ankara's support to the NATO membership processes of Sofia and Bucharest are not welcomed by Kremlin. Though the existence of problems, Bulgaria and Romania have voiced their objections against the enlargements of Washington in the Black Sea and at the same time, they have further developed their relations with Kremlin via the realization of joint projects namely Blue Stream and South Stream. Moreover, the Russia's traditional aim of accessing to the warm seas continues to be stable and keeps its vitality within the framework of current circumstances. In the same vein, while the Black Sea is forming to be a key component of Russian naval strategy, the Crimea is serving for a suitable transportation route among Russia and its partners in the Near East and Southern Europe. Furthermore, this region also has very rich mineral resources. The suitable climate of this peninsula makes it an appropriate touristic place for millions of Russians. Therefore the region as a harbour city means a strategic value for the Russian Federation as it did serve for the same role during the Cold War.⁴²

Following the 1991 August Coup and the separation of Republics, the Soviet Union has totally collapsed and Crimea has become an autonomous republic within the current independent Ukraine.⁴³ But the peninsula's ethnic Russian population has begun to work on activities toward the immediate independence of Crimea and then its reunification with the Russian Federation. In parallel with this, the nationalist forces in Moscow have declared their supports to the Russian community in Crimea. The continuing existence of former Soviet Union's major naval base in Sevastopol has transformed the Crimea's status into a fundamental issue of disagreement between Moscow and Kyiv. According to the Memorandum of Budapest signed between Washington, London, Moscow and Kiev on December 5, 1994, the Ukrainian government would abolish all its nuclear arsenals in return for the commitment of the Ukraine's territorial integrity by the signatory states. But Moscow has violated this only after 20 years later. The current situation addresses that the Moscow's activities will continue in the forthcoming years. Another important issue in that regard is the signing of an international agreement between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma. Within the milieu of this deal, the Black Sea Fleet of Soviet Union will be divided between Russia and Ukraine. The share of Ukraine in the fleet will be transferred to the Russia in return for Kiev's energy debts. A more important aspect of this deal has been the signing of Sochi Protocol determining Crimea's status as an Ukrainian soil by the two parties.

⁴¹ Ömer Göksel İşyar, *Karşılaştırmalı Dış Politikalar: Yöntemler – Modeller- Örnekler ve Karşılaştırmalı Türk Dış Politikası*, (Bursa: Dora Basım-Yayın, Dağıtım, 2013), pp.569-572.

⁴² Please see, Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Kırım: Rusya için Vazgeçilmez Yarımada", in *Uluslararası Politikada Ukrayna Krizi*, eds. Hasret Çomak, Caner Sancaktar and Zafer Yıldırım, (İstanbul: Beta Basım, Yayım, Dağıtım, 2014), pp. 289-308 and Işık Kuşçu, "Kırım'ın Rusya Katılımının Bölgesel ve Küresel Etkileri", in *Uluslararası Politikada Ukrayna Krizi*, eds. Hasret Çomak, Caner Sancaktar and Zafer Yıldırım, (İstanbul: Beta Basım, Yayım, Dağıtım, 2014), pp. 309-334.

⁴³ For more info please see, Amanda Paul, "Crimea one year after Russian annexation", *European Policy Centre Policy Brief*, March 24, 2015, accessed April 3, 2016 from http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_5432_crimea_one_year_after_russian_annexation.pdf.



Source:

http://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/624/media/images/73286000/gif/73286674_crimea_black_sea_fleet_624.gif

It can be summarized the fundamental guidance principle of Kremlin’s Crimea policies as the region’s ultimately belongingness to the Russian Federation in which this approach supports the Kremlin’s policy of backing up the ethnic Russian minority in the region and also the assessment of sensitive/vital subjects in the Crimea as a component of its domestic affairs.⁴⁴ The suspension of association agreement talks with the EU as a last minute decision by Yanukovich has triggered the massive protests in the country. Following the first demonstrations in Kiev, the pro-European groups have organized activities though the court ban toward the public demonstrations forcing Yanukovich to resign. In the same vein, the pro-Russian groups have invaded the state buildings including Crimea Parliament, Prime Ministry and other important institutions and also the buildings owned by private persons. With the support of Moscow, they have replaced Ukrainian flags in the official buildings with Russian flags. The anti-government protests starting at the end of November 2013 has been totally derailed as a result of violent protests toward the 16 January laws. Russia as the biggest neighbour of Ukraine has been silent toward these events in the first times shocking everybody. The reason of this is the Sochi Winter Olympics having the total budget of \$50 billion. Given the boycotts against this organization regarded as a respective organization in terms of showing Kremlin’s new face, Putin has preserved its silence in order not to harm this Olympic Games.



⁴⁴ Kathryn Stoner, “Putin’s Search for Greatness: Will Ukraine Bring Russia the Superpower Status It Seeks?”, *Foreign Affairs*, March 2, 2014, accessed April 3, 2016 from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-03-02/putins-search-greatness>.

Source: <http://lovelace-media.imgix.net/uploads/33/89b5d2c0-6c29-0131-beb0-3273f4812729.gif?>

However, after the establishment of new government in Ukraine, Yatsenyuk's Prime Ministry and the ending of the Russian language as the official language with the abolishment of the Law on Minority Languages have resulted with the acceleration of pro-Russian demonstrations in Crimea Autonomous Republic, a part of Ukraine, and have spread to the other cities in the North Ukraine.⁴⁵ Moscow's military activities have followed these demonstrations. Primarily, Moscow has mentioned that these activities have been planned before these developments in Ukraine; she has realized a four day military exercise with the participation of 150 thousand soldiers on February 28, 2014. The experts on this issue have underlined that Moscow has made efforts for the consolidation of its position in the region via this military exercise participated by all the military elements. In that sense, Dmitri Trenin has emphasized that this should be evaluated as Moscow's warnings to Kyiv not to use force in the Crimea. When the preservation of Crimea's autonomous status and the presence of 60% Russian population in Crimea, it is not a surprise for pursuing a pro-active policy toward Crimea by Kremlin and also the militarily direct/indirect landing of Moscow in Crimea should not be considered as surprise.

On March 16, 2014, pro-Russian groups have organized a referendum on the status of Crimea in which its result was pre-destined/determined.⁴⁶ The independence referendum boycotted by 99 per cent of Crimean Turks has come to pass with the 97 per cent of support for the peninsula's re-unification with Russian Federation. This result has not been recognized by several Western governments including United States and Turkey. But after two days from the referendum, Putin has initiated on a signing of draft law envisaging the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and the establishment of federal regions in the famous Ekaterininsky Saloon in the Kremlin Palace. This plan has been consecutively approved by State Duma and Russian Federation Council on March 20-21, 2014. The Western governments have not been able to response this movement and they have declared several ineffective sanctions toward the Russian interests. Among the proposed suggestions are; restrictions to the movements of Russian currency and Russians, the exclusion of Moscow from future G-8 meetings and the suspension of military and civilian relations with the Russian government. The final measure regarding this issue has been adopted during NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs' meeting held on April 1, 2014, Brussels. The steps taken by Western governments are probably ambiguous to force Kremlin to step back from its current stance. To put it frankly, Kremlin has openly been successful in imposing its conditions to its rivals for gaining a victory in the Crimea. As a result of these developments, the Crimean Tatar National Council has organized an urgent meeting in Bahçesaray, March 29, 2014. In this meeting, the participants have made a decision envisioning the initiation of necessary political and legal processes for the provision of national and regional autonomy of Crimean Tatars in their historical fatherland. This decision has authorized the Crimean Tatar National Council on contacting with the several international organizations namely United Nations, Council of Europe and Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe. The council members have put forward that Crimean Tatar community can only have been protected by international guarantees. Following this decision, the entrance of Mustafa Abdülcemil Kırmıoğlu, the leader of Crimean Tatars and a member of Ukraine Parliament since 1988, has been banned by Russian security forces positioned in this region. The following is the response of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey to this ban;

⁴⁵ Okan Yeşilot, "The Crimean Crisis in the Context of New Russian Geopolitics", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2014, pp. 177-178.

⁴⁶ Caşın, *Novgorod Knezliği'nden XXI. Yüzyıla Rus İmparatorluk Stratejisi*, pp. 417-418.

“There is no legitimate basis and no justification for the fact that Mr. Mustafa Abdülcemil Kırımoglu, the leader of the Crimean Tatar Turks, was prevented from accessing his homeland, Crimea on 3 May. We condemn such action which is unacceptable in every way and find it worrisome. Moreover, we have learned that an inquiry was launched after Crimean Tatars cheered their leader Mr. Kırımlioglu, whom they had come to meet, and showed a democratic and peaceful response, and that Mr. Refat Chubarov, President of the Crimean Tatar National Assembly (Majlis) was threatened that the Assembly could be abolished. Although we expect this will not happen, we consider that adopting such a menacing attitude toward the Crimean Tatar National Assembly, which is the sole legitimate representative body of the Crimean Tatar Turks who have always voiced their opinions and demands peacefully and who have been uneasy during the extraordinary circumstances that they have been through, is a serious development which will escalate tensions in the region. In this context, we would like to remind all the concerned parties that the Ukrainian Parliament has recognized the Crimean Tatar National Assembly, the executive body of the Crimean Tatar National Congress, as the fully authorized organ of the Crimean Tatar people by its resolution dated March 20, 2014, and that similar decisions have been taken at the local level. We expect that due respect will be shown to the democratic rights and freedoms of the Crimean Tatar Turks and to their sole legitimate representative body.”⁴⁷



Source: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/images/enformasyon/gg/disisleri-bakani-davutoglu-mustafa-kirimoglu_yla-gorustu/%5CCOG_3740.JPG.

After this ban, a prosecutor in this region has started an investigation regarding the activities of Crimean Tatar National Council led by Refat Chubarov. On May 9, 2014, Putin has gone to the Crimea to participate the Victory Day, the commemoration ceremonies of Soviet victory against Nazi forces. By emphasizing the fact of the re-unification of Crimea with the Russian Federation as a historical reality, Putin has alleged that the year 2014 will be a year that the local population chooses to be with Moscow and verifies their commitment to the historical reality. On May 11, 2014, the pro-Russian groups in Lugansk and Donetsk have organized a referendum toward the foundations of People’s Republic of Lugansk and People’s Republic of Donetsk consecutively and their declaration of independence from Ukraine.⁴⁸ Following this referendum, the newly founded People’s Republic of Donetsk has declared its unification with the Russian Federation. In response to this, Washington and Brussels have announced that they would accept this decision as invalid due to the illegality of referendum and the EU has adopted additional economic sanctions against Kremlin. On May 13, 2014, Ahmet Davutoğlu, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, has received Mustafa Abdülcemil Kırımoglu with an official group composed of council members. Davutoğlu has underlined that Ankara’s Crimea policies are based on the principles and the most important

⁴⁷ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “No: 140, 5 May 2014, Press Release Regarding the Prevention of Abdülcemil Kırımoglu’s entry to Crimea and Threats against the Crimean Tatar National Assembly”, accessed April 4, 2016 from http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-140_-5-may-2014_-press-release-regarding-the-prevention-of-abdulcemil-kirimoglu_s-entry-to-crimea-and-threats-against-the.en.mfa.

⁴⁸ Yeşilot, “The Crimean Crisis in the Context of New Russian Geopolitics”, p.179.

issue in that regard is to find a peaceful resolution to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine within the context of diplomatic means and the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Davutoğlu has also highlighted that the priority of the Turkish government has been the preservation of presence of Crimean Tatars in the peninsula and the benefiting of political, cultural and economic rights just as other Ukrainian citizens. Davutoğlu has also reminded their continuous efforts regarding the existing situation in Crimea within UN, OSCE, EU, Council of Europe and the Islamic Cooperation Organization platforms. During this meeting, Davutoğlu has appreciated the efforts of Kırımoglu in which they have been regularly contacting and expressed their wish to Kırımoglu's return to the peninsula as the leader of Turkish community. In response to this, Kırımoglu has mentioned that the Turkish Ministers of Foreign Affairs have always been welcomed and they have believed Turkey's efforts. Kırımoglu has also emphasized that Ankara has been playing an important role in this crisis.



Source: <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/>-

[1xSDnz9RCKw/UxSVuplvcpI/AAAAAAAAA1o/SPjBpD0Zwqk/s1600/CRIMEA3.png](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/1xSDnz9RCKw/UxSVuplvcpI/AAAAAAAAA1o/SPjBpD0Zwqk/s1600/CRIMEA3.png).

Ankara does not recognize the results of the independence referendums held in Donetsk and Lugansk on May 11, 2014 as well. The following is the statement of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on this issue;

“The illegal referendum held in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Lugansk on 11 May 2014 and its possible outcomes are null and void and are not recognized by Turkey. As we have stated on various occasions before, the crisis in Ukraine cannot be solved by unilateral decisions, but on the basis of independence, territorial integrity and political unity of Ukraine through reconciliation and dialogue in accordance with international law. In this framework, we consider that the so-called referendum held in the eastern regions of Ukraine

will not contribute to the settlement of the crisis and that it constitutes a development which might further deepen the crisis in the country. We call upon all parties once again to come together within the framework of the abovementioned principles for finding an immediate political solution to this crisis which have negative consequences in our region and beyond.”⁴⁹



Source: http://lifeinua.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/18-08_eng1.jpg.

Another important statement of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning this issue is on the 70th Anniversary of the exile of Crimean Tatars from their homeland. The statement is as follows;

“We commemorate with great sadness and grief the 70th anniversary of the exile of the Crimean Tatar Turk people by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on 18 May 1944. Seventy years ago, today, nearly 250,000 Crimean Tatar Turks, mostly comprised of children and women, had been taken away from their homes at midnight by armed soldiers, piled into freight wagons under inhuman conditions and sent forcibly into exile to remote regions, thousands of kilometres away from their homeland, without provisioning of any food or water. Half of these uprooted people lost their lives due to severe conditions of hunger, negligence and diseases which they were subjected to during the journey and in the locations where they were settled. The deep pains of this massive persecution in history, which we sadly remember today once again, have left indelible marks on the collective memory of the entire Turkish nation. We wish God’s mercy on all our kinsmen who lost their lives because of the exile. Decades later, Crimean Tatar Turks have started to return to their homeland from 1989

⁴⁹ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “No: 148, 14 May 2014, Press Release Regarding the Referendum Held in the Eastern Regions of Ukraine”, accessed April 4, 2016 from <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no-148-14-may-2014-press-release-regarding-the-referendum-held-in-the-eastern-regions-of-ukraine.en.mfa>.

onwards (as a result of their struggles under the leadership of Mustafa Abdülcemil Kırımoglu). Yet, today more than one hundred thousand Crimean Tatar Turks are still unable to return to their homeland, Crimea. On this occasion, we reiterate once again our strong support to the Crimean Tatar Turks who are now living through extraordinary conditions. We reaffirm our belief that the Crimean Tatar Turk people will overcome the challenges which they are facing today in unity, integrity and tranquillity through democratic and peaceful methods; and thus they will maintain their existence in Crimea by protecting their rights and interests. Turkey will fulfill all of its duties in order to help them achieve this objective.”⁵⁰

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of Turkey since August 2014, has attended to the World Congress of Tatars held in Ankara between August 1 and 2, 2015. His statements on the annexation of Crimea by Moscow should be given at that point in order to better comprehend the official state policy of Turkey regarding this issue. The following are the remarks of President Erdoğan;

“Unfortunately, throughout the course of history, Crimean Tatar's right to live a dignified, free life in their homeland was ruined by collective deportation and repression. And today we are witnessing the illegal annexation of the Crimea and causing sympathy events. Turkey's main priority in settling Ukraine's crisis is peace, prosperity and security of Crimean Tatars. In order to overcome repression and oppression facing Crimean Tatars, the Turkish Republic had been negotiating with all parties and making necessary proposals and steps.”⁵¹

On March 9-10, 2016, Petro Poroshenko, the current President of Ukraine, has paid an official visit to Ankara. He has been received by his counterpart Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey.⁵² In their talks, Erdoğan has stressed that “Turkey has not recognized the illegal annexation of Crimea, and it is not going to do so. Russia had breached international law by the illegal annexation of Crimea.” In this visit, Poroshenko has called for Ankara to involve in international talks with regard to the Crimean issue encompassing the ‘Geneva Plus’ format (Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the European Union). He has also accentuated that “Mr. President [of Turkey] and I have called for joint steps towards the de-occupation of Crimea. With this in mind, we plan to pool our efforts at international organizations, on the basis of new international formats, among them ‘Geneva Plus’ involving Budapest Memorandum guarantors, Turkey and Ukraine.”

⁵⁰ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “No: 150, 18 May 2014, Press Release Regarding the 70th Anniversary of the Exile of the Crimean Tatar Turks from their homeland, Crimea”, accessed April 4, 2016 from <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no-150-18-may-2014-press-release-regarding-the-70th-anniversary-of-the-exile-of-the-crimean-tatar-turks-from-their-homeland.en.mfa>.

⁵¹ “Turkey will never recognize Russia’s annexation of Crimea – Erdogan”, *Ukraine Today*, August 2, 2015, accessed April 4, 2016 from <http://uatoday.tv/politics/turkey-will-never-recognize-russia-s-annexation-of-crimea-erdogan-467453.html>.

⁵² “Recep Tayyip Erdogan: Turkey do not recognize Crimea’s annexation by Russia”, *Joinfo*, March 10, 2016, accessed April 4, 2016 from http://joinfo.com/world/1015134_recep-tayyip-erdogan-turkey-do-not-recognize-crimeas-annexation-by-russia.html, “Erdogan and Poroshenko want to return Crimea”, *Pravda*, March 10, 2016, accessed from April 4, 2016 from <http://www.pravdareport.com/video/10-03-2016/133778-crimea-0/> and “Erdogan Promises to Help Ukraine Return Crimea: We Have a Plan to Take the City Back”, March 11, 2016, accessed April 4, 2016 from <http://awdnews.com/top-news/erdogan-promises-to-help-ukraine-return-crimea-we-have-a-plan-to-take-the-city-back>.



Source: <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/assets/resim/album/konuk/2016/k-20160309-ukrayna-28-BT.jpg?width=850>.

3.2. Syrian Crisis

Syria has been one of the main conflictual and problematic countries since the collapse of Ottoman Empire. During Cold War period, Baas regime in Syria was in cooperation with Soviet Union, it provided financial and military support Assad regime against American hegemony. Syria had been experienced three military coups, 21 cabinet changes and there had been two military dictatorships in the country. After the collapse of Cicekli government that had been demolished by military coup in February 25th, 1954, Baas regime become into prominence in Syrian political life, thus, it is realized that Soviet Union (USSR) took an important place for Syria with Baas regime authority in the country.⁵³

The geo-strategic position of Syria and its neighbourhood with Turkey and Iraq were a significant factor for the security of the balance between Eastern and Western periphery. In addition, this characteristic of Syria made contributions efficiently to hinder “encirclement policy” against Soviet Union. Undoubtedly, one of the main reasons of Soviets ambitions in order to establish an authority on the Middle East was nearly different from Western powers, especially American regional aims. According to Western point of view, The Middle East meant “oil”, but USSR did not concern about the future of “oil” indeed. The regional policies of Soviet Union were reactionary policy to hinder American unique hegemony on the region. As it is known that, USSR preferred to be ally with Syria and Egypt which do not have any oil resources, and this was a one of main example of USSR strategy towards the Middle East region. The first fundamental developments that caused Syria rapprochement with Soviets was Suez Crisis. The crisis that held in 1956 contributed Soviets prestige on the region but USA declared Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957 as opposed to dramatically increasing of Soviet prestige. USA President Eisenhower thought that Soviets desired to become unique political power but USA would not tolerate Moscow rapprochement on that geography. Since the beginning of 1957, Syria began to change its axis to leftist ideologies and there was a communist impression in basic cities of Syria as well. One effective Syrian cabinet member was Halit el-Azm who had been strict communism sympathizer, visited Moscow to make political and economic agreements with Soviets in 1956. According to these comprehensive agreements, Soviets promised to provide 500 million dollars financial and military aids which were used for instruction of new port in Latakia, roads, railways and plans of new energy projects to Syrian government. It has to be stressed on that Soviets had a creditable place in providing national security of Syria.

⁵³ Fahir Armaoğlu, *20. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi:1914-1995*, (İstanbul: Alkım Yayınevi, 2010), Seventeenth Edition, p. 514.



Source: <http://www.noquarterusa.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/syria-russia-us.jpg>.

Since the beginning of Arab Spring or Arab Awakening, thinkers have been irresolute about its impacts on the Middle East. However, Arab Spring was one of most significant outbreaks to have emerged in the region, nearly transforming its social and political structure and reshaping them to new regional order. In this conjuncture, Russian Federation has inevitably determined new political approaches towards the region. Especially the beginning of uprising in Syria has threatened Russian Mediterranean policies, and it has caused to take necessarily precautions to protect national interest on Tartus and Lazkia regions. Moscow believes that the collapse of Assad regime would lead to gain strength of jihadist powers and trigger instability in the Caucasus and Southern Russia. Moscow's has an important role in Syrian policy and economy. Russian investors have been key actor, having invests up to 20 billion dollars in Syrian economy, that's why, Russian companies have been anxious to lose their investments in Syria due to removal of Assad from the government.⁵⁴ Furthermore, arms sales have a vital place in Russian and Syrian affairs because it makes Moscow's position stronger and authoritarian in Syrian foreign policy perspective. Moscow is planning to use Syrian military infrastructure that is named as Tartus as a part of its strategy to continuation of Russian naval forces in Mediterranean.⁵⁵

The economic ties between Russia and Syria are strong. Moscow has accepted to restore the Syrian government's debt to the former Soviet Union. Russian President Putin has maintained controlling Russian foreign policy on Syria but he ought to consider Washington's national interests as well. In addition, the President Putin's involvement in the Syrian case has quite impact on Russia-Syrian relations. It is clearly seen that Putin does not trust on Assad regime utterly. During 2000s, Assad started trying to repair affairs with Europe, but when he realized that initiative had been failed, the foreign direction of Syria was turned to Russia again. President Putin has been very rational leader in Russian foreign policy. This characteristic of Russian leader is going to hinder and serious confrontation with the West regarding Syria and preclude any deep relations with Damascus.

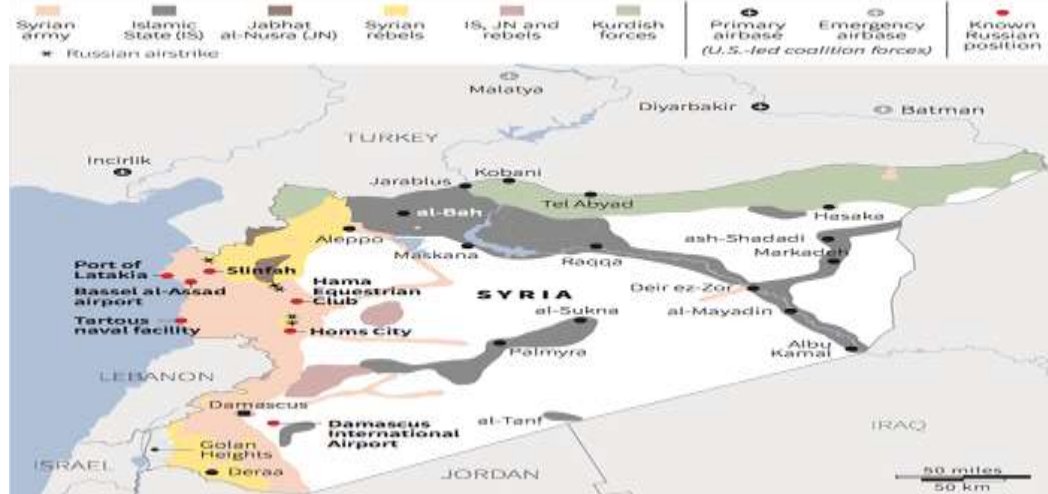
Moscow has been trying to make a dialogue with all forces in Syrian territories. Until now, Russia has come into contact with different opposition groups in Syria. The Kremlin points out that they spent 500 million dollars on their military operation in Syria which initiated on

⁵⁴ Anna Borshchevskaya, "Russia's many interests in Syria," *Policy Watch*, January 24, 2013, accessed April 8, 2016 from <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/russias-many-interests-in-syria>.

⁵⁵ Nikolay Kozhanov, "Russian-Syrian Dialogue: Myths and Realities", *Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, Vol: 5, Issue: 1, 2014, p. 2.

September 30.⁵⁶ Probably Moscow has been trying to demonstrate that it is going to be ready to contact with certain conditions and ready to talk to the new Syrian authorities right after collapse of Assad regime. The fallen regimes that have been post-Mubarak Egypt and post-Qaddafi Libya are main examples of states supported by Russia. Moscow was one of country to begin dialogue with Egyptian government right after collapse of Mubarak regime. Seriously, Arab Uprising was a threat for relations between Russian authorities and religious leaders of the Middle East. Moscow evaluates positive improvements of these relations one of the main factor that has been directly affecting the political stability of the country.

Russian air forces violated Turkish airspace while maintaining air operation upon Syria on 3rd and 4th October, 2015. Turkey and NATO opposed and protested Russian violation of international law and warned Russian authorities to be more cautious about national borderlines. Russian officials indicated that the reason of the violation was due to bad weather conditions and error in navigation system but NATO did not trust Russian explanations. In the beginning, Moscow has thought that the threat of ISIS cannot be extinguished without American and Turkish political and military contributions, that's why; Putin opt to determine Russian strategies in the context of the member states of international coalitions due to hinder international crises and conflicts, and take corporate decisions as well.⁵⁷ Afterwards, Russia has decided to share its Syrian policies with Iran which has been closed ally within Russian relations.



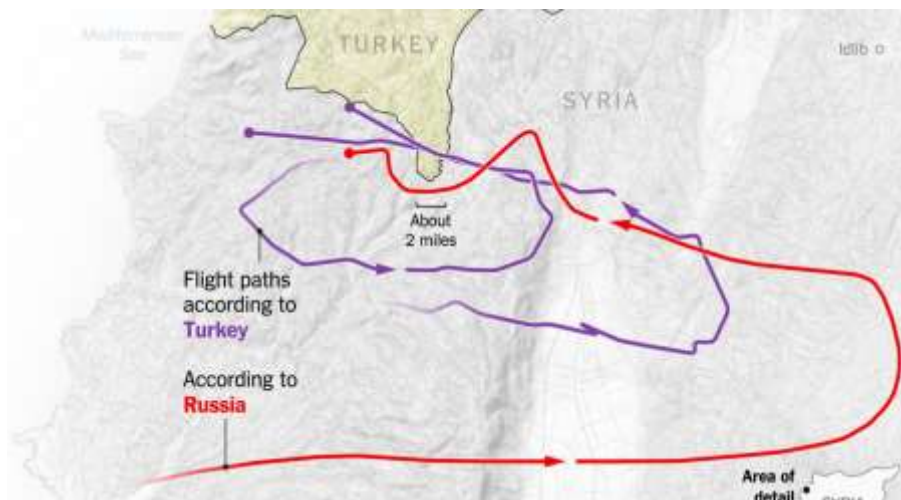
Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/cm/lb/6819476/data/syria-russian-airstrikes-data.png>.

President Putin has declared using power in Syria case to Western power at the same time Russian foreign minister Lavrov put forward the idea of Syrian territorial integrity should not be dismantled. In a short time, Russia sent its air, navy and land forces to Syrian territories and initiated comprehensive, influential military operations against ISIS. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a strict speech against Russia which was military operation upon Syria cannot be tolerated and it is against Turkish national interests on the region. Another statement from Turkish side was if Russia maintains its untrue attitude and accuse Turkey of dropping Russian aircraft on Syrian borders, they have to lose various national advantages related to

⁵⁶ Mansur Mirovalev, "Syria's war: A showroom for Russian arms sales", *Al Jazeera*, April 6, 2016, accessed April 8, 2016 from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/syria-war-showroom-russian-arms-sales-160406135130398.html>.

⁵⁷ "Russia hits 112 Islamic state targets in Syria- Defence Minister", *TASS News Agency*, October 7, 2015, accessed April 8, 2016 from <http://tass.ru/en/defense/826924>.

Turkey. As a matter of fact, the main reason of crisis between Turkey and Russia is the consequences of Georgian and Crimean military interventions and its impacts on Syria case. President Putin has indicated that Russia has continued to provide military training and logistics support to Syria, thus, he has formally proclaimed to accept military support to Assad regime. According to Aleksey Maleşonko, Moscow and Damascus has been two significant ally and Russian navy forces has a reparation base in Tartus for a long time. Furthermore, Moscow has continued to provide political support by arms shipping since the beginning of civil war in Syria. The thoughts of Moscow have been shaping on non-interference position against ISIS terror, that's why; they assert that Assad regime and Kurdish forces ought to be arming to battle with ISIS. It has to be point out that the center of Bagdad intelligence and coordination service has intensified Russian position in Iraq. In addition, Moscow has made collaborations with PYD terrorist groups that have received great amount of arm support from Russia.



Source: <https://static01.nyt.com/images/2015/11/24/world/middleeast/russia-turkey-jet-shoot-down-maps-1448382166586/russia-turkey-jet-shoot-down-maps-1448382166586-facebookJumbo-v3.png>

Turkey's downing Russian war plane has caused to significant results between Russia and Turkey. The claims of Turkish side are Russian war plane violated Turkish air space and it was shot by Turkish military forces within the context of engagement rules. Turkey and Russia has deep rooted affairs for a long time. However, Moscow put forward some provisions in order to rehabilitate relations with Turkey again.⁵⁸ Firstly, Turkey should accept the Russian war plane was shot in Syrian airspace; secondly, Turkey has to apologise for shooting Russian jet, thirdly, punishing all responsible. The question of will Turkish-Russian relations return to old days cannot be answered clearly. The main aim of Russian Federation in Syrian problem is not exactly established on the protection of Baas regime. Fundamentally, Russia has been trying to construct new Syrian political system and order that ought to be suitable for Russian national interests in Syria. Therefore, the prior Syrian strategy of Russia has been shaping on its advantages of Syrian territories, Moscow uses Assad regime for frontage against coalition powers. Actually, Western coalition powers understand that collaboration with Russia on Syrian case will provide privileges against ISIS but they are aware of the facts that some concessions have to be shown mutually in order to reach a permanent agreement. Turkish-Russian relations have to be evaluated with number of serious conflicts which have potential to threaten ties between two states. They have converging and incompatible interests in

⁵⁸ Caşın, Derman, *Rus Dış Politikasındaki Değişim ve Kremlin Penceresinden Yeni Ufuklar*, pp.485-492.

neighbouring territories, thus Turkey and Russia have become two powerful countries in Eurasian and Middle Eastern politics. Turkey and Russia should restore developing multidimensional affairs with Russia; this rapprochement will pave the way for positive consequences for Middle East and Eurasian region.

4. CONCLUSION

The Eurasian Region has been one of the most central regions throughout the world history. Its significance is derived from the location of several great civilizations as well as the presence of vital natural resources namely oil and natural gas and also the strategic trade routes. Given this factor, firstly empires and then nation-states located at this region or states out of this region have been struggling to control this geography which can be named as the "Heartland of the World" as well. In that regard, the relations between the Turks and the Russians, representing the two great civilizations in this huge area, have always been very attractive. During the Ottoman Empire and the Tsardom Russia, these two regional powers have fought for almost 200 years. But after the foundation of Soviet Union as a consequence of October 1917 Revolution and the establishment of Republic of Turkey on October 29, 1923, the affiliations have started to become much positive thanks to the efforts of Vladimir Lenin and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. However, with the beginning of Cold War, Ankara-Moscow relations have deteriorated due to the latter's demands from former's territories. Therefore, Turkey has shifted its direction to Western Bloc in order to preserve its territorial integrity.

The relations have continued that way till the official dissolution of Soviet Union in December 1991. From that time to the beginning of 2000, the Russian Federation has experienced political, economic and social turmoil. In terms of foreign policy, there has been a great confrontation between the two orientations namely Atlanticism and Eurasianism. But with the coming into power of Vladimir Putin in Russian Federation, the Eurasianist School of Thought in which its leading intellectual precursor is Alexandr Dugin has prevailed in that context. The Near Abroad Doctrine declared in 1993 has turned out to be a much more significant within this milieu which envisages the re-establishment of Russian domination in its neighbourhood. In Dugin's Eurasianist Approach, one of the countries that have been coming into the forefront is Turkey. For Dugin, Turkey represents noteworthiness in Eurasia region that the outer powers have been turning their attentions and developing multidimensional policies toward it. Despite the differences in certain areas, according to Dugin, Ankara and Moscow have to set up close relations against the initiatives of Atlanticist Bloc which can be resulted in with the "Victory of Sea Civilization".

In Turkey, the general elections held on November 3, 2002 have surprisedly ended with the victory of Justice and Development Party, established on August 14, 2001. This party has introduced new initiatives in Turkish domestic and foreign policy. Within the context of foreign policy, it has developed the concept of "Strategic Depth" which visualizes the multilateralism in Turkish Foreign Policy by taking into consideration the founding principles of Turkey. In that sense, one of the countries having been a very central one is the Russian Federation. Because for Turkish strategic thinking, developing close multidimensional affiliations with Kremlin is necessary for the resolution of regional frozen conflicts and by this way the spreading of peace, stability and welfare to their neighbourhoods.

From 2002 till the beginnings of 2010s, due to the harmony between Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the relations have experienced its “Golden Age.” Several projects including energy and visa-free travels have been initiated in those years. Nonetheless, the breaking out of two great geopolitical crises namely Ukraine and Syria in post-2011 period have been negatively influential on the continuing Ankara-Kremlin relationship.

The first geopolitical crisis that has been negatively impacting the Turkish-Russian relations is the Ukraine Crisis which started in November 2013. Since the independence of Ukraine in 1991, this country has been a geopolitical field of confrontation between the Atlantic Bloc and the Russian Federation. Given the changes in its administrative structure, Kyiv has shifted its foreign policy orientation from time to time. In November 2013, Viktor Yanukovich, the then pro-Russian President of Ukraine, has suspended the works of EU-Ukraine Preparation Committee for the signing of Association Agreement between Brussels and Kiev by showing the national security concerns as the main reason. Yanukovich and Putin have agreed on a new deal encompassing \$15 billion financial aid to Ukraine. On other hand, the pro-Europeans have objected Yanukovich’s decisions and organized protest demonstrations Kyiv Maidan. Their main aim was the signing of Association Agreement with the EU. The protest have further intensified and resulted with the resignation of Yanukovich. After that, the pro-Europeans have been in power. The Russian side have strongly been opposing to this change of administration and have been labelling this movement as “Coup”. Then the events have spread to the other parts of Ukraine. Ukraine holds a considerable Russian minority in the eastern part of the country, also a vital energy transit route for both Russia and Europe in that 75 per cent of Russian gas going to Europe is passing over the Ukrainian territory. Another important issue in that regard is the existence of Sevastopol in which Russian Federation holds a noteworthy naval base within the context of its Black Sea Fleet. Therefore due to these factors, Moscow has invaded the Crimea and declared its inclusion to the Russian Federation in 2014. This decision has been declared as null and void by the Atlantic Bloc and also Turkey. Both of them has been stressing that this initiative of Moscow is the violation of international law. In that context, Turkey’s main concern is the legal status of Crimean Tatars. Especially after the deterioration of Turkish-Russian relations after the downing of Russian war plane by Ankara in November 2015, Turkey has been increasing its severe criticisms toward Moscow and the highest levels of Turkish state are emphasizing that this illegal invasion of Crimea by Kremlin is/will never be recognized by Turkey.

The second important geopolitical crisis between Ankara and Moscow is the Syrian Crisis which has been continuing since 2011. In 2011, a Tunisian salesman has burned himself and this has triggered a cycle of protest movements in Arab countries named as “Arab Spring or Arab Awakening”. Syria as an important Arab country could not be thought independently from these rebellion movements. Since then, a civil war has been ongoing in Syria between Esad forces and opposition forces. When this clash is harshly continuing in Syria, we can see the phenomenon of terrorist organizations namely Daesh and El Nusra fighting against the current Syrian Regime. This civil war has been turning out to be a “Proxy War” between regional powers and outside powers of the region. On the one hand, the Russian Federation and Islamic Republic of Iran do provide multidimensional assistances including arms supply, financial aids to the existing Syrian Regime. For Moscow, Syria represents a very critical country in that Kremlin has one air base in Lazkiye and one naval base in Tartus which are the only Russian bases in the Middle East. Syria is also essential in Moscow’s strategic point of view to control the Mediterranean. Thus in order not to lose its influence in Syria, the Russian Federation has actively been involving in the ongoing crisis in Syria diplomatically and militarily. On other side of the coin, the Western Bloc including Turkey has been insisting on the resignation of Bashar Esad since the breaking out of this crisis. They have been backing up

the moderate opposition forces in the Syrian Civil War. Given the increasing of ISIS's influence in Syria, Moscow and Washington have been organizing air strikes toward this terrorist organization. In that context, Kremlin has been giving immense military support to Syrian Army in order to fight against Daesh since 2015.

Since the inception of Russian supports to the Syria, there have occurred several crises between Ankara and Moscow within the context of airspaces namely the downing of Turkish fighter jet and violations of Flight Info Region (FIR). However, the greatest crisis in this manner has occurred on November 24, 2015. On this date, a Russian Sukhoi SU-24 type combat aircraft has violated Turkish borders. Two Turkish F-16s have warned this plane ten times in five minutes. But Russian jet has underestimated these warnings and as a result of this, it has been downed by Turkish fighter jets. Since then, a great crisis has been experiencing with Ankara and Moscow. Both sides have been accusing of each other since that time. After this event, Kremlin has been following hard stances toward Ankara by applying embargoes and suspending the visa-free travels. The crisis has been ongoing with the mutual and very harsh declarations.

We do believe that these two great geopolitical crises are seriously affecting the current Turkish-Russian relations. As long as the parties do not reach compromises regarding these issues, the high-tensioned situation in Ankara-Moscow will likely to continue in the forthcoming years. For us, due to the high mutual interdependence between these two countries, they have to find a common ground for the sake of their future affiliations as well as their relations with the other regional powers and outside regional powers. If these two geopolitical crises are peacefully resolved in the near term, that time will be the re-beginning of new era in Turkish-Russian relationship. We would like to conclude our paper by the expression that "*The Best Friends or even Close Allies Cannot Agree on Every Issue*"

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