

Turkey between NATO and Kremlin. The impact of Russian-Turkish cooperation on the relationship between Ankara and NATO

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Abstract: *In this article, we investigate the evolutions that marked the bilateral relations between the Russian Federation and Turkey after 2016. The main question to be tackled is: Did military and energy cooperation between the Russian Federation and Turkey favor the manifestation of Complex Interdependence and the distancing of Ankara from NATO? The study will tackle the following topics: TurkStream and Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) role in shaping Russo-Turkish strategic cooperation, S-400 Triumph missile system affair – more security for Turkey new threats for NATO. The bilateral relationship between the Russian Federation and Turkey will be assessed using the neoliberal analysis framework proposed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. The study relies mainly on qualitative data including document analysis and official statements issued by the Turkish Government and NATO member states officials. The main conclusion is Russia-Turkey cooperation affects the strategic foreign policy decisions of the Turkish state.*

Keywords: *NATO, Russian Federation, S-400 Triumph, Turkey, TurkStream.*

INTRODUCTION

Turkey joined NATO in 1952 to defend its national security threatened by the Soviet Union. Under the auspices of the security umbrella provided by the Alliance, the Turkish state had the opportunity to consolidate its economy and ensure its prosperity. Moreover, as a member of NATO, Turkey signed multiple contracts in the economy field with Moscow, without fearing that the Russian side could resort to actions aimed at undermining the national security of the Turkish state or the territorial integrity of Turkey. Due to the fact that the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the disappearance of the most representative security threat for the Turkish state, the new regional and global context fostered the bilateral cooperation between Ankara and Moscow. Although the new world order that emerged after the post-Cold War facilitated strategic cooperation between the Russian Federation and Turkey, meanwhile the relationship between Ankara and the West deteriorated substantially. Ankara's intentions and perseverance to strengthen its influence in the Middle East and its efforts to reduce its strategic dependence on NATO have contributed in particular to the deterioration of relations between Ankara and NATO. The above mentioned radical changes in the conduct of the Turkish state's foreign policy intensified especially after 2002 when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) took power in Turkey.

In the last period, Turkey and the US/NATO have defined the “threat” notion in a different manner, having a contrasting approach towards the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) actions. Moreover, the Turkish state's political and economic ambitions in the Middle East contributed to the increased tensions between Ankara and the West. Turkish officials display a considerable lack of confidence in the NATO security guarantees, while more and more NATO member states are questioning the real intentions of the Turkish state and its future strategic aspirations. Among the main NATO member states concern are: the hegemonic ambitions of the Turkish state and the revival of ideologies like neo-Ottomanism; Ankara's policy towards the Kurdish minority in Turkey

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and the Middle East; Russian Federation-Turkey intensified cooperation and their development of strategic projects in the military and energy fields¹.

The peak of the tensions between Ankara and the West has been reached during the failed coup attempt of July 2016, when Turkish officials accused NATO and the EU of not showing support for the Ankara government during the hostilities. In return, the Russian Federation supported the views of Turkish officials and condemned those involved in orchestrating the failed coup. Against this background, the cooperation between Turkey and the Russian Federation has seen a reversal that has favored the acceleration of negotiations on the strategic energy projects (TurkStream pipeline and Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant) and military cooperation (S-400 affair).

The aim of this article is to highlight the most important evolutions that marked the bilateral relations between the Russian Federation and Turkey after 2016. The study attempts to answer two research questions: 1. Did military and energy cooperation between the Russian Federation and Turkey favor the manifestation of Complex Interdependence and the distancing of Ankara from NATO? 2. Did the cooperation between Moscow and Ankara influence the cooperation between the Turkish state and NATO?

In terms of methodology, we used in our study mainly qualitative data on the basis of which we performed a qualitative and historical analysis. In this regard, we have started with the descriptive approach, so we presented the main events which marked the Russian-Turkish relationship in the long run. In this study, we analyzed official documents and communiqués, scientific papers, articles, publications that have an impact on the chosen field of study and that have been published by reputable scholars and experts. However, we do not assume the merit of advancing a geopolitical explanation for the identified transformations.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analytical construct of the Complex Interdependence Theory has been proposed for the first time in 1977 by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. The two authors formulated a critique against the precepts promoted by the political realism. Keohane and Nye challenge the realist arguments that claim the following: the states are the main actors of the international system; force is a usable and effective political tool; international policy themes follow a precise hierarchy. According to Keohane and Nye, the Complex Interdependence is placed in opposition with the realism precepts, and it's based on three main assumptions: multiple channels of contact among society, lack of clear hierarchies of issues, and irrelevance of military force².

1. Multiple channels connect societies, including informal ties between governmental elites as well as formal foreign office arrangements; informal ties among nongovernmental elites (face-to-face and through telecommunications); and transnational organizations (such as multinational banks or corporations),

2. The agenda of interstate relationships consists of multiple issues that are not arranged in a clear or consistent hierarchy,

3. Military force is not used by governments toward other governments within the region, or on the issues, when complex interdependence prevails³.

Keohane and Nye point out that the interdependence between actors does not imply the existence of a perfect balance of power, which leads to unequal dependence. Under these conditions,

¹ Nilsu Goren, "Nuclear Energy Developments, Climate Change and Security in Turkey", *Council on Strategic Risks*, No. 7, April 27, 2020, accessed May 01, 2021, online available at: https://councilonstrategicrisks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Nuclear-Energy-Climate-Change-and-Security-in-Turkey_BRIEFER-7_2020_4_27-1.pdf.

² Robert O. Keohane, Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, Longman, Boston, 2012, pp. 19-25.

³ *Ibidem*.

the less dependent and more influential actor has the ability to use the interdependence relationship as a source of power and as a tool of influence in negotiations with the less dependent actor⁴. At the same time, the two authors consider that in conditions of Complex Interdependence between actors, the conflict is not absent. Moreover, Keohane and Nye believe that the conflict can coexist with cooperation⁵.

In 1996, Marc Genest defined Complex Interdependence as “a trans-nationalist concept arguing that the states are not the only major players in the international relations scene and that the well-being of society occupies the same central place on the global agenda as security issues”. At the same time, Genest argues that cooperation has a place as important at the level of international politics as the one occupied by the theme of the conflict. According to Genest, in conditions of interdependence, states cooperate because interests are common and produce benefits on both sides⁶.

Concerning the faults of the theory, Keohane and Nye do not argue that Complex Interdependence faithfully reflects world political reality. Quite the contrary, the two authors highlight both it and the realist portrait are ideal types. They also emphasize that most situations will fall somewhere between these two extremes. Sometimes, realist assumptions will be accurate, or largely accurate, but frequently complex interdependence will provide a better portrayal of reality. Before one decides what explanatory model to apply to a situation or problem, one will need to understand the degree to which realist or Complex Interdependence assumptions correspond to a certain situation⁷.

Regarding the criticisms formulated by the realism adepts, Robert Powell considers that Complex Interdependence is applicable in conditions where there is a relatively safe climate between states⁸. Subsequently, Powell's idea was taken over and refined by John Mearsheimer, who stressed that the relevance of Complex Interdependence decreases if there is conflict, and mutual gains diminish considerably. Based on Mearsheimer's assumptions, Mohammed Nuruzzaman argued in 2006 that Complex Interdependence lends itself much better to explain developments in the fields of political economy and the environment⁹.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the existence of several conflicting dossiers that have affected the Russian-Turkish bilateral relationship, several authors have studied the relations between Moscow and Ankara to determine whether the existing cooperation favors the manifestation of Complex Interdependence. Şaban Kardaş argues that between the Russian Federation and Turkey there is an incipient form of Complex Interdependence, generated mainly by cooperation in areas such as construction, tourism and energy. The author emphasizes that Turkish interest groups and

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 10-11.

⁵ Robert Keohane și Joseph Nye, „Power and Interdependence Revisited”, *International Organization*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 1987, The Mit Press, pp. 730, accessed April 28, 2021, online available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2706764?origin=JSTOR-pdf&seq=1>.

⁶ Marc A. Genest, *Conflict and Cooperation: Evolving Theories of International Relations*, Thomson & Wadsworth, Belmont, 1996, pp. 133-140.

⁷ Robert O. Keohane, Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, Longman, Boston, 2012, pp. 20.

⁸ Robert Powell, “Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory”, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 4, American Political Science Association, December 1991, pp. 1303-1320, accessed April 28, 2021, online available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1963947?origin=JSTOR-pdf&seq=1>.

⁹ Mohammed Nuruzzaman, *Liberal Institutionalism and Cooperation in the Post-9/11 World*, 2006, accessed April 28, 2021, online available at: <https://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2006/Nuruzzaman.pdf>.

companies with pro-Russian sympathies influence to a considerable extent the foreign policy of the Turkish state¹⁰.

On the other hand, Seçkin Köstem claims that economic relations between Moscow and Ankara are characterized by asymmetric interdependence, with the Russian Federation having an ascendancy over Turkey. The author also stresses that Turkey's sensitivity and vulnerability to the Russian Federation's actions are greater than vice versa, with Ankara having less room for maneuver in the bilateral relationship¹¹. Nargiz Hajiyeva emphasizes that the energy projects jointly developed by the Russian Federation and Turkey intensify the interdependence between the two states, including from a strategic point of view. Nargiz Hajiyeva believes that the Turkish political establishment's appetite for Eurasianisms will impact Turkey's foreign policy and will determine Turkish officials to join projects in strategic areas formulated by the Russian Federation¹².

According to the above mentioned authors, the bilateral relationship between the Russian Federation and Turkey is unbalanced, especially in the economic field, with the Kremlin's gains surpassing those of Ankara. For this reason, the interdependence between the two states is rather asymmetrical. However, more and more authors believe that the intensification of cooperation in the energy field has the potential to create a framework for Complex Interdependence. At the same time, cooperation in the economic field favors cooperation in other fields as well. For example, the intensification of the Russian-Turkish bilateral relations since 2016 has also led to the intensification of cooperation in the military field, the S-400 Triumph affair being the result of this process. Despite the mutual benefits resulted from Russian-Turkish cooperation, projects like the S-400 Triumph affair, have the potential to alter the bilateral relationship between Ankara and NATO.

Mehmet Yegin also highlights the changes occurred in the formulation of Turkish foreign policy following the acquisition of the Russian S-400 Triumph system. The author points out that Ankara used the subject to persuade the West to deliver sophisticated weapons to Turkey, the main stake being the Patriot missile defense system. Mehmet Yegin also emphasizes that the acquisition and operationalization by the Turkish army of sophisticated weapons systems of Russian origin have the potential to put at risk the national security of the Turkish state and NATO countries and to favor the increase of Ankara's dependence on Moscow¹³.

Furthermore, Timur Akhmetov argues that cooperation between Turkey and the Russian Federation gives the Kremlin strategic advantages in its competition with NATO. Against this background, the political elites of the Russian Federation intend to generate as sharp cleavages as possible between Turkey and the West¹⁴.

¹⁰ Şaban Kardaş, *Turkey's S400 vs. F35 Conundrum and its Deepening Strategic Partnership with Russia*, German Marshall Fund of the United States (on Turkey), May 28, 2019, pp. 1-11, accessed April 29, 2021, online available at: <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/turkeys-s400-vs-f35-conundrum-and-its-deepening-strategic-partnership-russia>.

¹¹ Seçkin Köstem, *The Political Economy of Turkish-Russian Relations: Dynamics of Asymmetric Interdependence*, in Center for Strategic Research of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey Report nr. 41/2019, Moscow, 2019, pp. 11-13.

¹² Hajiyeva Nargiz, *Russia-Turkey: The Interdependent Relationship Shaped by Energy or a Deeper Friendship?*, April 04, 2018, accessed April 29, 2021, online available at: <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2018/04/04/russia-turkey-the-interdependent-relationship-shaped-by-energy-or-a-deeper-friendship/>.

¹³ Mehmet Yegin, „Turkey's S-400 Purchase and Implications for Turkish Relations with NATO”, in *Turkey between NATO and Russia: The Failed Balance*, German Institute for International and Security Affairs nr. 30, June 2019, pp. 1-4.

¹⁴ Timur Akhmetov, „It Is Time to Revise Russia–Turkey Relations for a More Stable Future, Russian”, *International Affairs Council*, October 02, 2020, accessed April 30, 2021, online available at: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/it-is-time-to-revise-russia-turkey-relations-for-a-more-stable-future/?sphrase_id=72816862.

3. COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF STRATEGIC ENERGY PROJECTS

3.1. TurkStream project

Given the acute need for energy resources for industrial and domestic consumption, Ankara has concluded several energy partnerships in recent years with suppliers situated in the vicinity of Turkey, among them the Russian Federation. The turkis state opted for Russian gas because of the advantageous price charged by the Russian side and due to the fact Moscow is a reliable supplier. Turkey also intends to become a regional energy hub, and having as many suppliers as possible is gainful. To increase the amount of natural gas imported from the Russian Federation, in 2017 Turkey signed with Gazprom the TurkStream pipeline contract. The two parallel lines of TurkStream are crossing the Turkish territory and supply natural gas to Turkey and to states situated in southern and southeastern Europe. TurkStream is one of the most significant energy projects Turkey has undertaken in recent years. It is also a catalyst that is fostering the improvement and intensification of the relationship with Moscow. Despite criticism from the EU and NATO, Turkish officials have not suspended the project, omitting that Turkey is a NATO member and EU candidate¹⁵.

For example, the European Commission raised some objections against TurkStream 2 (the second line of TurkStream) and made it clear that the project would be carefully checked, to verify that it adheres to Internal Energy Market rules¹⁶. Brussels has also stated that the project would be approved if Bulgaria can secure gas supplies from three different sources¹⁷. The United States has also criticized the TurkStream 2 project. In December of 2019, President Trump signed the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and included sanctions against companies involved in building the Russian-sponsored natural gas pipelines to Europe, namely TurkStream and Nord Stream 2¹⁸. Later on, in July of 2020, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced US administration is ending grandfather clauses that had spared firms previously involved in the pipelines' construction from sanctions authorized by the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

The law is aimed at punishing Russia for interference in U.S. elections and other matters. The move opens the door for U.S. economic and financial penalties to be imposed on any European or other foreign company over the Nord Stream 2 and TurkStream projects, including those that had been working on the pipelines before the passage of CAATSA and had been previously exempted from the penalties. Mike Pompeo also took aim at the pipeline projects (TurkStream 2 and Nord Stream 2), calling them "the Kremlin's key tools to exploit and expand European dependence on Russian energy supplies" that "ultimately undermine transatlantic security"¹⁹. In these circumstances, in September of 2020, the world's largest shippers' insurance group, International

¹⁵ Dimitar Bechev, *Russia's Pipe Dreams Are Europe's Nightmare*, March 12, 2019, accessed May 01, 2021, online available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/12/russia-turkstream-oil-pipeline/>.

¹⁶ Martin Jirušek, *TurkStream is South Stream 2.0—has the EU done its homework this time?*, February 19, 2020, accessed May 01, 2021, online available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/energysource/turkstream-is-south-stream-2-0-has-the-eu-done-its-homework-this-time/>.

¹⁷ Margarita Assenova, *TurkStream: Triumph or Failure for Russia?*, January 16, 2020, accessed May 02, 2021, online available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/turkstream-triumph-or-failure-for-russia/>.

¹⁸ Gloria Shkurti Özdemir, Turkstream, "The U.S. Opposition And The Reasons Behind It", *SETA Analysis*, Istanbul, August 2020, NO.68, accessed May 12, 2021, online available at: <https://www.setav.org/en/russia-turkey-us-energy-triangle-success-of-turkstream/>.

¹⁹ Matthew Lee, *US warns firms about sanctions for work on Russian pipelines*, July 15, 2020, accessed May 05, 2021, online available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/us-toughens-stance-against-2-russian-gas-pipelines-to-europe/2020/07/15/e932ebcc-c6aa-11ea-a825-8722004e4150_story.html.

Group of P&I Clubs, announced that it would not insure vessels involved in the Russian-led Nord Stream 2 and TurkStream gas pipeline projects because of the existing threat of U.S. sanctions²⁰.

Given the above-mentioned legal statements and actions, it is clear that Washington's reaction to the TurkStream 2 project is much more vocal than that of the EU. The US claims that TurkStream 2 is a geopolitical project that will increase the EU's dependence on Russian gas and Moscow's influence in the region. One of the main fears of the US government is that once the TurkStream 2 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines are finalized, Moscow will suspend the gas exports to Ukraine, as it did in 2006 and 2009, putting the Ukrainian state in difficulty. At the same time, the operationalization of TurkStream 2 and Nord Stream 2 allows the Russian Federation to intensify subversive actions in eastern Ukraine because protecting the gas transmission network will not be a priority. Moscow's finding of alternative routes for exporting natural gas will not only deprive the Ukrainian state of gas of Russian origin but will also lead to a decrease in the amounts obtained from the transit taxes of the gas that the Russian state pays.

The US opposition to the TurkStream 2 gas pipeline has both economic and geopolitical implications. On the one hand, the Russian-Turkish project is a competitor for the USA, whose strategies aim to increase the quantities of liquefied natural gas exported to European countries. In other words, TurkStream 2 offers considerable advantages to the Kremlin in its fight with the US to control the European gas market. On the other hand, the Washington administration is concerned that the TurkStream 2 project will provide the Russian Federation with strategic advantages through which it will strengthen its levers of influence in Europe to the detriment of American interests. Despite Washington's opposition to TurkStream 2 and allegations of alienating the Western path of the Turkish state, the Ankara political establishment did not cancel the project, saying it was in line with Turkey's national interest. According to Ankara officials, the TurkStream project will increase the country's energy security and will improve the bilateral relationship with the Russian Federation. They also claim that TurkStream pipeline will contribute to the process of transforming Turkey into an energy hub²¹.

Speaking at the ceremony for the completion of the offshore section of the TurkStream Project, President Erdoğan underscored: "The TurkStream is a project of historic proportions for our bilateral relations and for the energy geopolitics in our region, on which we have exerted great efforts with our Russian friends." President Erdoğan continued his speech as follows: "The TurkStream Project, which will transport 31.5 billion-cubic-meter natural gas annually, has many advantages not only for our country and nation but also for our neighbors and the environment. We plan to transfer at least half of the natural gas, transported through here, to Europe". In the context of the West's criticism towards the TurkStream project and the intensification of relations with the Russian Federation, President Erdoğan stated: "We have never defined the framework of our bilateral relations with Russia according to other countries' demands or impositions"²². All these statements make it very clear that TurkStream is more than an economic project for Turkey.

Through TurkStream, both Turkey and the Russian Federation have achieved their strategic and economic interests. On the one hand, the Russian Federation managed to increase the volumes of natural gas sold on the European market. On the other hand, Turkey managed to secure substantial

²⁰ Anton Kolodyazhnyy, *Citing U.S. Sanctions, Insurers Won't Cover Ships For Russia, Turkey Pipelines Projects*, September 23, 2020, accessed May 05, 2020, online available at: <https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/international/2020/09/23/583772.htm>.

²¹ Gloria Shkurti Özdemir, "Russia-Turkey-US energy triangle: Success of TurkStream", *SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research*, January 13, 2021, accessed May 14, 2021, online available at: <https://www.setav.org/en/russia-turkey-us-energy-triangle-success-of-turkstream/>.

²² Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, "*The TurkStream is a project of historic proportions for the energy geopolitics in our region*" November 19, 2021, accessed May 14, 2021, online available at: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/99695/-the-turkstream-is-a-project-of-historic-proportions-for-the-energy-geopolitics-in-our-region->.

quantities of gas for domestic consumption and become a regional energy hub. These developments have automatically led to an intensification of Russian-Turkish economic relations. The state of affairs has drawn the attention of Western observers who look with suspicion at strengthening the Russian-Turkish relationship, especially in the context in which Turkey is a NATO member and the Russian Federation the main security threat to the Alliance²³.

Although Turkish officials believe that TurkStream is in Turkey's national interest and that the project does not represent a distance from the West, the pipeline favors emergencies of a long-term mutual dependence between the Russian and Turkish states²⁴. In the last years, Turkey has made sustained efforts to diversify energy sources, which has led to lower imports of hydrocarbons from the Russian Federation. Despite these evolutions, the Russian Federation continues to be the largest exporter of natural gas to Turkey, having strategic advantages over Ankara²⁵.

3.2. Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant

Given the increase in energy consumption, the lack of domestic fossil fuel resources, and the high dependence on energy imports, nuclear energy is one of the available alternatives for Turkey. Thus, Turkish officials plan to produce domestically about 10,000 MW of electricity from nuclear sources by 2030. To achieve this goal, Turkey accepted the Russian state-owned company Rosatom's offer to build a Nuclear Power Plant in Akkuyu. The Turkish state also plans to build a second nuclear power plant in the Sinop region, in partnership with a Japanese-French consortium, and a third nuclear power plant in partnership with China²⁶.

Akkuyu NPP is a representative project for the bilateral Russian-Turkish energy relationship. The project was launched in 2010, when Turkey signed an agreement with the Russian state-owned company Rosatom, the latter committing to build four nuclear reactors at Akkuyu with a total installed capacity of 4800 MW. Under the terms of the Agreement, on December 13, 2010, the Russian side established a project company in the territory of the Republic of Turkey – Akkuyu Nuclear Joint-Stock Company (Akkuyu Nükleer Anonim Şirketi). The Akkuyu NPP construction project in Turkey is the first-ever NPP project implemented according to the BOO model (Build - Own - Operate). Under the long-term contract, the Russian company provides the design, construction, maintenance, operation, and decommissioning of the NPP. The stake of Rosatom State Corporation in the project is 99.2% and the total project cost is estimated at 20 billion US dollars. According to the official website of Akkuyu NPP, the project is "the biggest one in the history of Russian-Turkish relations" and "it opens new vistas for cooperation between Russian and Turkey and provides opportunities for exchange of technologies and experience"²⁷.

During the launching ceremony of the Akkuyu NPP project, the then Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yıldız underlined that "Economic development cannot take place in a country without nuclear energy". The minister also mentioned that "If the Akkuyu plant had been built a decade ago, Turkey would have saved \$14 billion in natural gas purchases and nuclear power would today cover 28% of

²³ Hilal Köylü, *Turkey and Russia: TurkStream pipeline not a fix for bilateral woes*, July 01, 2020, accessed May 14, 2021, online available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-and-russia-turkstream-pipeline-not-a-fix-for-bilateral-woes/a-51923019>.

²⁴ Galip Dalay, „After the S-400 Purchase: Where Are Turkish-Russian Relations Heading?“, *German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, September 03, 2019, accessed May 15, 2021, online available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/after-the-s-400-purchase-where-are-turkish-russian-relations-heading>.

²⁵ Nuran Erkul Kaya, *Turkey's gas imports from Iran see sharp fall in 2020*, February 26, 2021, accessed May 15, 2021, online available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/energy-diplomacy/turkeys-gas-imports-from-iran-see-sharp-fall-in-2020/31999>.

²⁶ Huseyin Erdogan, *Turkey to build 3rd nuclear plant with China: Erdogan*, June 19, 2018, accessed May 16, 2021, online available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/nuclear/turkey-to-build-3rd-nuclear-plant-with-china-erdogan/20544>.

²⁷ Akkuyu Nuclear Rosatom, accessed May 15, 2021, online available at: <http://www.akkunpp.com/index.php?lang=en>.

the electricity demand”²⁸. According to calculations made by the Turkish Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, if Akkuyu NPP were to start functioning, then it alone would provide electricity to a large city with a population of 15 million, such as Istanbul²⁹.

The construction of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant is a complex process, which facilitates the intensification of cooperation between the Russian Federation and Turkey. Russian and Turkish specialists from several fields cooperate and work together to complete the project³⁰. As part of an agreement between the two governments, students from Turkish universities, mostly engineers, have been enrolling in training programs in Russia since 2011 to take jobs afterward at the Akkuyu Nuclear Plant, which is being constructed in the Mediterranean province of Mersin³¹. In March 2018, took place the first graduation of Turkish students trained in the nuclear energy field at the leading specialized university – National Research Nuclear University (MEPhI).

35 Turkish young professionals successfully completed a 6.5 long year training course with a degree in “Nuclear power plants: design, operation and engineering”. All of them received higher education diplomas in Russia and were hired by Akkuyu Nuclear Jsc to implement the project of the first nuclear power plant in Turkey. In 2019, another 53 young specialists from Turkey who received higher specialized education at MEPhI were hired by the company. In February 2020, 54 graduates of MEPhI received their diplomas, followed by job offers to join the Akkuyu project³².

Although the specific activities carried out to build the NPP facilitate the bilateral cooperation between the Russian Federation and Turkey, the project is still challenging, especially for the Turkish state. Given that the Russian Federation builds, owns, and operates the Akkuyu NPP, Moscow has a dominant position compared to Turkey. At the same time, in addition to the economic advantages obtained by the Russian Federation following the implementation of the project, the Russian state also gains a series of strategic advantages, Akkuyu NPP being the only nuclear power plant built and controlled by the Russian Federation in a NATO state. Although the Akkuyu NPP is an energy project with economic implications for the Russian Federation and Turkey, it can also have strategic and security implications. The Russian state is known for using energy diplomacy in an offensive manner, which is why Moscow will be able to use the Akkuyu energy project to exert pressure and influence the decisions of the political establishment in Ankara, especially during a crisis. Akkuyu NPP is the first nuclear power plant created according to the BOO model (Build - Own - Operate), which means maintaining long-term favorable relations in the Russian and Turkish states. The fact that the Russian Federation will own the Akkuyu nuclear power plant for about 60 years, with an extension period of 20 years, will have a considerable impact on Russian-Turkish relations. The situation favors the asymmetric nature of the interdependence between the Russian Federation and Turkey. Turkey will depend on the Russian Federation to ensure technology, nuclear fuel, skilled labor, know-how etc³³.

²⁸ Ground broken for Turkey's first nuclear power plant, April 15, 2015, accessed May 16, 2021, online available at: <https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/NN-Ground-broken-for-Turkeys-first-nuclear-power-plant-1541501.html>.

²⁹ Akkuyu Nuclear Rosatom, *Economic Effect, Expected project effect for the region*, accessed May 16, 2021, online available at: <http://www.akkuyu.com/economic-effect>.

³⁰ Tuncay Babali, “The Role Of Energy In Turkey’s Relations With Russia And Iran”, *The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey*, Ankara, March 29, 2012, p. 4.

³¹ Mithat Yurdakul, *Turkish engineers trained in Russia take jobs at country’s first nuclear plant*, April 13, 2021, accessed May 16, 2021, online available at: <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-engineers-trained-in-russia-take-jobs-at-countrys-first-nuclear-plant-163893>.

³² Akkuyu Nuclear Rosatom, *op. cit.*

³³ Turkey, Russia lay foundation for third unit of Akkuyu NPP, Daily Sabah, Istanbul, March 10, 2021, accessed May 17, 2021, online available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/energy/turkey-russia-lay-foundation-for-third-unit-of-akkuyu-npp>.

Despite the substantial economic benefits that the Akkuyu NPP will bring to Turkey, the Turkish officials' decision to cooperate with the Russian Federation represents a paradox. Even though Turkey resorted to several strategies designed to reduce its dependence on Russian gas, Ankara is deepening its cooperation with the Russian Federation in the nuclear field. In other words, Turkey's dependence on the Russian federation's energy resources is maintained. Moreover, the degree of complexity in energy relations between the two states will increase. The Akkuyu project has suffered criticism from the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects, which in 2019 issued a written report and warned that electricity generated from Akkuyu “would increase Turkey's dependence” on foreign countries. The report also states that “the energy generated in Akkuyu will be sold by the Russian side to the Turkish state at 275 percent higher prices than general energy costs in Turkey. Income from this will be sent abroad in the form of foreign currency”³⁴. It should be noted that for 15 years there is a purchasing guarantee for 70% of the electricity produced by the first two units and 30% from the third and fourth reactors at an average price of 12.35 cents / kWh. At the end of the 15 years, the prices will be settled by the market³⁵.

Regarding the geopolitical dimension of the Akkuyu NPP, Jamelle Bal underlines that the project is part of the Russian Federation's strategy to finance nuclear energy programs in the Middle East. According to Ball, the outcome of Akkuyu NPP is not just economic. In his opinion, Russian Federation and Turkey intend to increase their regional influence in opposition to US interests³⁶. It is important to note that in August 2016, after a meeting between President Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım designated Akkuyu as a strategic investment³⁷. The Akkuyu project is essential for the Kremlin, especially for ensuring and increasing the credibility of its nuclear reactors under the conditions of the competitive reactor market³⁸.

Akkuyu NPP favors the intensification of cooperation between the Russian Federation and Turkey in the nuclear energy field. Moreover, the complexity of the project favors the intensification of cooperation in other domains. Akkuyu NPP generates benefits for Moscow and Ankara, but it deepens Turkey's dependence on the Russian Federation. The Russian state will be the de-facto owner of the Akkuyu NPP, even though the project is being built on Turkish ground. Moreover, given that Turkey will depend on the expertise, nuclear material, and decommissioning provided by the Russian Federation, Moscow will have a new level of control over the political establishment in Ankara.

Moreover, the Akkuyu NPP is the only nuclear project built and owned by the Russian Federation in a NATO member state, and Moscow has the opportunity to jeopardize the relationship between Ankara and the Alliance by resorting to blackmailing operations. Through the Akkuyu NPP and TurkStream 2, the complexity of energy cooperation between the Russian Federation and Turkey has increased substantially, which reduces Ankara's room for maneuver in its relations with Moscow.

³⁴ İlgin Karlıdağ and Ksenia Idrisova, *Analysis: Fears of nuclear disaster as Russia builds Turkey's first plant*, August 28, 2019, accessed May 17, 2021, online available at: <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c2011oyk>.

³⁵ Soli Özel and Gökçe Uçar, „The Economics of Turkey-Russia relations”, *Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies*, Foreign Policy and Security, NO.10, July 2019, p. 23.

³⁶ Jamelee Bal, “Turkey's pursuit of nuclear energy. A case study of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant”, *The Institute for Middle East Studies*, The Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University, November 2015, p. 20-21.

³⁷ Barış Şimşek, *Akkuyu nuclear power plant turns into strategic investment*, August 11, 2016, accessed May 18, 2021, online available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/energy/2016/08/11/akkuyu-nuclear-power-plant-turns-into-strategic-investment>.

³⁸ Nurşin Ateşoğlu Güney, “Where Does Turkey Stand in the Quest for Civilian Nuclear Energy in the Middle East?”, *Perceptions, Journal Of International Affairs*, Center for Strategic Research, Summer-Autumn 2017 Volume XXII - Number 2-3, pp. 95-96.

4. S-400 TRIUMPH MISSILE SYSTEM AFFAIR – MORE SECURITY FOR TURKEY NEW THREATS FOR NATO

The Turkish-owned air defense systems and those deployed by the Allies in Turkey cannot defend the entire airspace of the Turkish state. Against this background, the political establishment in Ankara has taken steps to purchase more advanced missile defense systems from third parties. Ankara has negotiated with several NATO and non-NATO states for the delivery of such types of military hardware. For example, the political leaders in Ankara focused on the acquisition of the Patriot anti-missile system, but the US did not agree to build Patriot systems on Turkish territory and transfer technology to the Turkish army. In this context, Turkish officials decided to buy the Russian-made S-400 Triumph missile defense system. Ibrahim Kalin, the Turkish Presidential Administration spokesman, stated on April 05, 2018 that “Turkey decided to buy the Russian system to ensure its national security”. The Turkish official also mentioned that his country welcomes the statement issued by Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, who declared that “the acquisition of the system is Turkey’s sovereign decision”. In the context of the EU and US opposition to Turkey-Russia deal, Ibrahim Kalin states that “S-400 Triumph are a system purchased to meet Turkey’s defense needs, therefore it is already out of the question for them to pose a threat to any other country”. At the same time, to contradict the rumors that the Russian Federation is an alternative to the West, Ibrahim Kalin stressed that “Turkey will be willing in the future to acquire Patriot systems in the conditions in which the American side will accept the conditions imposed by Ankara”³⁹.

Given the lack of consensus with the US on the Patriot deal, in July of 2019, Turkey received the first components of the Russian-made S-400 Triumph system⁴⁰. Moreover, by January 2020, Moscow had sent in Turkey all S-400 Triumph components⁴¹. Even though NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg declared in 2017 that “the S-400 issue is the sovereign decision of Turkey”, the US protested vehemently against the deal⁴². US officials have drawn attention to the fact that the Russian Federation, through the S-400 Triumph system delivered to Turkey, has the opportunity to collect information about NATO military installations deployed on and around Turkish territory. At the same time, the American side drew attention to the security risks that the S-400 Triumph system can generate. Due to the fact that Turkey has not given up the acquisition of the S-400 Triumph system, Washington has decided to exclude Ankara from the program designed to build the F-35 fighter jet, refusing to deliver this type of aircraft to the Turkish army⁴³.

Moreover, the US government decided to impose economic sanctions against the Turkish Presidency of Defense Industries and activated the CAATSA sanctions mechanism (Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act). The sanctions are imposed on any person determined to have knowingly engaged in a significant transaction with a person that is a part of, or

³⁹ Statement by Presidential Spokesperson Ambassador Ibrahim Kalin, April 05, 2018, accessed May 31, 2021, online available at: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/spokesperson/1696/92515/statement-by-presidential-spokesperson-ambassador-ibrahim-kalin>.

⁴⁰ Burak Ege Bekdil, *Turkey makes deal to buy Russian-made S-400 air defense system*, Decembrie 29, 2017, Online: <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2017/12/29/turkey-russia-reportedly-sign-loan-deal-for-s-400-air-defense-system/>, Accessed: 23.09.2020.

⁴¹ Can Kasapoglu, “Turkey’s Critical ‘S-400 Moment’ Has Arrived, The Jamestown Foundation”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume: 17 Issue: 61, 4 May 2020.

⁴² Robin Emmott, *No angst over Turkey's air defense deal with Russia, says NATO chief*, October 10, 2017, accessed May 31, 2021, online available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-nato-turkey-idUSKBN1CF1CF>.

⁴³ U.S. removing Turkey from F-35 program after its Russian missile defense purchase, July 17, 2019, accessed April 11, 2021, online available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-turkey-security-f35-idUSKCN1UC2GL>.

operates for or on behalf of, the defense or intelligence sectors of the Government of the Russian Federation⁴⁴.

Although Turkey is one of the NATO member states that allowed the US to use its military bases, Washington contested Turkey's decision to acquire the S-400 Triumph system. The US attitude highlights the importance the US government attaches to the bilateral relationship with Turkey and the latter's actions. If until the S-400 deal the US reactions were moderate and there were critical statements against the Erdogan regime, after the delivery by the Russian Federation of the military anti-aircraft installation, a radical change of US rhetoric was observed. The exclusion of Turkey from the F-35 program and the initiation of the CAATSA sanctions mechanism is only part of the US strategy to punish Turkish officials. The Biden administration considered it appropriate for the US to increase the level of pressure on the political establishment in Ankara. On this basis, in April of 2021, Washington officially recognized the Armenian genocide, holding Turkey responsible for the events of 1915. Although the US decision has no economic implications for Turkey, it has important symbolic significance, generating dismay among Turkish political leaders⁴⁵.

These developments show that there is a limited level of tolerance for others in terms of Russian-Turkish cooperation. Washington's actions to punish Turkey indicate that the US will no longer allow the Ankara settlement to exceed limits that could jeopardize the US and NATO security. In other words, the intensification of Russian-Turkish cooperation in the energy and military fields poses the potential to foster a cleavage between Turkey and NATO. Although there is no tangible evidence that the intensification of Russian-Turkish cooperation has led Ankara to act contrary to NATO's interests and policies, many of the recent Turkish state's policies raised questions about the Turkish state's intentions. It is worth mentioning that during 2019 Turkey was the only NATO state that blocked the Eagle Defender plan, a project aimed at defending Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania from possible military aggression orchestrated by the Russian Federation⁴⁶.

Also, in the context of the tensions erupted between the West and Belarus, during May 2021, Ankara pushed NATO to tone down its condemnation of Minsk's grounding of a Ryanair plane and its decision to arrest a dissident journalist. In this context, NATO's 30 allies released a two-paragraph statement condemning the forcing down of a Ryanair flight to arrest journalist Roman Protasevich but did not include any punitive steps that Baltic States and Poland had pressed for. Ankara insisted that any mention of support for more Western sanctions on Belarus, and calls for the release of political prisoners there, would be left out of the statement. Turkey's insistence on a watered-down text upset several allies, particularly Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia, which had pushed for tougher wording⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ CAATSA Section 231 "Imposition of Sanctions on Turkish Presidency of Defense Industries", U.S. Embassy & Consulate in Greece, Fact Sheet, Office of the Spokesperson, December 14, 2020, accessed May 31, 2021, online available at <https://gr.usembassy.gov/caatsa-section-231-imposition-of-sanctions-on-turkish-presidency-of-defense-industries/>.

⁴⁵ *Biden's recognition of Armenian massacres as genocide is to honor victims - U.S. official*, April 24, 2021, accessed May 31, 2021, online available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/bidens-recognition-armenian-massacres-genocide-is-honor-victims-us-official-2021-04-24/>.

⁴⁶ NATO puts defense plan for Poland, Baltics into action, officials say, July 02, 2020, accessed May 29, 2021, online available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-baltics-turkey-idUSKBN24320B>.

⁴⁷ Humeyra Pamuk and Robin Emmott, *Turkey pushed NATO allies into softening outrage over Belarus plane, diplomats say*, May 28, 2021, accessed May 29, 2021, online available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/exclusive-turkey-pushed-nato-allies-into-softening-outrage-over-belarus-plane-2021-05-27/>.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2016 rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow marked the beginning of a new stage in Russian-Turkish bilateral relations. This process accelerated the construction of the TurkStream gas pipeline and the Akkuyu NPP. At the same time, Moscow has exploited the deteriorating relationship between Turkey and the West and facilitated the cooperation process with Ankara. Thus, Moscow and Ankara extended the cooperation process from the energy field to the military one. In other words, the economic relations between the two states created a favorable framework for expanding cooperation in the military field, which led to the deepening of Russian-Turkish ties and the increasing complexity of the bilateral relationship. These developments have favored the increase in the number of contact channels between the two states, which is why we can argue that the relationship between the Russian Federation and Turkey after 2016 is in line with the first feature of Complex Interdependence – multiple channels connect societies.

After 2000, cooperation between the Russian Federation and Turkey intensified, especially in the energy field. However, starting in 2016, the bilateral relationship agendas changed substantially, being added new layers of complexity. The main characteristic of it after 2016 is the lack of a pre-established hierarchy concerning the bilateral dossiers. Thus, the evolution of the Russian-Turkish bilateral relations after 2016 is in line with the second characteristic of Complex Interdependence which stipulates that interstate relations consist of multiple issues without a clear hierarchy.

Concerning the use of military power, the high level of economic cooperation between the two states has led their leaders to exercise caution when using military capabilities. Despite divergent interests in the war in Syria, the Russian Federation and Turkey were not involved in direct fights but only through proxies. The armed forces of the Russian Federation and Turkey killed Russian and Turkish soldiers, but just accidentally. However, the policymakers from Moscow and Ankara rapidly mitigated the political tensions generated by the incidents without causing a possible escalation.

Moreover, the intensification of military cooperation between Moscow and Ankara and the Turkish state's acquisition of the Russian S-400 Triumph air defense system has considerably diminished the possibility of the Russian Federation and Turkey attacking each other. In other words, by providing an air defense system to Turkey, the Russian Federation has helped strengthen Turkey's defense capabilities. In the light of these evolutions, we can conclude that Russia-Turkey energy and military cooperation created a propitious environment for the Complex Interdependence to manifest in the bilateral relationship between the Russian Federation and Turkey.

As for the capacity of the Russo-Turkish economic and strategic partnership to impact the relationship between Ankara and NATO, the situation is nuanced, and the answer is highly complex. The Russian Federation has always agreed with Turkey's reserved attitude towards expanding NATO's military presence in the Black Sea and has used its tools to reward this approach. Thus, during the Crimean Peninsula annexation, the Kremlin granted Turkey a 6% discount for the Russian gas imports. In the same context, the Russian Federation and Turkey signed the agreement to start work on the TurkStream gas pipeline. It also should be noted that Turkey had a reserved attitude towards the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian state and did not join the sanctions regime adopted against the Kremlin by the West. Moreover, Ankara used the crisis to increase the volume of exports of consumer goods to the Russian Federation.

As for the Akkuyu project, the Turkish officials awarded the construction of the nuclear power plant to a Russian state company even though the Turkish state's energy strategy aims to reduce its energy reliance on the Russian Federation. Furthermore, the Akkuyu NPP is the only nuclear power plant built by the Kremlin on the territory of a NATO state. Thus, Akkuyu NPP has the potential to deepen the Russia-Turkey bilateral relationship. It also facilitates the interdependence between the two states to manifest.

Similarly, Turkey's acquisition of the S-400 Triumph air defense system has increased the complexity of the Russian-Turkish bilateral relationship and thus the level of interdependence between the two states. Furthermore, the Russo-Turkish cooperation in the military field strained the Ankara-West ties, amid the security risks that the S-400 Triumph may pose to NATO's security infrastructure.

Even though the Russia-Turkey cooperation in the energy and military fields can generate security risks on NATO, the Ankara officials did not adopt a more cautious approach toward the Russian Federation. In conclusion, energy and military cooperation between Moscow and Ankara represents a factor that can lead to a change in the foreign policy priorities of the Turkish state. At the same time, the projects jointly developed by Moscow and Ankara have created the framework for the manifestation of the Complex Interdependence between the Russian Federation and Turkey, which will alter the dialogue between Ankara and the West.

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