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Reflections on the Centenary of Türkiye - Hungary Diplomatic Relations

Editor
Mehmet Oğuzhan TULUN



Ankara • 2026

Report

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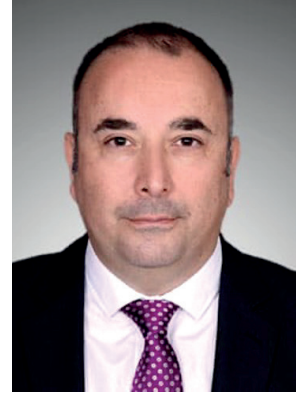
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GİRAY SADIK

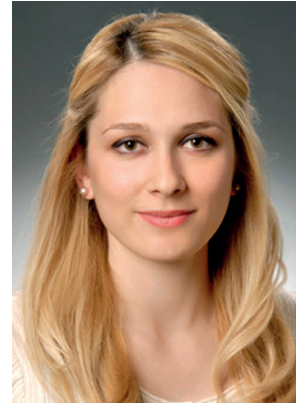
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She served for more than seven years as an EU Expert at the Turkish Ministry of Trade, where she primarily worked on EU-funded capacity development projects aimed at enhancing the functioning of the Türkiye–EU Customs Union. Drawing on her professional experience, she also obtained the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification issued by the Project Management Institute (PMI).



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EDITOR'S NOTE

The report before you was originally part of a collaborative book project between the Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) in Ankara, the Eurasia Center (EC) of John von Neumann University in Kecskemét, and the Magyar Külügyi Intézet (Hungarian Institute of International Affairs - HIIA) in Budapest. Initiated in the 2024, the project was meant to provide space for scholarly reflections on the 100th anniversary of the Friendship Treaty signed between Türkiye and Hungary.

The book to be produced as a result of this project would have 2 editors (one Turkish and one Hungarian who would jointly write an introduction and an conclusion), 2 forewords (one written by a Turkish author, the other by a Hungarian author) and 5 sections composed of 2 chapters per section (five Turkish and five Hungarian authors). As such, the book would have evenly reflected the perspectives of the Turkish and Hungarian sides.

The 5 sections of the book would have been structured as follows:

- **Section I** - Turkish-Hungarian Relations: From Past to Present
- **Section II** - Turkish and Hungarian Strategic Outlooks
- **Section III** - Türkiye and Hungary within the Security Architecture of Eurasia: Past, Present, Future
- **Section IV** - Türkiye and Hungary as Critical Actors within Eurasia
- **Section V** - Regional Interests and Policies of Türkiye and Hungary in Eurasia

Organized around these 5 sections, the book would have discussed several topics and sought to answer questions such as:

- Turkish-Hungarian relations throughout history. What were the converging and diverging interests of the two sides in the historical process?
- A vision for Ankara-Budapest strategic partnership in the “new Cold War era” (an issue that was in the public’s agenda in 2024-2025). What is the current state of Turkish-Hungarian relations? What are Türkiye’s and Hungary’s security, geopolitical, and geoeconomic priorities

today? What are the reasons for potential conflict and what are the common grounds of cooperation between the two sides in a time of rapid global changes? In mid- and long-term perspective, what policy recommendations can be made for Ankara and Budapest?

Unfortunately, the book project was met with several setbacks that included the departure of the original Turkish editor from the project, administrative challenges and budgetary constraints in the Hungarian side, and the withdrawal of one of the Turkish authors due to personal reasons. So as to respect the efforts of the remaining Turkish authors who had submitted their articles and to share their contributions with the think tank and academic communities and the wider public, AVİM consulted with its Hungarian counterparts to have the Turkish authors' articles published as a standalone AVİM Report. Despite the notable absences from the initial book project, we believe that the articles contained in this report contain valuable assessments and information regarding political history and foreign policy matters pertaining to Türkiye, Hungary, and the Eurasian geography in general.

A recent major development that should be briefly mentioned is the result of the April 2026 legislative election in Hungary. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his Fidesz Party that had been in power in Hungary for the last 16 years suffered major defeat in the election at the hands of Péter Magyar and his Tisza Party. One would initially assume that Hungary under Magyar's leadership might notably alter its foreign policy trajectory. However, considering Magyar has his political roots in Orbán's political movement, it remains to be seen what substantial changes will be witnessed in Hungary's relationship with Türkiye in specific and Eurasia in general.

Have a nice reading and kind regards,

Mehmet Oğuzhan TULUN

Analyst, Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM)

FOREWORD

2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the Friendship Treaty signed between Türkiye and Hungary. A notable feature of this treaty is that it was the first treaty signed after the declaration of the Republic of Türkiye, meaning Türkiye officially began its diplomatic relations with foreign countries through this treaty with Hungary. The treaty was signed on 18 December 1923 in Ankara and came into force after ratification on 22 January 1924. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the treaty, the governments of Türkiye and Hungary have declared 2024 as a cultural year and decided to hold 100 cultural events in each country throughout the year. This book, edited and published jointly by the Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) in Ankara and the Eurasia Center (EC) in Budapest, represents one of the significant scholarly activities marking the centenary.

The foundation of the friendship between Türkiye and Hungary can be said to lie in the kinship relations between Turks and Hungarians. Here are a few concrete pieces of evidence on this matter; the reader may decide the extent of the kinship between the Turkish and Hungarian peoples:

- For centuries, Turkish and Hungarian tribes lived side by side in Central Asia, intermarried, exchanged various needs through barter, and never engaged in significant conflict. While the Chinese, who were defending themselves from Turkish and Mongol invasions, built the world's longest wall to ensure their security, there is no information about any major hostile conflict between the Turks and Hungarians during this period.
- In the 9th century, Hungarian tribes migrated from the north of the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea to settle in Central Europe. The Turks migrating from the south of the Caspian Sea opened the gate to Anatolia with the 1071 Battle of Manzikert. However, it is known that Turkish tribes such as the Huns, Sabirs, and Khazars had entered Anatolia much earlier, and Turkish tribes like the Kipchaks, Pechenegs, and Oghuz, arriving from the north of the Black Sea in the 9th and 10th centuries, were settled in Anatolia by the Byzantines. Thus, the Byzantines were familiar with the Turks long before 1071 and, upon seeing the

Hungarian tribes arriving from the north, referred to them as “the Turks have arrived.”

- Byzantine Emperor Leo, as early as 904, referred to the Hungarians as “Turks” in his writings.
- Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenetos wrote in 950, “The Hungarians spoke Turkish... Each of these eight Turkish tribes does not obey their own princes. Their first leader is a prince from the Arpad family by succession.”¹
- Iranian and Arab historians, like the Byzantines, referred to the Hungarians as “Turks” until they reached the center of Europe. Ibn Rusta, Gardazi, Adü’l Fida, Al Marwazi, Awfi, all describe the Hungarians as a Turkish people. Shukrallah says, “The seven tribes of Turks are called Hungarians; they are of Turkish origin.” Muhammad Katip writes, “The seven tribes are of Turkish origin and are known as Hungarians.” Hajji Khalifa, when mentioning Turks, states, “One of them is also the Hungarians.” Similarly, Hudud Al Alami, after listing the Hungarians, describes them as “all of these mentioned are different categories of Turks in the world.”²
- The Hungarians, like Turks, are warriors; they shoot arrows backwards from their horses just like the Turks. To make their horses run faster, they tie their tails, just as the Turks do.
- The Europeans, throughout much of history, never truly considered the Hungarians as one of their own; instead, they regarded them as the “Attila Tribe.”
- In the monument in “Heroes’ Square” in Budapest, three out of the seven mounted figures representing the tribes that migrated from Central Asia have Turkish names: Leader Arpad (Arpacik), Tas (Tas), and Huba (Hun).

1 Laszlo Rasonyi, *The Successors of the Turkish State in the West and the First Muslim Turks* (Ankara: Turkish Culture Research Institute Publications, 1983), p. 9.

2 András Rona-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), p. 275-277.

- Geza, a descendant of Arpad who led the Hungarians to the Carpathian Plain and unified all Hungarian tribes under his rule while converting them to Christianity, received a golden crown from Byzantine Emperor Michael VII Dukas, symbolizing the recognition and sanctification of his kingdom. This crown, featuring a cross, has relief images around it. Next to Geza's image, it reads in Greek letters, "The Faithful King of the Turks, I. Geza." This crown is currently displayed in the foyer of the Hungarian Parliament.^{3 4}
- In the peace treaty made between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire in 1519, and in the pledge of King II. Lajos to adhere to this document, the Turks are referred to as "Our beloved relatives, friends, and neighbors."⁵
- Since the Ottoman armies first set foot in the Balkans, we see that European powers (like the Holy Roman Empire) always placed the Hungarians against the Turks, thus forcing the Turks to fight against their relatives with the aim of demoralizing them. During the sieges of Belgrade by Murad II and Sultan Mehmed II, they were forced to face Hungarian King Janos Hunyadi (at that time, the city was in Hungarian hands and was known as "Nandorfehervar").
- The Battle of Mohács in 1526 was a victory for the Turks, but a disaster for the Hungarians. At Mohács, the Hungarian army was routed, leading to the death of King Janos Hunyadi. Subsequently, the Hungarians came under Ottoman rule lasting 145 years. This was followed by 232 years of Habsburg and then 40 years of Communist rule. Despite this, there is much evidence showing that the Hungarians did not lose their bonds of brotherhood with the Turks, evidenced by the fact that Hungary is the European country that best preserves Turkish heritage (examples include the baths, mosques, and tombs). To give specific examples: 1) When Buda Castle was recaptured from the Ottomans, the Hungarians took care of the body of the last governor of Budin who fell in battle, Abdurrahman Abdi Arnavut Pasha, and built his grave, 2) Ottoman tombstones remain exposed in the suburbs of Buda Castle, untouched

3 Tarık Demirkan, *Hungarian Turanists* (Istanbul: History Foundation Yurt Publications, June 2000), p. 19-20.

4 Dr. David Simfai Kara, "Are Hungarians Turks?", speech at the third session of the Turkish Council Media Forum held in Istanbul on October, 22-24, 2021.

5 Demirkan, *Hungarian Turanists*, p. 9-10.

to this day, 3) One of the symbols of Eger is a minaret, the remaining part of an Ottoman mosque, 4) One of the churches in Pecs is has a crescent dome due to its conversion from a mosque and the Fatiha verse is preserved on the church's wall, 5) Hungarian heroes such as Imre Thököly, II. Ferenc Rakoczi, Kossuth Lajos, and many others sought refuge in Turkish lands during their struggle for freedom against the Habsburgs.

- The Hungarians have not only preserved Turkish artifacts, but have also made efforts to find, restore, and maintain new ones. Examples include: 1) The Kanuni Park and symbolic tomb opened in Zigetvar in 1994, 2) The discovery and excavation of the tomb where Kanuni's internal organs were buried, located on Grape Hill near Zigetvar, made into a new site for visitors with the support of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) and academics from Pecs University (Hungary) and Middle East Technical University (Türkiye), 3) The establishment of the "Gül Baba's Heritage Preservation Foundation" to enhance cultural relations between the two countries, 4) The erection of various busts, and so on commemorating historical figures.
- For the first time in the world, scientific research on Turkish studies was initiated with the establishment of the Chair of Turkology by the renowned Hungarian Turkologist Armin Vambéry at the University of Budapest in 1870.⁶
- The Turan Society was first established not in Türkiye, but in Hungary in 1910. The brochure announcing the society's foundation stated its purpose as follows: "To study the science, art, and economy of the Asian and related European peoples, to promote and develop them both domestically and abroad. Also, one of our aims is to integrate the interests of these brotherly peoples with Hungary."⁷
- The Hungarian Academy of Sciences opened its first branch abroad in Istanbul in 1917, publishing many valuable academic materials.
- Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Gombos said in a speech on 22 July 1932; "I am strongly committed to the Turks in three respects: First,

6 Demirkan, *Hungarian Turanists*, p. 9-10.

7 "Turan Society Program", Budapest, 1910.

our common ancestry; second, their high military skills; and third, the revolutions made with Atatürk's genius."⁸

- We learn from the report sent to Budapest by Ambassador Jungerth-Arnothy Mihaly, whom Atatürk received in January 1934, that Atatürk said; "If the two peoples, knowing their kinship when our countries were neighboring, had leaned on each other and strengthened their powers, the history of Eastern Europe in recent centuries would have taken a completely different course. Now that they have closed the chapter of the religious period, there is no obstacle to solidifying the brotherly people's friendship and cooperation in every field."⁹

Recently, we observe that Turkish and Hungarian leaders have been careful to pursue policies aimed at developing political, economic, and cultural cooperation between the two countries, as suggested by Atatürk in 1934.

In the articles by esteemed scholars from both countries included in this book, you will find details about the various relationships between Türkiye and Hungary and information about the capacities both countries possess for further development of these relations.

Undoubtedly, the activities being conducted on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship will make significant contributions to further development of relations between our countries.

Ender ARAT
Ambassador (Ret.)

⁸ Hungarian National Archives, MNL. OL. DL. 24393, 28/III/1519.

⁹ Report No. 2/fön.pol/1934 dated January 10, 1934, sent by Ambassador Jungerth-Arnothy Mihaly to Foreign Minister Kalman Kanya. (MOL, K 63, 1934, 32/7)

TURKISH-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS: FROM PAST TO PRESENT

Alev DURAN*

Introduction

The close acquaintance between the Turks and the Hungarians, which has continued since the earliest periods of history, has gone through various phases. The history of the Hungarians, a people of Finno-Ugric linguistic and ethnic origin who inhabit Hungary, one of the strategically significant countries of Central Europe, began in the lands of Central Asia from the earliest times. Due to various economic, geographical, and sociological factors, the Hungarians gradually left their original territories and, over a period of more than a thousand years, migrated to the lands of Central Europe, where they eventually established a new homeland (Karatay, 2018).

During these migrations, especially after the 5th century AD, the Hungarians, who had merged with various tribes in different cultural settings and regions, underwent significant cultural and social transformations (Güngörmüş, 2010: 17-19). They migrated from their homeland in the Ural Mountains region to Western Siberia, and from there migrated to the Caucasus region in 463 AD. Initially under the influence of the Onogur language and later living under the rule of the Khazar Empire along with other Turkic tribes, the Hungarians were referred to as “Turks” in Islamic, Armenian, and Byzantine sources during the 800s and 830s. They first settled in Levédia, north of the Black Sea, and later migrated to Etelköz.

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Due to pressure from the Pechenegs, they left these two homelands and, in 895/896, settled in the Carpathian Basin. This settlement is referred to as “Honfoglalás” (Yusufoğlu, 2006). This study explores the complex historical relationship between the Turks and the Hungarians, tracing the evolution of Hungarian identity from its Finno-Ugric roots through significant migrations and cultural interactions, particularly during their settlement in the Carpathian Basin.

Historical Turkish-Hungarian Relations

In the 9th century, the Hungarians began migrating westward and by the 11th century, they arrived in their current homeland, establishing dominance there. In their former homeland, the two peoples, who lived intertwined in what can be considered a shared existence, were bound by familial ties. However, Turks and Hungarians encountered each other as rivals when the Ottoman Empire, founded by the Turks, sought to expand westward, impacting Hungarian territories. The great Hungarian Kingdom, which had been established in the Carpathians, became a defender of Europe and Christianity, while the Turks, who championed Islam and expanded their borders towards Christian Europe, frequently clashed with the Hungarians up until 1526.

After settling in these lands, the Hungarians continued their contact with the Turks, particularly during the Ottoman period, when the two faced each other once more. The Battle of Mohács, where the Turks emerged victorious after prolonged wars, is recorded as a major triumph in Turkish history, while in Hungarian history, it remains a deeply traumatic defeat with lasting impacts. The Hungarians were unable to receive the support they sought from Europe and the Vatican. This situation revealed their sense of isolation within the Slavic world. Mohács marked a turning point in relations between the two nations. In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire conquered Hungary and ruled the region for approximately 150 years. However, following the defeat at Vienna in 1683, the Ottoman Empire lost the Hungarian territories. Soon after, the Hungarians eventually came under the control of Catholic Austria.

In the mid-19th century, Austria’s “Greater Germany” propaganda sought to keep Hungary distanced from Europe. After the Compromise of 1867, resentment towards the Hungarians from Slavic and Romanian elements grew, with these dissatisfied nations adopting anti-Hungarian rhetoric. As dissatisfaction increased, Hungarians turned to the Ottoman Empire as a refuge

in their struggle for freedom, and their relations evolved into friendship with the Ottoman state, alongside exiles such as Imre Thököly, Ferenc Rákóczi, and Lajos Kossuth. A symbol of this friendship was the return of the Corvin Books to their rightful place in Hungary, a gesture celebrated with ceremonies in Hungary. During the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, further examples of this courteous relationship with the Hungarians can be seen (Duran, 2020a).

Turkish-Hungarian relations have developed and changed in various ways throughout history. During this period, the diplomatic maneuvers between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire were particularly notable. These maneuvers generally took the form of official visits, diplomatic gifts, correspondence, and other gestures of protocol.

The movements of small Balkan nations, which gained strength with the weakening of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century, particularly in the southern border region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Balkan Peninsula, played a significant role in shaping world history (Armaoğlu, 2007: 148). These small communities, characterized by diverse ethnic and cultural structures, fought for independence from the Ottoman Empire, under which they had been for five centuries, with the support of other states, making the region even more complex. On 5 October 1908, Austria-Hungary occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina, which provoked the strongest reaction from Serbia. Serbia viewed this occupation as a severe blow to the Balkan nationalist movements. In a sense, the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina served as a precursor to World War I. With the loss of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ottoman Empire's influence in the Balkans further diminished. Other small Balkan states also sought to seize this opportunity to gain territory from the Ottomans (Çolak, 2022).

One of the consequences of the 1908 Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis for the Ottoman Empire was the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. During this period, Austria-Hungary adopted a pro-Bulgarian stance in response to Bulgaria's occupation of Edirne, while Turkish sympathy prevailed in the Hungarian public opinion. Another significant issue during the wars was the asylum of Ottoman soldiers in Hungarian territories. Although Austria-Hungary did not participate in the Balkan Wars, in accordance with international law, it disarmed and interned Ottoman soldiers who had sought refuge in the Sanjak region after being overwhelmed by the numerically and materially superior Serbian and Montenegrin forces, treating them as prisoners of war and providing for their needs (Tosun Saral, 2021).

In the war that reshaped the 20th-century world, the two nations found themselves on the same path, and the fact that Turks and Hungarians fought on the same front in World War I brought the two nations closer. During the war, they were part of the same bloc, with Turkish troops fighting in Galicia, while Austro-Hungarian artillery battalions fought alongside the Turks in the Gallipoli Campaign and the Sinai-Palestine front (Karbi, 2016). Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman soldiers fought together as allies on other fronts as well, including the Suez Canal and Syria. The Austro-Hungarian forces supporting the Ottoman soldiers on the front consisted of various classes and roles, including water engineers, artillerymen, communications officers, doctors, nurses, and technical personnel, numbering between 7,000 and 12,000. (Tosun Saral, 2021). The Turkish and Hungarian soldiers, fighting side by side during this period, strengthened the bond between the two nations.

During the war years, one notable example of cooperation and solidarity between the two nations was the establishment of a Hungarian hospital in Istanbul. The Hungarian Red Cross Society significantly contributed to the Turkish army by founding the hospital, providing for its needs, raising funds, and brought in cholera serums (Fodor, 2020). Cooperation during World War I was not limited to military affairs. A key institution symbolizing partnership between the two sides was the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Istanbul (KMTI) that opened on 21 November 1916, and remained active until it was forced to close. It played a pivotal role in cultural politics in Istanbul between 1916 and 1918. Additionally, both sides made symbolic gestures by renaming major streets in each other's capitals. In December 1915, Budapest's Museum Boulevard (Múzeum körút) was renamed Sultan Mehmet Boulevard, while a street in Istanbul's Şişli district was renamed Hungarian Brothers Street.

The alliance between Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, two defeated powers in World War I, drew both states into a shared fate under the terms of the Armistice of Mudros. Both empires fought as allies in the war, and both emerged from it defeated, losing their empires. The post-war peace treaties imposed by the Allies fractured both nations. However, the Turks refused to accept this so-called peace treaty and took up arms to pursue a war of liberation. Meanwhile, the Hungarians, facing their second major defeat in history, watched their old allies, the Turks, closely. After World War I, Hungary had signed the Treaty of Trianon on 4 June 1920, losing two-thirds of its territory and suffering a significant loss in terms of land and population (Dilbaş, 2019: 88). This situation had a devastating effect on the Hungarians,

who, in their own words, felt “crucified and dismembered” (Mayor, 1970: 621). The Turkish War of Liberation, led by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) against imperialism in Anatolia, was thus closely followed by the Hungarian people, and after Trianon, the Turkish resistance against the Treaty of Sèvres gave them great hope. They saw the Turkish War of Liberation as an inspiration for their revisionist policies and as a model for breaking free from the post-war treaty they had signed.

The semi-official relations during the Lausanne peace negotiations became official with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne. Hungary was one of the first countries to recognize the newly established Republic of Türkiye (Turkey), and the first friendship treaty between the two countries was also signed on 18 December 1923, laying the foundation for contemporary ties (Emre Saral, 2017: 170). The relationship between Turks and Hungarians, which dates back to the earliest periods of history, has thus been marked by a deep friendship since the 19th century. Their alliance during World War I, fighting on the same front, further strengthened the bond between the two nations (Rásónyi, 1944: 23).

The early years of the Republic were marked by the most vibrant period of Turkish-Hungarian friendship, as reflected in the mutual correspondence between Atatürk and Hungarian President Miklós Horthy, where they praised the virtues of their respective nations (Şimşir, 2001: 332-394). This golden age of Turkish-Hungarian relations during Atatürk’s era (particularly in the early years of the newly founded state), was marked by relations between the two countries continually developed without any major issues.

Under Atatürk’s leadership, Turkish-Hungarian relations flourished, expanding in political, economic, and cultural spheres and becoming rooted in mutual friendship and brotherhood. (Çolak, 2000: 61-72). After İsmet İnönü became the Turkish president, the first contact between the two nations came in the form of condolence messages following the death of Atatürk. Hungarian President Horthy sent a heartfelt message of sympathy to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, and 21 November 1938, the day of Atatürk’s funeral, was declared a national day of mourning in Hungary by Prime Minister Béla Imrédy. All public buildings in Hungary flew black flags in honor of the fallen Turkish leader (Çolak, 2003).

During World War II, due to the occupation in Hungary, former Prime Minister Miklós Kállay was informed that he could be accepted as a refugee by the

embassies of Turkey and Switzerland when he was attempted to be arrested by German and Hungarian police. Kállay sought refuge in the Turkish Embassy and remained in the Turkish embassy building in Hungary for approximately six months, until 19 November 1944. On 19 November, he left of his own accord, as the Turkish government did not want to be put in a difficult situation any further, and was he subsequently arrested (Cumhuriyet, 4.4.1944:1). During Kállay's imprisonment, his wife, who continued to stay at the Turkish embassy, lost her life during the city's bombardment and was buried in the garden of the Turkish Embassy. Kállay became the fourth Hungarian politician to seek refuge in Turkey, following Imre Thököly, Ferenc Rákóczi, and Lajos Kossuth in Hungarian history.

The friendly relationship between Turkey and Hungary sometimes evolved into what could be described as "brotherhood." Even though Turkish-Hungarian relations suffered a setback during World War II, the spirit of friendship remained strong. Politically, relations continued without any significant problems, with both countries emphasizing their friendship whenever possible. Economically, the two countries engaged in trade primarily through clearing and barter agreements, which were suited to the conditions of the time. Hungarian experts played a notable role in these economic interactions, though the war limited the desired level of economic relations.

Culturally and socially, relations between the two countries were particularly fruitful during this period. Social interactions often served as a driving force behind political and economic relations. Hungarian scientists and experts made valuable contributions to Turkey, while both countries extended a helping hand to each other in times of need. Hungarian experts worked throughout Turkey, playing important roles in the country's modernization and development efforts. Hungarian academics and professionals contributed significantly to fields such as science, education, architecture, art, agriculture, and engineering. (Yıldırım, 2012: 137)

Following the end of the Cold War and Hungary's liberation from Soviet control, Turkish-Hungarian relations experienced a resurgence in the early 1990s with the reestablishment of diplomatic ties. Bilateral visits and cooperation agreements were signed, particularly in the areas of economic cooperation and strengthening trade relations. Hungary emerged as a strategic partner for Turkey in its relations with Europe, with both countries emphasizing their shared historical ties and undertaking cultural cooperation projects. Politically,

Turkey and Hungary cooperate in the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), with Hungary supporting Turkey's EU membership process. Cultural and academic collaboration remains important, with both countries engaging in cultural events, academic conferences, and student exchange programs. Turkish-Hungarian cultural relations, rooted in historical connections, continue to strengthen the friendship between the two nations.

The Role of Turkology and Turanism in Bilateral Relations

In the early 19th century, the Hungarians found themselves wedged between Germanic and Slavic peoples, prompting a deep desire to explore their own history, language, and identity. This quest led to the emergence of Turanism and Turkology in Hungary. Turkology became an essential field of study for the Hungarians, leading to the establishment of the first chair of Turkology in Hungary. This institutionalization marked the beginning of more systematic and organized research efforts. Pioneering Hungarian Turkologists, such as Ármín Vámbéry, made significant contributions to the study of the Turkish language, history, and culture. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences played a crucial role by producing dictionaries, compilations, and translations, which further enriched the field of Turkology. The influence of these works extended beyond Hungary, inspiring the development of Turkology in other countries as well.

Hungarians' efforts to explore their own origins not only contributed significantly to Turkish history and linguistics but also sparked global interest in the field. Hungarian Turkologists, by drawing attention to the Turkish culture, fueled scholarly activity in this area across various countries. Their research and dictionaries enriched the field of Turkic studies, ensuring that Turkology continued systematically and encouraged further research on Turkish topics (Duran, 2020b).

Hungarian Turanists viewed Turkish lands as a treasure trove of untapped potential. In the three years following its establishment, the Hungarian Turan Society sent three different expeditions to Anatolia. These journeys were not merely technical missions; they also included geological research that led to the discovery of coal mines in the Zonguldak region, making significant economic contributions. These scientific expeditions to Anatolia, conducted during World War I, included a comprehensive study in 1918 of the Black

Sea coast, focusing on its wildlife, geographical features, and geopolitical structure (Çolak, 2019).

An article titled “Magyar Tudományos Fekete-Tengeri Expedíció” (“Hungarian Scientific Black Sea Expedition”) in the October 1918 issue of *Turán* (to be elaborated below) reported that the team, led by Jenő Lenárd, set out at the end of September after a long and exhausting expedition. It also expressed the hope that the war would not affect their journey. Despite the challenges of the war years, Turkish people and officials warmly welcomed the research team everywhere, even in the poorest villages. This hospitality made their task easier and left a positive impression. The Hungarians viewed Turkish lands as a region with great potential waiting to be explored, and they prioritized these regions for their research expeditions. Despite the hardships of the era, these expeditions were significant not only in strengthening ties and increasing cooperation but also in contributing economically to the region (Çolak, 2019).

Between 1916 and 1921, over 200 Turkish students came to Hungary for education. These students not only began practicing their professions after their studies, but also influenced the decision-making processes within the Ottoman Empire as advisors and specialists. During the war, Pan-Turkist and Turanist figures in Anatolia contributed to the strengthening of Hungarian-Turkish connections (Oláh, 2012). The ideology of Turanism significantly revitalized and strengthened Turkology studies in Hungary. After the 1890s, Budapest became known as the “Mecca of Turan Studies” (Özdoğan, 2016: 63). Vámbéry was instrumental in introducing ‘Turan’ as an ethnographic concept to the Hungarian public, a contribution that secured his place as a central figure in the rise of the Turanist movement. His scholarship, widely recognized among Hungary’s intellectual elite, laid the foundations for modern Turkology and inspired subsequent Hungarian and international research in the field (Doğan, 2017).

After a failed attempt in 1905, leading Hungarian scholars, politicians, and elite figures founded the *Turáni Társaság* (Turanian Society) in 1910 (Farkas, 1993). The society began publishing the *Turán* journal in 1913, and despite interruptions until 1921, it continued regular publication until 1944 (Çapraz, 2014: 256). Among the contributors to the journal were prominent Hungarian scholars and nobles, including Abdüllatif, the head of Budapest’s Muslim community (Önen, 2005: 65).

The articles in *Turán* emphasized both the untapped regions of Asia and the necessity of Hungary's economic expansion (Teleki, 1913: 3). The journal featured articles on the economic, cultural, and social values of Asian countries, impressions from expeditions, and linguistic studies on various Turan peoples (Demirkan, 2000). These articles, particularly those discussing the economic structures of Anatolia and Asian countries, are key to understanding the true objectives behind the Hungarian Turanist movement's apparent goals. This economic understanding of Turanism became more explicit during the lead-up to and the course of World War I.

The search for their origins also systematized Turkology in Hungary. With Turkology becoming an essential discipline, the establishment of the first Turkology chair in Hungary marked the beginning of a more structured approach to the study. Leading figures like Vámbéry and other Hungarian Turkologists contributed extensively to the study of the Turkish language, history, and culture. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences played a vital role through its numerous dictionaries, compilations, and translation activities. These efforts not only benefited Hungarian studies but also accelerated Turkology research worldwide.

The work of Hungarian Turkologists, like Vámbéry, who led the field, significantly advanced Turkology, and his contributions were recognized with the Order of the Medjidie, Second Class, in 1888 (BOA, İ. DH, Dos, No. 114). Besides Vámbéry, scholars such as József Thúry, Ignacz Kúnos, and Gyula Németh also made important contributions to Turkic studies. Kúnos, for instance, traveled to Anatolia to collect folk stories, tales, anecdotes, songs, and shadow plays, thus preserving Turkish folk literature. During his travels, Kúnos discovered cultural bridges between the Hungarians and the Turks, which led to the opening of the Oriental Museum in the Eastern Trade Academy, a symbol of Hungarian Turkophilia (Çolak, 2001).

László Rásonyi, another renowned Turkologist, was invited to Turkey during Atatürk's era and appointed professor of the newly established Hungarian Studies chair in Ankara in 1935. Rásonyi worked in Ankara for over 15 years, training many experts and students in Hungarian literature, history, and Hungarian-Turkish relations.

The Hungarian Turkology chair, through its pioneering scholars, made significant contributions to the discipline, shedding light on previously unexplored areas of Turkic studies and guiding future research. The Hungarian

school of Turkology occupies a unique place in the history of the discipline, raising some of the most important scholars in Turkology and addressing crucial issues concerning the Turkish language.

Conclusion

The migration of Turkish-Hungarian relations from Central Asia to their current homelands has laid the groundwork for today's connections, fostering a shared heritage as well as cultural and linguistic ties between the two peoples. This period serves as a crucial reference point for understanding the historical depth and deep-rooted connections of Turkish-Hungarian relations. Within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while Hungarians viewed Turks with a distinct perspective and justified reasons compared to the Austrians, Turks also regarded them as "brothers," setting them uniquely among their other allies based on the historical and cultural bonds formed through their interactions on the frontlines.

In addition to wartime assistance and collaboration, cultural and economic ties increased before and during World War I, demonstrating the influence of Hungarian Turkology and Turanism across various fields. Turkish students who studied in Hungary during this process and later Hungarian experts played significant roles in establishing the foundation of the young republic following the Turkish War of Liberation. Relations in the 20th century elevated this connection to new heights.

Today, these relations are further strengthened through economic and cultural cooperation. They are gaining new momentum that aligns with the common interests of both countries. Turkish-Hungarian friendship continues, rooted in history, positioning itself as a significant actor in international relations. The familiarity, interactions, common grounds, and contributions from the past have borne fruit in the present, with 2024 marking the 100th anniversary of Turkish-Hungarian diplomatic relations declared as the Turkish-Hungarian Cultural Year. The joint events and collaborations during this cultural year are set to leave significant marks in history, indicating the potential for economic relations to develop even further over time. The historical context of Turkish-Hungarian relations reveals the depth and diversity of their bonds. Changes and developments in cultural, military, and economic fields create a promising foundation for future collaborations. Strengthening Turkish-Hungarian relations will also reinforce the strategic partnerships of both countries.

Today, Turkey and Hungary seek mutual benefits not only in bilateral relations but also in regional and global issues, collaborating based on their shared historical heritage. This process reinforces the deep connection between both peoples. It also reflects their shared vision for the future. Turkey's membership in the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) and Hungary's inclusion as an observer country in the same organization in 2018 represent significant steps, indicating that interactions and common grounds are likely to increase in the years to come. In the economic sphere, mutual trade volumes have increased. Moreover, investments have gained significant momentum. In the cultural domain, joint projects focusing on both countries' historical heritage and cultural richness have enhanced interactions among people and deepened mutual understanding.

In the development of Turkish-Hungarian relations, the Turkish Studies departments in Hungary and the Hungarian Studies departments in Turkey, alongside various institutions and organizations, play a significant role. The Turkish Studies departments in Hungary act as a cultural bridge between the two countries by increasing interest in Turkish culture and history through its research, thereby contributing to a greater recognition of Turkish cultural values within Hungarian society. Conversely, the Hungarian Studies departments in Turkey facilitate a better understanding and appreciation of Hungarian culture and language through its studies. This mutual academic collaboration deepens cultural interaction between the two countries while also laying the groundwork for educational cooperation. In addition to academic relationships, symposiums and conferences are organized through these departments. Exchange programs create a network for young scholars and students from both countries. This paves the way for future joint projects. Thus, Turkish-Hungarian relations are strengthened not only by historical ties but also by contemporary academic collaborations.

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TURKISH STRATEGIC OUTLOOK

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Introduction

The world is on the brink of a change in the global order which has prevailed since the end of the Cold War. The unilateral order with the US as a dominant power is changing into a multipolar one with revisionist Russia, rival emerging power China, and an assertive Global South. On the other hand, the transformation is incomplete, bringing great power competition to the scene. Therefore, the strategic outlook has changed for all countries in the world, and so has Türkiye.

Türkiye is a significant regional power with a unique strategic position in an ebullient world. The Russian War in Ukraine in Europe, the Israeli War on Gaza in the Middle East, and China's economic expansion to the West can be listed among the events that affect not only Türkiye and the region where Türkiye is located but also all the world. In such a turbulent time, searching for Türkiye's strategic outlook is important to better comprehend the link between history and the future, so that what was done in the past can provide some clues about foreign policy choices of today. In search of this question, this study elaborates on the relations of Türkiye with two major institutions based in the West, the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Türkiye's relations with the big powers, the US, Russia, and China are examined separately in the following sections, in addition to its relations

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with the emerging Global South. Lastly, in consideration of the changing global world order, Türkiye's position in the great power competition is also discussed. As a result, in this study, it is argued that in the current strategic outlook, Türkiye is strengthening its relations with the EU and NATO despite its impartial stance in the Russian War in Ukraine. At the same time, Türkiye is developing economic, cultural, and institutional relations with the emerging Global South which should not be evaluated as an axis shift but rather a very rational action for such a strategically significant country in a globalized and interconnected world. Moreover, Türkiye is a unique regional actor, yet to promote its strategic outreach and foster its capabilities, Türkiye can look for cooperation possibilities with especially like-minded countries like Hungary from the West. Moreover, such a collaboration can be super-optimized by adding some industry-based countries, such as Germany and Spain as well as energy-rich countries such as Azerbaijan. In a world with multiple centers, such a trio or quartet would bring many benefits for the ones that take part in and for the region itself.

1. Türkiye and the European Union (EU)

The relations between Türkiye and the EU have a long history with ebbs and flows, however, the process is still incomplete. After more than 60 years of EU membership application (European Economic Community/EEC of that day), reports are still being published on Türkiye's progress towards EU accession to revitalize ties between the two sides, for instance, the one published in 2024 (EC, 2024). As the most concrete result of the membership process, the Customs Union formed in 1995 can be shown. However, it is also not a full-fledged one, because it covers exclusively industrial and processed agricultural products and requires modernization to adapt to the new changes of the era. Migration can be listed as the second working area in relations. Following the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war in 2015, an unprecedented migration flux toward Europe was experienced. As a result, the EU cooperated with Türkiye to control migration flows, and such cooperation -despite some problems- proved that Türkiye is the EU's strategic partner beyond dispute when the topic is the EU's external borders.

The geopolitical, economic, and societal significance of Türkiye-EU relations is undeniable for both sides. The Association Agreement was signed in 1963, and Türkiye became a candidate country in 1999. In the early 2000s, there

were positive relations with the EU, and accession negotiations started in 2005. However, in the upcoming years, the enthusiasm for the membership was lost, and the negative course was intensified, especially following the failed coup attempt in Türkiye on 15 July 2016. Leaving behind the debates on who was right and wrong in the past throughout the membership process, it is more fruitful to focus on the future of the relations following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

A new platform called the European Political Community (EPC) aims to bring the EU and non-EU countries together to discuss mainly Ukraine and other topics related to the West such as irregular migration and energy was established in 2022, including Türkiye. While Türkiye attends high-level EPC meetings, especially with a focus on security, such a formation cannot be evaluated as an alternative for Türkiye's EU membership. Hungary is particularly noteworthy among EU member states for its close engagement with Türkiye, both within the framework of the EPC and in the context of NATO. Hungary and Türkiye are mostly on the same page, especially regarding the balancing policy between the West and the East and that is why they cooperate strategically in the new world order. On the Hungarian side, halting aid to Ukraine, demanding the removal of some sanctions on Russia, and meeting with the Russian leader are already attracting attention in the Western world, and reciprocally there are also some moves against Hungary, such as Ukrainian oil transit disruption (Alexander, 2023).

Concerning security, Türkiye is a natural partner for the EU. As a NATO member and a neighbor, Türkiye has contributed to European security since the Cold War. However, security cooperation with the EU has been problematic historically mainly due to the unresolved Cyprus Question. Nevertheless, Türkiye participated in some EU operations as a candidate and third country. Türkiye has also been involved in several security-related projects with the EU members on the bilateral and multilateral levels. Moreover, Türkiye's defense industry is growing which brings an increased cooperation with the Western countries. In addition to such engagements, Türkiye and the EU cooperate closely on counter-terrorism measures, such as on foreign fighters, terrorism financing, and terrorist deportations.

Following the Russian War in Ukraine in 2022, the EU released a Strategic Compass for Security and Defense, bringing a common strategic vision of security and defense for the EU members. In the document, it is accepted that

there will be chances for cooperation in the common interest areas of both sides for a “mutually beneficial partnership (EC, 2022, p. 42). An example of such a betterment in relations in the face of regional and global turbulences is Türkiye’s attendance at the EU informal foreign ministers meeting in September 2023 to which Türkiye had not been invited for five years.

During the Russian War in Ukraine, Türkiye did not act totally in line with the EU, especially in aligning with the EU sanctions towards Russia (EC, 2023, p. 11). Moreover, Türkiye’s mediator role in the Black Sea Grain Initiative has demonstrated Türkiye’s potential as a regional power to the EU. Moreover, especially following the Russian war in Ukraine, Türkiye’s importance for European energy security was intensified, despite the EU’s long-term plans to transition to green energy. In such a turbulent time, Türkiye has been an example of how connectivity in energy or transportation can be used as one of the defining features of a country. On the other hand, regardless of such autonomous acts, there is no doubt that Türkiye will always be on the EU’s security agenda due to its NATO membership. This is because EU moves in security and defense cannot be considered separate from NATO, but rather can be complementary due to the duplication of their members and coverage areas.

2. Türkiye and NATO

Türkiye has been a NATO member since 1952 and has played a pivotal role within the Alliance, especially by contributing to the collective defense capabilities. The main motivation of Türkiye for the application of NATO membership was to strengthen its Western identity against the emerging Soviet and communist threat at that time. On the other hand, while remaining committed to NATO, the role of Türkiye in NATO evolved in time in line with the changing circumstances.

In the context of the Cold War, Türkiye’s contribution to deterring communist threat was significant. From the military point of view, the large armed forces of Türkiye have been a crucial part of NATO’s collective defense strategy. Hosting several armed NATO military installations in Türkiye was another significant strategic input when considering the conditions of that era. There is also the political angle, because a predominantly Muslim country with a quite large territory bordered by various regions was obliged to be defended against a communist aggressor with the membership of Türkiye. Moreover,

as a NATO member, Türkiye also played a role in preventing the spread of terrorism in the Middle East and bringing stability to its neighbors.

Following the Cold War, NATO adapted itself to the new order and so did Türkiye. Attacks that fall into NATO's responsibility diversified including hybrid and cyber ones as well as threats coming from non-state actors. Especially following the 9/11 attacks against the United States, NATO institutionalized counter-terrorism with a working legal doctrine, institutional structure, and military operations (Sadık and Yalcin-Ispir, 2023, p. 259). In this atmosphere, based on past experiences within the organization, as well as its unique geopolitical position, Türkiye started to focus more on balancing its relations with non-NATO actors and neighbors and prioritize its national security concerns. Despite some moves that were not welcomed by NATO members, such as purchasing S-400 air defense systems, neither Türkiye's commitments to NATO nor NATO's position towards Türkiye's membership on the multilateral level have changed. Therefore, it can be argued that Türkiye-NATO relations are strong with a long history and despite all the troubles, the relations remain on track and unlikely to deteriorate.

Türkiye has been unique to NATO in terms of its geopolitical significance as the defender of the southern flank. Although historically the eastern front was more prioritized due to the Russian threat, in today's world both flanks are interconnected. The significance of the southern flank emanates from the Russian threat and growing Chinese engagement in the region. The War in Ukraine naturally brings the eastern flank to the forefront again, and the membership of Sweden and Finland due to the Russian threat are significant developments for NATO. On the other hand, it can also be argued that the War in Ukraine also influences the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and North Africa regions in addition to threats specific to those regions such as terrorism, migration, political and socio-economic instability, and vulnerable energy supplies. Türkiye and some other NATO members, such as Italy and Spain, play a significant role in showing NATO's existence in the region and work to face off the mentioned threats.

Throughout the Russian War in Ukraine, Türkiye maintained relations with both sides, as opposed to most Western countries. Türkiye delivered Ukraine unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and other military assets and even started to establish a company in Ukraine to produce drones. On the other side, Türkiye continued its relationship with Russia since there are some common topics

among them, such as S-400 systems and regional conflicts in Syria and Libya. Such a position provided Türkiye with mediating and conciliatory roles in the grain conflict and so Türkiye could bring Russia, Ukraine, and the UN to the table and make an agreement. Hungary is the other NATO member that continued its relations with Russia and even their criticism of some multilateral decisions taken at the level of NATO and the EU resulted in putting some hurdles to the admission of new members to NATO, similar to Türkiye.

Türkiye and NATO are stuck together with “alliance dependency” and as Lindgaard and Pieper explain; “Both parties see more benefits than costs in NATO, which will contain and channel recent areas of disagreement” (Lindgaard and Pieper, 2020, pp. 3, 5). Despite all the frustrations of Türkiye for not being supported enough by NATO members as a frontline state and despite its quest for strategic autonomy, Türkiye, as the second largest army of NATO and as a geopolitically significant member, continues to fulfill its commitments to NATO. Türkiye’s significance in connectivity, especially related to energy and trade makes a difference, as well as its contributions to NATO’s southern flank.

3. Türkiye and the Big Powers

Until very recently, while scrutinizing the relations of Türkiye with the big powers, examination of the US and Russia would have been enough. With changes in the current international order, however, China must be included and studied as one of them, affecting the global order. In the new multipolar era, more countries, such as rising powers, are expected to take an active role, though not as effective as China.

3.1. Türkiye and the United States

Relations between the US and Türkiye have been complex. Supporting the NATO membership of Türkiye since the beginning with an appreciation of Türkiye’s military strength and geopolitical significance, there have been times when the line between the US’s bilateral and multilateral level requests from Türkiye has blurred which resulted in the raise of mistrust.

In recent years, the main reason for Türkiye’s disagreement with the US has been the US support of the terrorist groups PYD/YPG in Syria. Türkiye’s

military operations that started in 2016 in northern Syria have caused tension with the US forces in Syria. The US's main source of dispute with Türkiye has been the purchase of the Russian S-400 air missile systems in 2019, which ended up with Türkiye's removal from the F-35 fighter jet program. However, relations have been put on a course again with Türkiye's approval of Sweden's NATO accession and the US's permission for the sale of F-16 Block 70 fighter jets and F-16 modernization kits sale to Türkiye. When both the War in Ukraine and the War in Gaza are taken into consideration, working closely multilaterally and bilaterally on common security interests is to the advantage of both sides. Moreover, cooperation between the US and Türkiye on transportation and energy connectivity of Türkiye would also serve the US's Black Sea strategy to contain Russia and prevent China (Tuncel, 2023, pp. 1, 5).

3.2. Türkiye and Russia

Relations between Türkiye and Russia have a long history. However, following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, both countries found more opportunities to collaborate, especially in tourism and energy. From the security point of view, in recent history, Syria was the main collaboration (mixed with competition) area between Türkiye and Russia until the War in Ukraine. According to Dalay, through the Syrian conflict, "Ankara and Moscow have discovered the value and effectiveness of bilateral engagements and limited regional multilateralism as a form of dealing with conflicts in which both actors are involved" (Dalay, 2021, p. 6). In addition to Syria, Libya and Karabakh have been other conflicts where Türkiye and Russia supported different sides but avoided a confrontation.

In the War in Ukraine, Türkiye followed a neutral policy, maintained its relations with Ukraine and Russia, and found a finely tuned equilibrium. Moreover, Türkiye brought both sides of the conflict together to solve the grain problem in the Black Sea. While supporting Ukraine militarily, Türkiye did not impose sanctions and maintained commercial relations with Russia despite being a NATO member and an EU candidate country. Similarly, Hungary is another country that continued relations with Russia and has been faced considerable criticism by these organizations for walking the middle path. As was experienced in the previous conflicts in which both Türkiye and Russia took part, as the two essential regional powers in a new world order,

Türkiye and Russia need to continue working together in the Caucasus, the Middle East, and North Africa and sustain their collaboration.

3.3. Türkiye and China

The relations between Türkiye and China did not develop extensively up until the end of the Cold War, but after that, there has been progress in the contacts, especially in trade. Despite the asymmetry in the economic outlook stemming from the Chinese trade surplus, announcing China as a strategic partner in 2010 and starting the Asia Anew Initiative in 2019, Türkiye aimed to boost economic cooperation between the two countries (MFA, n. d.). From time to time, Türkiye criticizes China for not respecting the human rights of the Uyghurs living in Xinjiang, however, the bilateral economic relationship between Türkiye and China has not deteriorated as a result.

China gradually became a significant power in the international arena that could even balance the US. On the other hand, China cannot be categorized as a revisionist country in the changing international politics, because it benefits very much from globalization. As a noteworthy trade and infrastructure investment of the Chinese government, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has significance for not only Türkiye but also for many countries. In addition to contributing to BRI, Türkiye also draws attention to its Middle Corridor Initiative, which will directly serve the interests of Türkiye, as an indivisible part of the BRI (Eldem, 2022, p. 2). Türkiye also started to come across China in the international organizations established by the active participation of China, such as BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) and the Shangia Cooperation Organization (SCO). These organizations have been alternative platforms for emerging countries and have become significant due to the transition to a multipolar world. Despite being a NATO member and an EU candidate country, Türkiye applied to both organizations aiming to be informed about the developments, to engage with the members of these organizations, and to benefit from the possible opportunities. Especially Türkiye's application for full membership to BRICS has significance because taking part in such a strong group would bring important economic opportunities and geopolitical benefits to Türkiye. Therefore, when such increasing economic and political ties are considered, it is expected for Türkiye to maintain and advance relations with China and be one of its partners in the new global order.

4. Türkiye and the Emerging Global South

The end of the Cold War presented new opportunities appeared for Türkiye in new locations and venues. Türkiye could now collaborate with non-Western countries and international organizations. Recently, the redefinition of the US role in the world brought another significant impact on the multidirectional approach followed by Türkiye. With the end of the unipolar world order, Türkiye is in search of diversifying its political and economic partnerships and participating in different platforms that can foster such relations.

Starting with the announcement of the Year of Africa in 2005, an increased presence was achieved in sub-Saharan Africa for economic and humanitarian purposes (MFA, n. d.). Increased contacts with the region also resulted in close relations with the African Union (AU), where Türkiye was accepted as an observer in 2005 and became a strategic partner in the organization. Similarly, Latin America is another example where Türkiye took some similar steps. 2006 was declared the Year of Latin America and the Caribbean to develop economic, cultural and social relations (MFA, n. d.). In the meantime, Türkiye was granted observer status in some of the organizations of the region, such as the Organization of American States and MERCOSUR. In addition to Africa and Latin America, in the Indo-Pacific region, the economic rise of China, India, and Japan, in addition to other ones such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Korea made the region very significant for Türkiye. Türkiye's close cooperation with the Indo-Pacific countries under such as G-20 (Group of 20) and MIKTA (Mexico-Indonesia-Korea-Türkiye-Australia) platforms, and dialogue partnership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and SCO provide opportunities for Türkiye to get into contact with the region countries and cooperate with them. Moreover, increased relations with the Central Asian Republics both bilaterally and under multilateral organizations such as the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) and also closer relations with the Muslim countries under the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) aim to keep economic and cultural relations maintained and deepened in the new world order.

The examples for the areas where Türkiye has established connections can be broadened, however, there is bare attention for increasing relations and engagement with the emerging Global South to benefit from the multipolar world politics. On the other hand, such moves cannot be associated with an axis shift because Türkiye still has robust and institutional ties with NATO

that will not be abandoned. On the other hand, the engagement with the non-Western world can be evaluated as complementary for Türkiye to its relations with the West in a multi-layered world order.

5. Türkiye and the Great Power Competition

The dynamics of international politics are changing in the new order. While the influence of the US decreases, non-Western actors increase their impacts, among which China and Russia come first with many more countries following them. Therefore, in such a world, what will be the position of Türkiye, as a significant regional actor that has the power to shape its surroundings needs to be the question to elaborate on.

In the new world order, it is not expected to have sharp polarization as was experienced in the Cold War years. Therefore, as a medium-sized power, Türkiye needs to prioritize its security and economy-related interests. Considering all the crises around it, Türkiye now follows a balancing strategy between the great powers. While not abandoning the security guarantee that NATO provides, Türkiye is developing economic relations with Russia, China, and other emerging countries. Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan formulates this position of Türkiye as “It stands out as a problem solver, system improver, and transformer actor in the region and in international affairs” (Fidan, 2023, p. 14).

The war in Ukraine has been a significant turning point for Türkiye in shaping the new balance in the world along with other evolving changes that have been happening for years, such as the rise of the Chinese economy. Without taking sides, Türkiye is developing its relations with the non-Western world on a mutual benefit basis. Hungary is among a limited number Western countries that follow a similar balancing act.

Conclusion

Throughout its history, Türkiye has been a strategic country due to its geographic location at the intersection of Europe, the Middle East, and the Black Sea. Such a unique position brings some privileges, as well as burdens. At the regional level, surrounded by many crises, Türkiye is now politically in a delicate balance. At the global level, in the face of a change in the balance

of power from unipolarity to multipolarity, as a significant regional power, Türkiye is searching for opportunities that might be harnessed from the new order with minimum harm.

From the current strategic outlook of Türkiye, it can be argued that the Russian War in Ukraine brings uncertainty to the region, and as a result of this Türkiye's long-standing ties with the EU and NATO are strengthening. While the EU is searching to include Türkiye in building a more secure and prosperous Europe, NATO, as an organization that has returned to its original purpose -collective defense, is more aware of the benefits of having Türkiye as an ally. However, such institutional relations and ties with the Western countries do not hamper Türkiye from developing pragmatic relations with the other great powers and the emerging Global South countries and institutions.

To foster its capabilities and extend strategic outreach, Türkiye can cooperate with some other countries, such as Hungary as being like-minded in terms of balancing policy. Such cooperation can include some more countries from Türkiye's east, such as Azerbaijan because an energy-rich state would strengthen the cooperation. Lastly, the cooperation can be consolidated with the addition of an industry-focused Western state such as Germany and Spain to increase its impact and enlarge its coverage. Therefore, although Türkiye is significant, its capabilities would not be enough to affect the future of the whole region in the great power competition. However, a wisely established trio or quartet would work for the betterment of the region in such a shaky environment.

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TÜRKİYE WITHIN THE SECURITY ARCHITECTURE OF EURASIA: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

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1. Strategic Context

This analysis explores the strategic trajectory of Türkiye (and the Turkish view of Hungary's strategic trajectory) within Eurasia's security architecture, tracing their engagements from the Cold War through to the present. It examines how these countries have navigated their roles within shifting geopolitical alliances and regional conflicts, adapting to the demands of the global security environment while pursuing their national interests. The exploration begins with their Cold War alignments -Türkiye with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Hungary within the Warsaw Pact- and extends into their contemporary strategies amidst new global challenges and regional instabilities. The analysis aims to uncover the underlying factors influencing Türkiye and Hungary's current and future geopolitical positions by contextualizing their historical and ongoing security policies. Through synthesizing historical data and contemporary analysis, we will explore the impact of broader geopolitical dynamics on their security strategies and foreign policy decisions.

This strategic context sets the stage for a comprehensive review of Türkiye and Hungary's pivotal roles in past and present security issues, providing a foundation for understanding their evolving strategies within Eurasia's complex geopolitical framework.

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2. Türkiye and Hungary in the Cold War Security Architecture

During the Cold War, Türkiye and Hungary were positioned on opposite sides of the global security architecture, reflecting their geopolitical alliances and strategic priorities. Türkiye played a critical role in NATO by maintaining a strategic position between Europe and Asia. This allowed Türkiye to pursue a flexible foreign policy, emphasizing its geopolitical importance. In contrast, Hungary's role in the Warsaw Pact was more aligned with the Eastern bloc, focusing on cooperation with Soviet allies and adherence to the bloc's policies (Kelkitli, 2023: 316-323).

Türkiye, as a NATO member since 1952, was critical in the Alliance's strategy to deter Soviet expansion into the Mediterranean and Middle East. Türkiye joined NATO on 18 February 1952, bringing in what would eventually become the second-largest army in NATO, only behind the United States. This military might not only enhanced Türkiye's defense capabilities but also significantly elevated its geopolitical leverage, positioning it as a key player in balancing East-West relations during the Cold War.

Its geographical location bridged Europe and Asia, making it a pivotal member for monitoring Soviet naval activities and deploying ballistic missile systems as part of NATO's southern flank defense strategy. Additionally, Türkiye hosted critical NATO military installations, including air bases and early warning radar systems, and controlled access to the Black Sea through the Turkish Straits, governed by the Montreux Convention since 20 July 1936 (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2020).

The strategic placement of these installations underscored Türkiye's pivotal role in the collective security framework of NATO, influencing regional and international policy decisions during the Cold War. Türkiye's NATO membership provided security guarantees and military support from Western allies, shaping its defense strategies.

Amid the East-West divide during the Cold War, Türkiye navigated its security policies by pursuing a balanced foreign policy that included cooperation with both Western and Eastern blocs. This strategy aimed to safeguard Türkiye's interests while avoiding direct confrontation with either side (Can, 2022; Ellehuus, 2019; Kelkitli, 2023:227-230). It was able to balance its Western alignments with regional independence by engaging actively in regional affairs, such as the Balkans and the Middle East, while maintaining ties with

Western powers. This approach allowed Türkiye to assert its autonomy in foreign policy decisions.

Hungary, on the other hand, was forced into alignment with the Soviet bloc and was a member of the Warsaw Pact from its inception in 1955 until the pact dissolved in 1991. This alignment limited Hungary's independence, as it closely followed Soviet directives and policies (Kelkitli, 2023: 223-230). Hungary's position in the Warsaw Pact led to close military cooperation with Soviet forces, impacting its defense policies with Soviet interests. This deep integration into Soviet structures forced Hungary's broader geopolitical strategies to be in line with those of the Soviet Union, affecting its interactions with non-Warsaw Pact nations. (Başaran, 2024; Can, 2022).

During this time Hungary played the role of advancing Soviet interests in Central Europe, acting as a buffer between Western Europe and the Soviet heartland. The strategic use of Hungary's territory for deploying military forces underscored its role as a frontline state in the East-West ideological and military divide (Barrany, 1992: 25-38; Kelkitli, 2023: 220-225).

Soviet troops began leaving Hungary in March 1990, with the last troops withdrawn on June 19, 1991. The withdrawal marked a significant shift in Central European security dynamics, catalyzing a reevaluation of Hungary's strategic position and relationships within a rapidly changing international landscape.

Bilaterally, Türkiye and Hungary navigated their distinct security policies amidst this polarized divide. Türkiye maintained a balancing act, upholding its commitment to NATO while fostering regional relations that sometimes diverged from its Western alliances. This dual approach was aimed at enhancing its strategic autonomy in regional conflicts and its broader geopolitical aspirations (Advisory Council on International Affairs, 2022; Ellehuus, 2019).

The divergent paths of Türkiye and Hungary during the Cold War underscored their strategic imperatives shaped by their respective geopolitical alliances, reflecting a complex interplay of regional and global security considerations.

Comparative Strategic Positions

	Türkiye	Hungary
Alliance	NATO (1952-present)	Warsaw Pact (1955-1991)
Strategic Role	Southern flank defense, Mediterranean security	Central European buffer state
Military Contribution	Second-largest NATO army	Integrated into Soviet military structure
Foreign Policy Autonomy	Flexible, Western-aligned	Limited, Soviet-aligned

3. Post-Cold War Era: 1991-2020

As the ideological and military divisions of the Cold War receded, both Türkiye and Hungary embarked on paths marked by significant shifts in their security policies and international alignments. The dissolution of the Soviet Union not only redefined global power dynamics but also heralded a period of intense reorientation for Hungary towards Western institutions, culminating in its accession to the European Union (EU) and NATO. Simultaneously, Türkiye continued to leverage its strategic geopolitical location, engaging actively in emerging regional challenges and extending its influence across the Balkans and the Middle East.

Hungary's foreign policy orientation shifted gradually and consistently towards Euro-Atlantic integration, driven by both external and internal factors. The transformation of the Hungarian Defense Forces from a Soviet-type mass army to a Western-type expeditionary model was accelerated by Hungary's NATO membership, further supported by a large-scale modernization program initiated in 2016. Hungary became a more active participant in international security policy, though it maintained strict limitations on the use of force (Budai, 2020: 10-15).

For Hungary, the post-1991 era was characterized by a transformative realignment. Shedding its Warsaw Pact military commitments, Hungary embraced Western political and security frameworks, which reshaped its role from a Soviet-influenced buffer state to an integrated member of Western defense and economic structures. This transition was punctuated by Hungary's NATO membership in 1999 and its EU accession in 2004, signaling its shifted allegiances and expanded role in European security.

Engagement in EU Crisis Management Operations was significant, with Hungary actively participating in the EU's Common Security and Defence

Policy (CSDP) even before its official EU membership. Hungary has been involved in 42% of civilian and 70% of military operations under the CSDP, contributing to missions in various regions including Africa, Central Asia, and the Near East (Juhász, 2021: 46-50).

Conversely, Türkiye's post-Cold War security stance continued to reflect its balancing act between East and West, albeit in a transformed geopolitical context. The regional conflicts in the Balkans during the 1990s and the unfolding complexities in the Middle East provided Türkiye with both challenges and opportunities to assert its strategic importance. NATO expansions during this period further complicated the security landscape, as Türkiye navigated its relationships with both new and old alliance members, underscoring its unique position as a bridge between diverging geopolitical interests.

Emerging as a crucial regional leader, particularly in energy projects, Türkiye became a key transit route for energy resources, exemplified by the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline which began operations in 2006, capable of transporting up to 1 million barrels per day (Almuedo, 2011; Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy, 2021).

Additionally, Türkiye became a major host country for refugees, particularly from Syria, hosting approximately 3.7 million Syrian refugees by 2021, the largest refugee population in the world. In the Caucasus, Türkiye's role evolved significantly, notably during the Second Karabakh War in 2020, providing substantial military support to Azerbaijan, including advanced drone technology.

Despite regional tensions, Türkiye remained a significant contributor to NATO operations, being the 8th largest contributor to NATO's common-funded budgets and programs in 2019. The defense industry in Türkiye also saw significant growth, with defense and aerospace exports increasing from \$1.39 billion in 2011 to \$2.74 billion in 2019 (Aydın, 2007). In this respect, while Hungary decisively moved towards Western institutions, Türkiye maintained a more balanced approach between East and West. Unlike Hungary, which focused on integrating with NATO standards, Türkiye pursued independent development of its defense industry.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union marked a significant shift in the geopolitical landscape, profoundly impacting Türkiye's security policies. This period saw Türkiye adapting to new regional dynamics and threats, particularly in the

Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. The end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union led to significant changes in Türkiye's security environment. Türkiye had to reassess its security policies in light of new threats and opportunities, particularly concerning nuclear proliferation and regional instability (Sezer, 1995: 150-153).

The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in increased instability in the Caucasus region, notably affecting the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflicts. Türkiye's foreign policy evolved from limited support and mediation efforts during the First Karabakh War to a more assertive and active role in the Second Karabakh War, significantly influencing the conflict's outcome in favor of Azerbaijan. These changes reflect Türkiye's evolving security environment and strategic priorities in the post-Soviet era (Öztig, 2023).

Türkiye's security stance has been shaped by its NATO alignment and the complex geopolitical landscape of the Balkans and the Middle East. While its involvement in regional defense schemes has been an extension of its NATO commitments, the challenges posed by superpower confrontations and regional conflicts have underscored Türkiye's role as a regional leader and energy hub. These dynamics highlight the intricate balance Türkiye must maintain in its security engagements (Bouzov, 2016).

4. Contemporary Security Dynamics: The Ukraine-Russia War

The ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict that turned into a full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia on February 2022 has reshaped the strategic landscapes for NATO members, particularly impacting Türkiye and Hungary. Türkiye, maintaining substantial ties with both Russia and NATO, has had to adeptly navigate its strategic relations amidst escalating tensions. This intricate balancing act involves enhancing its autonomy while preserving economic stability (Shlykov, 2023; Parmeter, 2023: 19). Türkiye's government has also positioned itself as a mediator, striving to maintain productive relations with both Russia and Ukraine despite the conflict's economic ramifications (Salsabila & Muttaqin, 2023: 1643-1644; Özdemir, 2023: 123-127).

Türkiye's geopolitical strategy has been notably multifaceted. It has condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine and supported Ukrainian sovereignty while simultaneously avoiding joining Western sanctions against Russia. This stance facilitates ongoing economic engagements with Moscow, illustrating a

complex geopolitical balancing act (Mamishova, 2022; Parmeter, 2023: 19-23; Childs, 2023: 29). Hungary, on the other hand, navigates its responses within the EU and NATO frameworks, often aligning closely with the EU stance while managing its unique diplomatic ties with Russia. This positioning reflects a cautious approach to balancing its commitments within these international bodies against national interests.

In demonstrating its strategic significance, Türkiye has provided military support to Ukraine and exerted control over the Black Sea by restricting Russian naval movements through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits (Mamishova, 2022; Childs, 2023: 27-30). These actions underscore Türkiye's pivotal role in regional security dynamics. The conflict has spurred diverse perspectives within NATO regarding Türkiye's role. Some allies see Türkiye as a crucial partner, while others are cautious of its independent foreign policy maneuvers (Gisclon, & Keyman, 2023: 65-67 ; Bölme, 2022: 94-98). Türkiye's mediation efforts have also reinforced its presence and influence in regional and international arenas, especially in the Black Sea and Middle East regions (Saeed, 2023; Chmyreva, 2022: 36).

Türkiye's role as a regional power broker has been underscored during the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war. The geopolitical landscape presents complex challenges and opportunities for Türkiye's strategic interests. Historically, Türkiye and Russia have experienced both cooperation and conflict, particularly evident in regions like the Eastern Mediterranean, Black Sea, and South Caucasus. These interactions are influenced by their respective imperial histories and current geopolitical ambitions (Irkhin, Moskalenko, Kabanova, & Demeshko, 2023: 215-220).

The ongoing Syrian civil war has further exemplified a complex trilateral relationship among Türkiye, Russia, and Iran, managing to coexist and collaboratively manage the conflict despite supporting opposing sides. With the escalation of the Ukraine crisis, this balance may shift, potentially leading to increased competition between Türkiye and Iran (Vogel, 2023).

Economically, the war has had significant repercussions. Soaring food prices, critical to Türkiye's economy due to its reliance on agricultural imports from Russia and Ukraine, have led to increased food inflation and a reduction in foreign direct investment. This economic strain has resulted in estimated income losses of up to 0.8% of Türkiye's real GDP, contributing to significant welfare losses and impacting its trade dynamics, particularly affecting the tourism and contracting sectors (Ozturk, & Faizi, 2023).

In 2023, Türkiye increased its purchase of Russian fuel products by 105% compared to the previous year, while also boosting its fuel exports to the EU by 107%. This strategic maneuver has allowed Türkiye to generate approximately \$3 billion by reselling Russian energy to the EU, all while technically adhering to EU sanctions imposed on Russia. Moreover, Türkiye's support for Ukraine's defense capabilities has been instrumental, including the supply of drones, small arms, ammunition, armored vehicles, and training. Notably, Türkiye played a pivotal role in securing Ukraine's seaborne exports through an UN-brokered grain deal and later through a corridor in its territorial waters. This initiative was crucial in mitigating food security risks for several Middle East and African nations (Outzin, 2024; Romandash, 2024).

Despite the challenges posed by the war, Türkiye's economy showed resilience, with a robust economic expansion of 4.5% in 2023. Although this growth rate is expected to slow to 3.0% in 2024, it is projected to rebound in subsequent years.

Türkiye's unique position allows it to potentially play a significant role in any future peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. The country's capacity to maintain open channels of communication with both sides enhances its potential as a mediator for ceasefire and post-war arrangements.

Looking ahead, Türkiye is poised to enhance its role as a regional power broker, leveraging its strategic position to influence future geopolitical developments. Hungary's future scenarios will likely involve navigating its role within the EU's collective security framework, balancing between collective European policies and its national strategic interests. Türkiye's multifaceted strategies in the Ukraine-Russia conflict highlight its unique position in the international arena. By adopting strategic hedging, Türkiye not only preserves its significant ties with Russia but also maintains its commitments to NATO, enhancing its regional and global diplomatic influence. This delicate balance is pivotal for maintaining regional stability and shaping future international diplomatic relations.

5. Comparative Analysis and Integration with Other Chapters

Türkiye's pivotal role in energy routes from the South Caucasus and Central Asia exemplifies its strategic position as a crucial energy corridor between the East and the West. The country's engagement in projects like

the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) highlights its influence in diversifying Europe's energy sources while enhancing its geopolitical leverage. These initiatives are not only about energy transit, but also about securing Türkiye's energy supply chain, thereby bolstering its economic stability and regional influence.

Türkiye's strategic role as a critical energy corridor is increasingly recognized in geopolitical and energy strategy discussions. Positioned uniquely, Türkiye serves as an essential conduit for Caspian energy resources to Europe, which is pivotal in reducing the EU's reliance on Russian gas (Müftüler-Baç & Başkan, 2011, pp. 361-365; Bilgin, 2007, p. 6388). Projects like the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) and TANAP illustrate Türkiye's broader impact on EU energy diversification strategies (Kim & Blank, 2016, p. 48).

The geopolitical and security landscape presents challenges such as political instability and regional conflicts that heighten the risk of energy supply disruptions. These risks underscore the need for secure and stable energy transit routes (Aydin & Azhgaliyeva, 2019; Ibrayeva et al., 2018, p. 153). Furthermore, Russia's strategic initiatives, including the Turk Stream project, introduce complexities that influence the energy dynamics among Türkiye, the EU, and the Caspian littoral countries, highlighting the intricate interplay of regional power politics on energy security (Kim & Blank, 2016, pp. 39-43).

As alluded to earlier, diversification remains a cornerstone of the EU's strategy to bolster its energy security. The integration of the Caspian region's resources through Türkiye provides a substantial alternative to Russian supplies, promoting a diversified energy portfolio for Europe (Müftüler-Baç & Başkan, 2011, pp. 370-373; Ibrayeva et al., 2018, pp. 150-155). The recommendation for developing multiple energy corridors, including the Western Energy Corridor through Türkiye, aims to ensure a reliable and varied energy supply to the continent (Bilgin, 2007, pp. 6384-6387; Mavrakis, Thomaidis & Ntroukas, 2006, pp. 1671-1675).

Economic growth in the Caspian states, heavily reliant on hydrocarbon exports, is significantly influenced by global oil prices and geopolitical stability. Effective cooperation with transit countries like Türkiye is crucial for maintaining stable export revenues and enhancing regional economic prospects (Aydin & Azhgaliyeva, 2019; Karatayev & Hall, 2020, p. 258). Robust policy frameworks and international agreements are imperative to mitigate risks and reinforce the energy security of both exporting and importing nations (Karatayev & Hall, 2020; Ibrayeva et al., 2018).

Conversely, Hungary's energy strategies within the EU frame its security posture differently. As a member of the Union, Hungary navigates its energy policies within the collective framework of European energy diversification and security goals. However, it also seeks to ensure national energy security by diversifying its sources and routes, which often includes negotiating positions that balance its dependency on Russian energy supplies with increasing engagement in European energy initiatives. Hungary has demonstrated repeatedly that it will not hesitate to come into conflict with the EU over national energy security issues.

The analysis of security architecture extends into broader regional policies, where both Türkiye and Hungary's strategies serve as both influences and responses to their engagements in Eurasia. For Türkiye, its security dynamics are heavily intertwined with its regional policies, especially regarding its relations with neighboring countries and its role within transcontinental energy politics. These strategies are reflective of a broader doctrine that seeks to leverage geographic and economic positions to maximize national security and regional influence.

Hungary's approach, while influenced by its alignment with EU policies, also shows strategic autonomy aimed at leveraging its geographic position to enhance its standing within and beyond the EU. This includes fostering relations with Türkiye and other significant Eurasian players, aligning itself with projects that enhance its energy security, and participating in regional discussions that aim to stabilize and secure its immediate and broader geopolitical neighborhood.

The integration of these discussions on security and energy architecture with broader regional interests underscores the complex interdependencies in Eurasia. Both Türkiye and Hungary illustrate how countries use their geopolitical and energy strategies to navigate and shape regional architectures. This comparative analysis not only links the discussions from previous chapters, but also provides a comprehensive backdrop against which the strategic postures of Türkiye and Hungary can be critically evaluated and discussed in the concluding parts of this work.

6. Strategic Synthesis and Forward-Looking Recommendations

This chapter has delineated the evolving strategic roles of Türkiye and Hungary within the security architecture of Eurasia, tracing their paths from

the Cold War era to the contemporary geopolitical landscape. Throughout these periods, both countries have adapted and responded to the changing dynamics of global and regional security, underpinned by their historical experiences and strategic foresight.

During the Cold War, Türkiye's alignment with NATO and Hungary's position in the Warsaw Pact set the stage for their distinct strategic directions. Türkiye capitalized on its geographic linchpin to enhance its geopolitical leverage and influence within NATO, playing a crucial role in the Alliance's southern flank defense. Conversely, Hungary's integration into the Soviet sphere underscored its role as a buffer state, aligning closely with Soviet military and political strategies.

In the post-Cold War era, both countries faced the necessity of redefining their security policies and international alignments amidst a transforming Eurasian security architecture. Türkiye, leveraging its strategic geopolitical position, actively engaged in regional conflicts and energy politics, asserting its role as a regional power broker. Hungary, on the other hand, navigated its transition towards Euro-Atlantic integration, redefining its security and foreign policy in alignment with Western institutions.

The ongoing Ukraine-Russia war has further tested the strategic imperatives of Türkiye and Hungary, prompting them to navigate complex geopolitical currents while balancing their ties with NATO and regional interests. Türkiye's role as a mediator and a strategic conduit for energy supplies highlights its continued importance in Eurasian geopolitics, whereas Hungary's cautious navigation within EU and NATO frameworks illustrates its strategic recalibration in response to contemporary challenges.

Looking forward, the insights garnered from this historical and strategic analysis suggest several avenues for deepening the bilateral relationship between Türkiye and Hungary in the context of the "new Cold War" era.

It is essential to enhance bilateral dialogues to foster a mutual understanding of shared security challenges and opportunities. This should particularly focus on stability in the Black Sea region and the Balkans, areas where both countries have significant strategic interests. Regular strategic dialogues can help synchronize Türkiye and Hungary's responses to regional threats and opportunities, enhancing their collective security and diplomatic influence.

Türkiye's pivotal role as an energy corridor offers significant opportunities for Hungary's energy diversification strategies. The two countries could collaborate on energy infrastructure projects that benefit from Türkiye's strategic position between energy-rich regions and Europe. Such cooperation would not only secure energy supplies but also strengthen economic ties between the two countries, contributing to regional energy security.

There is considerable potential for defense cooperation, including joint military exercises and intelligence sharing, particularly in light of evolving security dynamics in NATO and the specific regional security concerns of both countries. These initiatives would enhance interoperability and understanding between their armed forces, providing mutual benefits in terms of enhanced defense capabilities and strategic positioning.

Strengthening cultural and historical ties is crucial, as it promotes initiatives that highlight the shared and diverse heritage of both countries. This fosters a foundation of trust and mutual respect that supports broader strategic and diplomatic engagements. Such cultural exchanges could include educational programs, art and history exhibitions, and reciprocal cultural festivals, which would deepen the societal links that underpin diplomatic and strategic relations.

By fostering a robust strategic partnership, Türkiye and Hungary can not only enhance their bilateral relations but also contribute to the stability and security of the broader Eurasian region. This partnership, rooted in a comprehensive understanding of their historical legacies and strategic capacities, will equip both nations to navigate the complexities of contemporary geopolitical challenges more effectively.

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TÜRKİYE'S REGIONAL INTERESTS AND POLICIES IN EURASIA

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Türkiye's immediate region comprises the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Black Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean region. When Central Asia, stretching from Eastern Europe to China, is also included, the term Eurasia naturally comes into play. Indeed, the geographical area extending from the borders of Vienna, encompassing the entire Black Sea region, reaching eastward to the borders of China, including southern Russia to the north and the Middle East to the south, can be defined as the Eurasian region. Eurasia is neither Asia, nor Africa, nor Europe, but it is situated at the center of these continents (Çeçen, 2006, p.421). Türkiye is strategically and geopolitically at the heart of Eurasia. It connects and simultaneously separates the Mediterranean and the Black Sea; the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East. The birth of the Republic of Türkiye in Anatolia, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, profoundly influenced the political map of Eurasia. Today, Türkiye still plays a key role in the power struggle within Eurasia, maintaining its capacity to shift the balance.

Even aside from its geostrategic importance and place in geopolitical theories, Eurasia's primary significance for Türkiye is rooted in its role as Türkiye's immediate neighborhood, where historical ties, cultural affinities, and deep interactions shape a shared sense of security and cooperation. The key

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point is deep interaction. The importance of this region for Türkiye stems from both security considerations and the historical coexistence that fosters mutual recognition, proximity, cooperation, and cultural affinity. The concept of security should not be understood solely as military security. It must also encompass economic, trade, energy, environmental, water, and even food security. Additionally, the pursuit of security by “oppressed nations” (Şimşir, 2002, p. 35; Sevim et. al, 2006, p. 6; Akyol, 2008, p. 182)¹ in unity should be included, extending to cultural and political security.

1. Türkiye’s Eurasian Foreign Policy: A Periodized Analysis

Since the founding of the Republic of Türkiye, and even during the War of Liberation, the Turkish people have seen their destiny intertwined with the oppressed nations of the East. This sentiment is also reflected in the principle of “Peace at home, peace in the world.” Within this framework, Türkiye’s policies towards Eurasia must be evaluated beyond energy agreements, trade deals, or political, military, and economic cooperation agreements. Embedded in the founding ethos of the Republic of Türkiye is the principle of seeking its own security and prosperity through the establishment of security and prosperity in its region.

In its relations with Eurasia, Türkiye pursues a multidimensional strategy that considers the region’s cultural proximity and historical ties, aiming to meet common security and prosperity needs. This strategy seeks to contribute to Eurasia’s development while fostering deep and multifaceted relations between Türkiye and the region’s actors.

Four main periods can be identified in terms of Türkiye’s Eurasian policies:

¹ We are making a reference to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye, and his solidarity and cooperation with anti-imperialist states during the struggle for independence and freedom in Anatolia against imperialist powers, as well as his use of the term “oppressed nations” (this would also include nations whose rights have been violated). In his interview with *Le Temps* correspondent Marie-Laure Oiselet, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) stated; “We demand that the Great Powers grant us the same rights (full independence) they have accorded to themselves. The world is full of oppressed nations like us; one day, they too will be freed from colonialism and imperialism” (İlhan, 2007, p.177). Thus, the term “oppressed nations” refers to nations subjugated by imperialist states. The founding will of Türkiye does not separate the destiny of the Eastern nations from its own existence, freedom, and independence struggle.

1.1. Period from 1923 to 1945: Multi-directional Western-oriented Foreign Policy

During the interwar period between World War I and World War II (1923-1945), Türkiye pursued a multifaceted foreign policy toward the West within an international system characterized by both cooperation and competition among multiple Western power centers. While enhancing its relations with the West, Türkiye aimed to maintain a balanced policy, particularly in the Balkans and the Middle East, and sought to promote stability and friendly relations with neighboring countries. The Balkan Pact and the Sadabat Pact were significant diplomatic initiatives for Türkiye during this period. In the Black Sea policy, the Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits was a turning point. Türkiye regained control over the Turkish Straits and pursued a policy aimed at maintaining the status quo in the region. During this period, Türkiye had no direct influence in regions such as the Caucasus and Central Asia.

1.2. Cold War Period: Full Orientation Towards the West (1945-1990)

After World War II, with the international system becoming bipolar, Türkiye began to pursue a unidirectional foreign policy against the Eastern bloc by aligning itself with the Western bloc. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership formed the foundation of this strategy, and Türkiye acted as the forward outpost of the West against Soviet influence in the Balkans and the Caucasus.

During this period, Türkiye had very limited relations with Central Asia, as the region was under Soviet control.

In the Balkans, as a representative of the Western alliance, Türkiye maintained limited relations with countries such as Yugoslavia and Albania. Relations with Greece deteriorated in the 1950s due to the Cyprus Question.

In the Black Sea, Türkiye sought to counter Soviet influence, acting as NATO's forward base to safeguard Western interests in the region.

Türkiye was unable to exert a direct influence in the Caucasus due to Soviet presence, however, the borders with Armenia and Georgia became an important part of the West's security strategy during the Cold War.

In the Middle East, Türkiye attempted to maintain a neutral stance in the Arab-Israeli conflicts. Nevertheless, in 1955, Türkiye became part of the Baghdad Pact (CENTO), representing the Western camp.

1.3. Post-Cold War Period: From a Single Vector Western-oriented Policy to Opening Towards the East (1990-2007)

The period following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War marked a phase in Türkiye's foreign policy characterized by the deepening of unidirectional relations with the West. Türkiye played a bridging role to facilitate the integration of post-Soviet countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia with Western structures.

In the Balkans, following the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Türkiye engaged in active diplomatic initiatives to ensure peace and stability in the region, supporting peace processes in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

Türkiye strengthened relations with newly independent post-Soviet states around the Black Sea and played an active role in energy and security issues in the region. Regional organizations like the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) gained importance during this period.

In the Caucasus, particularly with Azerbaijan, Türkiye enhanced its relations in the fields of energy and security. Türkiye became an important actor in the region's energy geopolitics through projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Pipeline.

In Central Asia, after the Turkic republics gained independence, Türkiye fostered regional cooperation by establishing close ties with them based on linguistic, religious, and historical connections.

In the Middle East, Türkiye sought to preserve stability in the region; however, throughout the 1990s, it faced challenges regarding border security and terrorism issues with Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

1.4. Post-2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis: Multi-vector Foreign Policy and the Eurasia Strategy

The global financial crisis of 2007-2008 marked the beginning of a period in which the international system began to evolve into a multipolar structure.

In response, Türkiye adopted a multidirectional foreign policy instead of a Western-dependent one. This new policy, termed Eurasia Strategy 2.0, represents a distinct transformation in Türkiye's relations with Eurasia. Ankara employs various tools such as trade, energy, diplomacy, and cultural cooperation to enhance its influence in these regions. Türkiye maintains its relations with the West while simultaneously strengthening its ties with the East. This balancing act was not without friction; Türkiye's procurement of the Russian S-400 missile defense system in 2019 triggered a significant rupture with NATO, resulting in its exclusion from the F-35 program and exposing the structural tensions inherent in Ankara's multi-vector strategy.

In the Balkans, Türkiye has continued to support regional countries regarding European Union (EU) and NATO integration. Cultural and economic ties have strengthened with countries such as Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania.

Türkiye has maintained cooperation with NATO in the Black Sea while balancing relations with Russia. Energy projects and security matters in the region have become strategic priorities.

In the Caucasus, particularly in the South Caucasus region, Türkiye has focused on energy corridors and trade routes, striving to establish a balanced relationship with both the West and Russia. The process of diplomatic normalization with Armenia has also emerged as a significant component of this strategy.

In the Middle East, Türkiye has taken on a more active role in the face of internal conflicts and geopolitical uncertainties in the region. The Syrian civil war posed a significant challenge regarding Türkiye's security concerns and regional influence. Additionally, Türkiye has developed its economic and diplomatic relations with the Gulf countries.

In Central Asia, Türkiye has strengthened its economic, cultural, and political ties through the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). Türkiye has also sought balanced cooperation in this region with Western powers, China, and Russia.

2. Regional Analysis of Türkiye's Eurasian Foreign Policy

Türkiye's policies in Eurasia have undergone significant transformations over the past 30 years. These changes have been shaped by Türkiye's geopolitical

position, historical and cultural ties, economic collaborations, and security interests (which have been central to its approach). While striving to balance its relationships with the West, Türkiye has undertaken a series of strategic initiatives to enhance its influence in Eurasia. This part will analyze Türkiye's regional interests in Eurasia, organized under four key headings.

2.1. Türkiye's Balkan Policy: Strategic Depth and Current Approaches

Since the 1980s, the international system has entered a significant transformation process. International law, sovereignty, state structure, citizen-state relations, the balance between majority and minority, economic systems, alliances, and partnerships are areas where changes are being acutely felt. The Balkans, however, is the geography that has most distinctly undergone such a transformation, going into (a still unfinished) change earlier than other regions.

Türkiye's interest in the Balkans cannot be separated from its history and socio-cultural ties with the region. Indeed, even if Turkish foreign policy had not shown interest, the Balkan-origin population residing in Türkiye and the Turkish and Muslim communities in the Balkans would have eventually compelled Turkish foreign policy to engage intensively with the region. Throughout history, not only during the decline of the Ottoman Empire (with the most intense initial migrations occurring in 1877-1878) but also during problematic periods in the Republic of Türkiye, the country has emerged as a crucial route for escape and migration, and there remains a perception among even non-Turks that Türkiye is the "homeland." The fact that the Balkan-origin population in Türkiye is not limited to Turks further inspires a holistic understanding of the issue. Furthermore, the collapse of an empire alongside the withdrawal from the Balkans and the establishment of a republic by those coming from the Balkans greatly facilitated this deep-rooted connection.

In this regard, it is essential to emphasize that Türkiye, both as a state and a nation, harbors feelings of intense affection and friendship towards all communities in the Balkans, stemming from historical and kinship ties. It is challenging to pinpoint the exact beginning of this interaction. While the year 1389 serves as a significant milestone, it does not definitively mark the beginning. One must trace back even before the establishment of Anatolia as a Turkish homeland. Therefore, when comes to the Balkans, historical and socio-cultural ties take precedence over all other priorities in Turkish foreign policy.

Starting from the 1990s, Türkiye has reshaped its policies toward the Balkans in line with the transforming international system and the opportunities it presents. With the years of Turgut Özal, Türkiye took on a more active role in foreign policy. After the 1980s, whether willing or not, Türkiye was directly affected by the events unfolding around it and found itself as an actor within these developments. The ethnic conflicts and wars that emerged with the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s prompted a reconfiguration of Türkiye's policies toward this region. Türkiye aimed to contribute to peace and stability by establishing close relations with countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Albania. It played an active role in NATO's intervention in Kosovo. Türkiye was one of the first countries to recognize and support Bosnia-Herzegovina's and Kosovo's independence, thereby increasing its influence in the Balkans. Türkiye's approach was shaped by the concept of "Strategic Depth," emphasizing historical and cultural ties.

During the tenure of Ahmet Davutoğlu (from his appointment as Foreign Policy Advisor in 2003 until his resignation while he was Prime Minister in 2016), Turkish foreign policy was primarily built on the principle of "zero problems with neighbours." This was a policy that sought to reduce the problems plaguing bilateral relations. Davutoğlu developed other approaches as well, like the "Balkan Expansion", the policy Türkiye implemented between 2009 and 2014 to enhance stability, regional cooperation, and its influence in the Balkans. Within this policy framework, the strategy prioritized acceptance, friendship, and trust with Serbia, the key country in the region's instability, while fundamentally relying on the friendship of Albanian and Bosniak groups, whose loyalty was not in question. Steps were taken under the motto "From Shared History to a Common Future," and an approach was developed encapsulated by the idea that "We, as regional actors, understand the region best" and "regional issues can be resolved in the region." This theoretically robust policy represented the segment of Davutoğlu's foreign policy that appeared to be the most successful, least risky, and most promising.

During this period, the "Trilateral Consultation Meetings" were successful (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2017).² The gathering of Serbian (T.C. Dışişleri

2 As confirmed in the 2017 Foreign Policy Document prepared by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the last summit meeting under the Türkiye-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia Trilateral Consultation Mechanism was held in Ankara on 14-15 May 2013.

Bakanlığı, 2013),³ Croatian, and Bosniak leaders through Türkiye facilitated the mutual acceptance of the principle of “respect for territorial integrity.” This, in turn, signifies the preservation of stability in the region.⁴ Türkiye attempted what the EU and the United States (US) had failed to achieve; while lasting and sustainable peace has still not been realized, a relative degree of stability was brought to the region. As the US supported Türkiye in these discussions, there were plans for Türkiye to replace the increasingly influential radical movements such as Salafism and Khomeinism in the region with its “Moderate Islam.” Behind its visible and concealed mission, Türkiye had its own objectives. Türkiye aimed to leverage this opportunity to attain a position where it could negotiate on equal terms with the West and Russia, aspiring to be recognized as the “indispensable actor” in the reshaping of the Balkans. In 2018, the US’s policies aimed at taking measures against Russia in the Balkans reduced Russia’s influence in Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Montenegro. These same policies also heightened tensions in Türkiye-Greece relations.

Türkiye’s policy towards the Balkans is currently conducted through both bilateral relations and regional cooperation mechanisms. The diplomatic principles from the 2009-2016 period (the balance between security and democracy; proactive and preventive peace diplomacy⁵ and rhythmic diplomacy⁶ principals) are still valid today. Türkiye plays an active role in increasing trade volume with Balkan countries, collaborating through energy transmission lines, and ensuring regional security. Significant projects in the fields of education, health, and culture are being implemented through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA). Today, Türkiye

3 The 2013 Foreign Policy Document prepared by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlights that Serbia is a key country for peace, stability, and prosperity in the Balkans. It emphasizes that the Turkish government attributes special importance and priority to Türkiye’s relations with Serbia. The document states that Türkiye-Serbia relations are at their highest level in history, in line with the goal of establishing a “strategic partnership.” In this context, Serbia’s key position is underlined for several reasons: (a) Türkiye’s commercial and economic interests, (b) the significance of Serbia’s location at the center of the Türkiye-West Europe route for Turks living in Western Europe, and (c) the impact of the Serbian minority in six different countries on regional stability.

4 On 25 April 2013, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić apologized during an interview with Bosnian national television for the Srebrenica Genocide, in which 8000 Muslims were killed. He stated, “I kneel and ask for forgiveness for the crime committed by Serbia in Srebrenica” and “I apologize on behalf of our state and people for the crimes committed by individuals.” This apology is particularly significant considering that Nikolić had previously stated upon his election as President (in May 2012) that “there was no genocide in Srebrenica” (Al Jazeera, 2013).

5 This diplomacy is aimed at fostering security and high-level political dialogue, economic integration, interdependence and multicultural coexistence, multidimensionality with which Türkiye wants to supplement its NATO role by building relationships with other influential players such as Russia (Davutoğlu, 2009).

6 Refers to an increased role for Türkiye in international and multilateral agreements.

pursues policies aimed at maintaining peace in the Balkans, supporting economic development, and strengthening regional cooperation within the framework of multilateral diplomacy. Additionally, it seeks to enhance its influence in these regions by strengthening cultural and religious ties with Muslim communities in the Balkans. Lastly Cooperation between Türkiye and Balkan countries is expected to increase in areas such as energy security, water resource management, and infrastructure projects.

To summarize, Türkiye has based its policy towards the Balkans on four main axes: 1) High-level political dialogue, 2) Security for all, 3) Maximum economic integration, and 4) Preservation of the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious social structures in the region. In the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents, it is stated that the goal is to accelerate existing cooperation and achieve comprehensive regional integration by creating “common areas of interest” among the countries of the region.

2.2. Black Sea Region: Security and Energy Policies

The Black Sea region emerged as a significant area for trade and defense during the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire transformed the Black Sea into an inland sea, controlling trade routes in the region and fostering a strong maritime culture. Ottoman policies regarding the Black Sea were shaped by its relations with the Crimean Khanate and its influence along the eastern shores of the Black Sea, particularly in Georgia and the Caucasus. Today, Türkiye's historical ties with countries in the Black Sea region have deepened through the diplomatic and cultural relationships established during this period.

During the Cold War, the Black Sea region played a critical role in Türkiye's relations with the Soviet Union. As a member of NATO, Türkiye became an essential part of the Western alliance in ensuring the security of the Black Sea. It emerged as a balancing force against Soviet naval power in the Black Sea and played a key role in maintaining the strategic balance in the region.

With the end of the Cold War, new power dynamics emerged in the region. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Türkiye strengthened its diplomatic and economic relations with the newly independent post-Soviet states with coastlines on the Black Sea. Particularly through strategic partnerships with Georgia and Ukraine, Türkiye has contributed to the security and stability of the region.

The Black Sea region has been a critical area for Türkiye in terms of accessing energy resources and ensuring strategic security. Since the late 1990s, Türkiye has participated in multilateral mechanisms aimed at promoting stability and cooperation in the region. Through the establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) in 1992, Türkiye collaborated with countries in the region in areas such as trade, energy, transportation, and the environment. Türkiye's role within BSEC is crucial for supporting economic development in the region and promoting stability. BSEC, which serves as a summary of Türkiye's Black Sea policy, is the best alternative to large-scale wars that could shake the world. Despite the fact that it is possible to leave the organization with a simple notice, the fact that not a single member has made such a declaration of withdrawal demonstrates that the member states still hold hope for a peaceful environment sustained by the functionality of the BSEC.

The Black Sea is a vital energy transit point for Türkiye, and the energy pipelines in the region play a strategic role in ensuring Türkiye's energy security. Notably, BTC and Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) projects facilitate energy flow through the Black Sea, enhancing Türkiye's energy supply security.

From a security perspective, one of the most significant developments in the Black Sea has been the relations between Türkiye and Russia. The 2008 Russia-Georgia war and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 have affected the security balances in the Black Sea. As a NATO member, Türkiye has sought to maintain equilibrium in the region while pursuing a multi-faceted balancing policy with Russia. It emphasizes the importance of the Black Sea remaining a sea under the control of its coastal states. Türkiye, which considers the security of the Black Sea as part of its own security, is the strongest NATO member in the Black Sea region. It steadfastly enforces the Montreux Convention and thus plays a key role in Black Sea security. Moreover, Türkiye actively engages in diplomacy regarding maritime jurisdiction areas in the Black Sea. The protection of Türkiye's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) rights and the sustainable utilization of maritime resources in the region are fundamental components of Türkiye's maritime policies.

While preserving its historical heritage in the Black Sea, Türkiye continues to enhance security, energy, and trade cooperation in the region, maintaining its regional leadership role. The Black Sea region also serves as a significant connection point in Türkiye's relations with surrounding regions, is thus an integral part of Türkiye's regional and global strategies. Specifically, the

Black Sea holds strategic importance for Türkiye's Caucasus policy. Access to the Caucasus through the Black Sea reinforces Türkiye's relationships with Georgia and Azerbaijan, contributing to energy and transportation projects in these areas. Notably, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway line and other transportation corridors strengthen Türkiye's strategic ties to the Caucasus, enhancing the Black Sea's significance as an energy and trade corridor.

2.3. Türkiye's Caucasus Policy: Historical Dynamics and Strategic Approaches

The Caucasus holds strategic importance in Türkiye's foreign policy. Geographic proximity, as well as historical and cultural ties, are key factors in Türkiye's relations with the region. In this complex area where global and regional actors such as Russia, Iran, the EU, and the US play significant roles, Türkiye pursues a balanced and multi-faceted foreign policy.

Türkiye's relations with the Caucasus date back to the Ottoman Empire. Starting from the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire expanded towards the Caucasus, establishing direct contact with various peoples in the region. However, as the Ottoman Empire weakened and Russia's influence in the Caucasus grew, the balance of power shifted. Beginning in the 1860s, peoples from the Caucasus, such as the Nogays, Circassians, Abkhazians, Chechens, and Ingush, were forced to migrate to Anatolian lands, similar to the Crimean Tatars. During the 19th century, the Ottoman-Russian wars turned the Caucasus into a strategic battlefield, further strengthening the bonds between the peoples of the Caucasus and the Ottoman Empire. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century and the establishment of the Soviet Union, a new era began in Türkiye-Caucasus relations. In 1921, Türkiye delineated its borders with Caucasian countries like Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan through the Kars and Moscow Treaties, establishing diplomatic relations. However, under Soviet influence, these relations remained limited for a long period.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Türkiye developed close relations with the newly independent states of the Caucasus, particularly Azerbaijan. Türkiye was one of the first countries to recognize Azerbaijan's independence, and a strong strategic partnership was established under the principle of "two states, one nation." For Türkiye, Georgia serves as a gateway to the Caucasus, with economic and trade relations between the two countries playing a key role in regional cooperation. Georgia has also been

integrated into energy transfer routes and railway projects between Azerbaijan and Türkiye. Türkiye has adopted a more cautious approach in its relations with Armenia, due to tensions arising from the Karabakh conflict and the dispute over the events of 1915. Despite these tensions, Türkiye has made various attempts to improve diplomatic relations with Armenia in the interest of promoting regional peace and stability.

The Circassian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian diasporas in Türkiye play a crucial role in preserving the cultural ties between Türkiye and the Caucasus. These communities serve as a bridge in Türkiye's relations with the region, fostering closer connections and cultural continuity. Today, Türkiye's Caucasus policy is defined by energy security, regional cooperation, and security issues. Türkiye plays a strategic role in energy transfer routes stretching from the Caspian Sea to Europe. BTC and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) pipelines are the cornerstones of Türkiye's energy policy in the Caucasus. These projects have not only positioned Türkiye as a regional energy hub but have also contributed to deepening economic relations with countries in the Caucasus.

Türkiye also plays an active role in maintaining peace and stability in the Caucasus. In the 2020 Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Türkiye's strong support for Azerbaijan was particularly noteworthy. The ceasefire agreement signed after the war and the new geopolitical balances in the region have increased Türkiye's influence in the Caucasus. Contributing to the peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia remains one of Türkiye's primary goals. Türkiye continues its diplomatic engagement with other South Caucasian countries to promote peace and enhance regional cooperation. Additionally, discussions have arisen about the potential for platforms involving Iran⁷ and Russia to contribute to regional stability.

⁷ Iran has shown reluctance regarding the opening of the Zangezur Corridor that will connect Azerbaijan with its exclave Nakhchivan. It perceives a threat due to its significant Azerbaijani population and is uncomfortable with the discourse around "Southern Azerbaijan." Although border changes are not on the table, Iran claims that the Zangezur Corridor will sever its connection with Armenia. Several economic factors also contribute to Iran's hesitation, including the fact that travel (including gas transport and trade) between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan has so far been conducted through Iran. Additionally, Iran remains Armenia's sole trading partner, owing to the closed borders resulting from Armenia's (now-ended) occupation of Azerbaijani territories. Armenia's location on the Iran-Russia trade route, and the potential rerouting of Central Asian trade, further drive Iran's reluctance. Moreover, Iran seeks to maintain the significance of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a 7200-kilometer sea, rail, and road route that it hosts, which facilitates cargo transportation between India, Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe. The Middle Corridor, which passes through Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Türkiye, offers an alternative to the southern route passing through Iran (Altynbayev, 2022). The opening of the Zangezur Corridor would create an even shorter route. Furthermore, for a range of economic, political, and military reasons, Iran's perception of a threat from Israel also extends to Azerbaijan (Kılıç Yaşın, 2019).

The future of Türkiye's Caucasus policy will be shaped by geopolitical dynamics and energy strategies in the region. As Türkiye deepens its economic and trade relations with the countries of the Caucasus, it will continue to seek new opportunities in energy projects. Initiatives like the Southern Gas Corridor will reinforce Türkiye's strategic role in the Caucasus, ensuring its position as a crucial link in transporting the region's energy resources to Europe.

2.4. Türkiye's Central Asia/Turkistan Policy: Historical Ties and Strategic Relations

Central Asia, or Turkistan, has always held a special place in Türkiye's foreign policy. The region carries strategic importance for Türkiye due to historical, cultural, and ethnic ties. Central Asia is considered the ancestral homeland of the Turkic peoples. Many Turkic states of the past, such as the Göktürks, Karakhanids, Seljuks, and Ottomans, had their origins in Central Asia. Therefore, Türkiye shares strong ethnic and linguistic ties with the region. There are significant similarities between the Turkish spoken in Türkiye and the Turkic languages spoken in Central Asia, such as Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen. On the other hand, the spread of Islam in Central Asia created strong religious ties between the Turkic peoples of the region and Anatolia. Islamic madrasas and scholars in Central Asia significantly influenced Islamic thought in Anatolia during the Ottoman period.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Türkiye's relations with the newly independent Central Asian Turkic republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan have developed on a strong foundation of shared history and culture. Türkiye's relationship with Central Asia is rooted in the historical migrations of Turkic peoples and their shared cultural heritage. These ties, which extend into the early 20th century, weakened with the establishment of the Soviet Union, but were never completely severed. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Türkiye was one of the first states to recognize the said republics.

During this period, Türkiye swiftly moved to enhance relations with the Central Asian republics through diplomatic and economic initiatives. Under the leadership of Turgut Özal, Türkiye adopted the vision of the "Turkic World from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China," launching a multifaceted cooperation process with these countries. Significant projects were undertaken in education, culture, economy, and energy during this period.

Today, Türkiye's Central Asia policy is shaped by two main pillars: 1) Deepening political, economic, and cultural ties with the countries in the region, and 2) Enhancing cooperation on regional and global security issues.

Through international organizations such as OTS, Türkiye strengthens multilateral cooperation mechanisms with Central Asian countries. This organization stands out as a key platform in Türkiye's relations with Central Asia. Additionally, through TİKA, Türkiye supports educational, healthcare, and infrastructure projects in Central Asia, strengthening its ties with the region's Turkic-speaking communities. Cultural celebrations like Nevruz play a vital role in strengthening the cultural ties between Türkiye and Central Asian countries. Through such events, Türkiye takes care to preserve and nurture its cultural connections with Central Asia.

In the economic sphere, Türkiye's trade volume with Central Asia has steadily increased. It seeks opportunities for collaboration in projects involving the region's natural resources and energy transportation routes. Moreover, Türkiye has made significant investments in sectors such as agriculture, construction, textiles, and services in the region.

In the field of security, Türkiye collaborates with Central Asian countries on issues such as counter-terrorism, border security, and preventing radicalization. This cooperation is critical both for regional stability and for Türkiye's own security.

Looking ahead, Türkiye's Central Asia policy will continue to evolve with the goal of preserving and expanding its strategic interests and influence in the region. In this process, Türkiye may engage in initiatives that promote regional integration and deepen cooperation with Central Asian countries in areas such as energy, transportation, and the digital economy. At a time when China is increasing its influence in Central Asia through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it is crucial for Türkiye to maintain a balanced role in this process. By balancing its relations with the West and cooperating with regional powers like China and Russia, Türkiye can pursue an active foreign policy in Central Asia.

The expanding structure and functionality of OTS will remain an important tool in Türkiye's Central Asia policy that aims to foster solidarity within the Turkic world. In this context, Türkiye is expected to further strengthen its cultural ties with the countries of Central Asia and prioritize projects that emphasize their shared historical heritage.

Conclusion

Türkiye's foreign policy operates within a multidimensional framework, especially as the international system evolves into a multipolar structure. While maintaining its traditional ties with the Western world, Türkiye has increasingly focused on strategic engagement with Eurasia, which includes the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East. In these regions, Türkiye employs a combination of economic, political, and cultural instruments to expand its influence and assert its role as a key regional actor.

Through initiatives such as OTS and other multilateral organizations, Türkiye has strengthened its relations with Turkic republics and fostered regional integration. Economic cooperation, particularly in energy, trade, and infrastructure, has become central to its Eurasian strategy. Projects like BTC and Trans-Anatolian pipelines underscore Türkiye's ambition to be a regional energy hub, connecting resource-rich regions like the Caspian to Europe.

In security matters, Türkiye is an active player in ensuring regional stability, countering terrorism, and managing border security. The ongoing conflicts and geopolitical shifts in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East require Türkiye to navigate complex relationships with global and regional powers, such as Russia, the EU, and the US, while fostering partnerships with neighboring states.

In conclusion, Türkiye's Eurasian policy is marked by a balance between economic ambitions, security interests, and cultural diplomacy, all within the broader context of a multipolar international order. As Ankara deepens its connections in Eurasia while maintaining its Western alliances, its approach reflects the growing significance of these regions in its long-term strategic goals. Türkiye's position as both a regional and global actor will depend on its ability to successfully integrate these multifaceted policies and adapt to the changing geopolitical landscape.

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