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**TURKISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS A DECADE LATER: FROM ADVERSITY TO
MANAGED COMPETITION**

DUYGU BAZOĞLU SEZER

Dr Duygu Bazoğlu Sezer is Professor of International Relations at the Department of International Relations, Bilkent University, Ankara.

NAVIGATING IN GEOPOLITICAL FLUX

The 1990s seemed to promise, at least from the Turkish perspective, the opening of a positive new page in the annals of Turkish-Russian relations. Henceforth, it was hoped, trust and co-operation would drive the relationship. The promise of a democratic and non-imperialistic Russia was the fundamental reason behind the Turkish optimism. A qualitatively new Russia would no longer threaten Turkey's vital interests.

Where do Turkish-Russian relations stand now? Has Turkish optimism been justified?

Clearly, a decade is too short a period to be able to draw definitive conclusions and attempt predictions about the present and future quality and direction of Turkish-Russian relations. For, after all, both countries represent highly complex polities engaged in radical transformation, each in its own way and in different degrees. Also, domestic transition has had to be shouldered in an external environment caught in tectonic change, assigning a high degree of fluidity and unpredictability to external forces. This was especially true in the larger Eurasia where both countries perceive important or, as in the case of Russia, vital interests.

Accordingly, the discussion below is not the last word on Turkish-Russian relations in the post-Soviet era, but rather an attempt to understand that this is a relationship that is still evolving and one which is intensely interactive with unfolding regional forces.

Despite the high degree of ambivalence in relations, however, it is critically important to note a most profound positive development from the Turkish perspective: a change in the perception of Russia as a security threat to Turkey's vital interests. Existential security concerns were persistently at the centre of Turkish attitudes towards Russia, the colossal 'northern neighbour' in modern times. In many ways, this profound apprehension served as the defining force in the country's foreign policy orientation - hence, for example, Turkey's NATO membership soon after World War Two.

It can safely be argued that today Russia's enemy image - an image that antedates the Cold War, which makes the change even more significant - has greatly receded. It has lost much of its overpowering impact even among circles where national security is the dominant preoccupation. This is not purely because of Russia's weakened position economically and militarily - a great country like Russia is likely to recover in due time. The more meaningful reason is the new image of

Russia as a power no longer driven by territorial and ideological expansion, as in former times. Mikhail Gorbachov put this in the following words to a Turkish audience in Ankara during one of his visits in the mid-1990s: "Russia still wants to reach the warm waters of the Mediterranean through Turkey. But with Russian tourists."

Does this mean that bilateral relations are now based on complete mutual trust? The answer is 'no', the details of which will be discussed in the following pages.

Two structural features of the evolving regional and world order have had an important complicating impact on the growth of greater confidence in Turkish-Russian relations. First, are the different regional geopolitical schemes to which each country feels itself attached to. Second is the deep, perhaps systemic, instabilities that have engulfed the neighbouring regions that they abut.

On the first point, one should recall that both countries are situated at the crossroads of two formerly adversarial continental systems, the Trans-Atlantic and the Eurasian. Turkey belongs to the former, and is the sole Trans-Atlantic country directly adjacent to the newly opened-up Eurasia's south. While both the Trans-Atlantic and the Eurasian worlds have changed enormously since 1991, their respective visions for the future of the vast space 'from Vancouver to Vladivostok' continue to differ in numerous fundamental ways.

For example, Russia, still the pre-eminent power in Eurasia, strongly resists a greater regional role for external actors primarily because of the conviction that the former Soviet space in Eurasia is Russia's backyard. Trans-Atlantic powers are especially not welcome. In other words, Russia entertains a Russia-centred vision for Eurasia, continuing to view it especially in the south as an exclusive preserve of Russian influence for strategic-security and economic-energy reasons. This Russian vision, this impulse, introduces an element of systemic tension into Turkish-Russian bilateral relations.

In the case of Turkey, it is this country's continuing membership of the Trans-Atlantic system at the southwestern doorstep of Eurasia, coupled with its aspiration to connect with it in an open system, which exerts similar tensions on bilateral relations. Despite the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, Russia does not truly trust this military alliance. Turkey enjoys a unique position in the Trans-Atlantic strategic system due to its accessibility to certain sub-regions of Eurasia - the southern Caucasus, Central Asia, and the northern Black Sea - through geography, history, language and culture. Accordingly, Russian perceptions and policies have evolved under the influence of the double-hats that Turkey wears; that is to say, one as a strategically located neighbour in Russia's south with renewed interest in the former Soviet space in Eurasia, and the other as a NATO ally in the vicinity of the very same space.

NATO's greater involvement in the southern Caucasus, Central Asia and the Black Sea through its Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme is a major source of concern to Moscow, which is seriously worried about presumable NATO plans for enlargement to the south - however implausible that appears to be. Turkey's status as a NATO ally acquires real significance in view of the fact that the United States, a country that, according to Moscow, dominates 'the unipolar world', is its core ally. This lone superpower has been the main global force pressing for the integration of southern Eurasia with the world through the export of the region's energy sources to world markets by routes largely bypassing Russia. Much to Russia's frustration, the United States-backed Baku-Ceyhan and Trans-Caspian pipeline alternatives that would boost Turkey's regional position are - or perhaps

'were', given the unknowns surrounding the Bush administration's likely choices - leading examples of this strategy.

As to the second major structural complicating factor in Turkish-Russian relations: the pervasive, and perhaps systemic, instability in neighbouring regions where both countries profess important, and in the case of Russia vital interests. On at least one occasion, namely Armenia's invasion of Azerbaijan in April 1992, they seemed to have come to the brink of war. It was then that Russia resorted to explicit nuclear intimidation to deter Turkey - when Marshal Yevgeny Shaposhnikov, the commander-in-chief of the CIS armed forces, warned of "a Third World War" if Turkey intervened in the war to help Azeri forces drive back the Armenians.

As this incident illustrates, Turkish and Russian policies have largely stood far apart concerning international or intra-national conflicts especially in the southern Caucasus and the Balkans. There is historical continuity in much of this behaviour. Almost without exception, the two countries start from opposing premises in their diagnosis and proposed-solutions to such conflicts as Bosnia, Kosovo, Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia.

Separatist conflicts in the southern Caucasus have already sown the seeds of polarisation in the region. The political-military implication of Turkey's and Russia's differing positions has been to reinforce this undercurrent, Moscow leaning towards Yerevan and Teheran (an alignment to which Athens is also tied at several levels), and Turkey leaning towards Baku and Tbilisi. The success of such schemes as the Caucasus Stability Pact, proposed by Turkey in winter 2000, would require a basic reorientation away from regional polarisation.

In short, on the positive side, Turkish-Russian relations have been relieved of the overpowering tension and total mistrust bred by the perception of Russia as the enemy. On the negative side, the unsettled nature of the external environment - especially in the Trans-Atlantic and Eurasian worlds where the two countries are being pulled into new geopolitical rivalries and alignments - has introduced an element of structural impediment to the emergence of mutual confidence.

The following pages will offer, first, a more detailed analysis of the direction of Turkish-Russian relations as they have evolved over the past decade, named by this author 'virtual rapprochement.'^{*} This section comprises the core of the article because it traces and explores the fundamental quality of the relationship and the processes by which it has been forged. Second, we shall examine the course of bilateral relations in the Putin era. The article will end with concluding remarks.

'VIRTUAL RAPPROCHEMENT': A HISTORICAL FIRST ALL THE SAME

It is vitally important for analytical and policy purposes to repeat at the outset the one phenomenon of cardinal importance in Turkish-Russian relations in the 1990s: the drastic diminution in Turkey of the enemy image of Russia.

This positive new factor has been kind of hijacked, however, by the intervention - perhaps unavoidable in an international system that prizes power - of another development alluded to in preceding pages: the Turkish-Russian geopolitical rivalry in the newly opened-up Eurasia, especially in the south. Against this background, the evolution of relations in the 1990s between the two countries can best be captured by the term 'virtual rapprochement.' While this is less than a perfect state of affairs, it is still a highly satisfactory relationship because it represents a break with the

deep-rooted pattern of the past.

Virtual rapprochement refers to a state of bilateral relations in which public manifestations of state-level adversity and hostility have nearly completely disappeared; the importance of co-operation in a range of fields for furthering respective national interests is mutually perceived and publicly articulated; governments desist from using inflammatory rhetoric so as not to arouse public opinion; and officials keep the lines of communication open in order to safeguard relations against the impact of sudden crises. On the other hand, a hard kernel of mutual fear, mistrust and suspicion remains in the minds of the decision-makers and the larger circle of the political élite.

The scope of Turkish-Russian relations has been broadened as well as deepened in the 1990s, but the entire range of possibilities for friendship and co-operation have not been exhausted, primarily because of residual mutual fear and mistrust. The level of relations reached in the 1990s ascends above routine 'normalisation' but falls several steps short of genuine rapprochement.

Managed Geopolitical Rivalry

Two major but diametrically opposing dynamics have underpinned the process of moving towards virtual rapprochement: managed geopolitical rivalry on one hand and unique economic co-operation verging on interdependence on the other.

Managed competition represents Russia's and Turkey's mutual evaluations of each other as geopolitical competitors, in particular with respect to their role and influence in the southern part of the new Eurasia, also called the southern Newly Independent States (NIS). In policy terms, this mindset has led to behaviour - some of it well thought out but most of it reactive - aimed at constraining as much as possible the other's freedom of movement and long-term influence in the region. In other words, a corollary to competition was the desire to exclude the competitor. The race to win the main energy pipeline (MEP) for the transport of Kazakh, Turkmen and Azeri fossil fuels to the west is a perfect example of this behaviour.

As previously noted, the exclusion of external powers from the former Soviet space was one of Russia's main objectives as it sought to turn the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) into a genuine vehicle for reintegration among the former Soviet republics. This Russian strategy especially affected Turkey due to the latter's perceived special ties to the Turkic republics in general and to Moscow's fear of the pseudo-ideology of pan-Turkism in particular.

Turkish policies in the new Eurasia were equally exclusionary, especially early in the decade. They were designed to serve two mutually reinforcing functions: first, to assist the southern NIS in solidifying their newly won independence, especially by facilitating their integration into the international community, and second, to weave special bonds among Turkey, Azerbaijan and the Turkic republics on the basis of common ethnic, linguistic and cultural roots.

If realised, the Turkish objectives would contribute, however indirectly, to a further weakening of Russia's position in southern Eurasia while enhancing that of Turkey. Some circles in Turkey possibly entertained considerable pan-Turkic aspirations in the early post-Soviet era. However, within one or two years it became clear that pan-Turkism was not on the immediate agenda of the newly independent Turkic nations. The coup d'état against President Ebulfez Elchibey in Baku in the summer of 1993 was perhaps the turning point ending Turkish hopes to erect a loose community of Turkic nations using the southern NIS as a potential rallying forum.

Nor was the quality of relations satisfactory in other areas. One must distinguish here, however, between the nature of relations with the states of Central Asia and the southern Caucasus. It was especially in Central Asia where Turkey failed to make true progress. New thinking seemed necessary here. In the southern Caucasus, in contrast, a rich menu of mutually fulfilling relations has become a fact of life with Azerbaijan and Georgia.

New thinking in Turkey about Eurasia matured into policy by summer 2000. On the basis of a review of the record of the past decade, Foreign Minister İsmail Cem announced on 23 June 2000, that relations with the states of Central Asia and the southern Caucasus would henceforth be better institutionalised, basing them on a state-to-state framework rather than on the personal relations of high-level officials. He singled out political, economic and security co-operation as the priority areas where measures for institutionalisation for regular consultation and co-operation were already under consideration.

It is perhaps important to note that the new Turkish outlook on the southern NIS has been enunciated concomitantly with an increasingly public emphasis on Turkey's aspiration to become a pivotal country in Eurasia, a point reiterated by Minister Cem on the same occasion. Equally important was his elaboration of how Turkey defined 'competition': "We are not in a fight. We are in serious competition. We are in peaceful and rational competition...not only with Russia but all foreign countries in the region." Interestingly, the Russian view of the reality of competition lacks similar openness. In fact, Russian officials do not admit to it.

A Checklist of Controversies and Disagreements

Over the last decade, Turkish-Russian relations have weathered the strains generated by divergent views and policies on a range of bilateral and regional issues. The list is quite long and demanding:

- Mutual recriminations of support for ethnic separatism, with Russia charging Turkey of assisting Chechnya and Turkey accusing Russia of aiding Kurdish separatism and PKK terrorism;
- The competition over Caspian Sea main oil pipelines, with Russia pressing for the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline and Turkey for the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline;
- The Turkish sense of encirclement by Russian military bases in Georgia and Armenia;
- The implicit tension in their respective approaches to conflict resolution and peacekeeping in southern Eurasia, with Russia intent on keeping these functions primarily, if not solely, within the jurisdiction of the CIS, and Turkey advocating a role for the international community in general and for Nagorno-Karabakh in particular - a position in line with the decision of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) at the Budapest Summit in 1994;
- Russian apprehensions over perceived Turkish naval superiority in the Black Sea at a time when the former Soviet Black Sea fleet is much weakened;
- Turkish discomfort with the Russian view of Iran as a counterweight to Turkey in the south Caucasus and Central Asia;
- The destabilising nature, from the Turkish perspective, of Russian arms export policies in the region, in particular the sale of S-300 air defence missiles to the Greek-Cypriot government in Nicosia, who eventually refrained from taking delivery of the weapons and transferred them to Greece. Russian assistance to Iran's nuclear programme is also most troubling to Ankara;
- Russian objections to Turkish policy since 1994 to regulate the traffic of vessels in the Turkish

Straits for environmental and safety reasons in view of the prospect of greatly increased tanker traffic carrying Caspian Sea oil to world markets;

- Surprisingly, perhaps, one important discord was resolved in early 1999 through bilateral accommodation, namely the disagreement over the so-called 'flank' issue on the adaptation of the 1992 treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). In autumn 1999, when the Chechen War was raging, Russia again exceeded the equipment limits allowed by the treaty in the north Caucasus. In the face of strong Western criticism, Russia verbally pledged to honour its treaty commitment and the adapted CFE text was endorsed at the OSCE's Istanbul Summit 19-20 November 1999.

Why this long list of controversies, disagreements, and disputes? Almost without exception, they are all a manifestation of the competition in southern Eurasia galvanised by the disintegration of the former Soviet Union.

Mechanisms for Managing Competition and Controversy

Diplomatic communication and regular political contacts among senior officials were Turkey and Russia's primary instruments for managing their genuine competition. As mentioned before, on at least one occasion, Russia resorted to explicit nuclear intimidation to deter Turkey from military intervention to free Azeri lands from Armenian occupation.

High-level exchanges between Turkish and Russian officials throughout the 1990s laid the ground rules and political commitments for improved co-operation. The joint statements issued at such meetings not only carried messages of reassurance to their respective publics but also played up the potential for intensified partnership. In fact, Turkish governments since the mid-1990s have toyed with the notion of a deeper partnership with Russia as a possible alternative to the country's deteriorating relations with Europe. But, neither Russia nor any other state has yet emerged as a real alternative.

Three visits are of special significance: Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel's visit to Moscow in May 1992, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's trip to Ankara in December 1997, and Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit's visit to Moscow in November 1999.

Demirel's visit took place in the shadow of Azerbaijan's military defeat by the Armenians and Marshal Shaposhnikov's subsequent warning of nuclear retaliation if Turkey intervened. Nevertheless, the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation signed during Demirel's visit declared that the two countries would base their relations on good neighbourliness, co-operation and mutual trust. This is the most far-reaching document signed between the two states that aims to steer the spirit and direction of Turkish-Russian relations on a positive course.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's visit to Turkey on 16-17 December 1997 was the first in the post-Soviet period by a head of Russia's government. Its main objective was to close a huge natural gas deal, dubbed Blue Stream. The \$30 billion project envisaged Russia supplying 16 billion cubic meters of natural gas a year to Turkey by the year 2010 through underwater pipelines in the Black Sea. On that occasion, Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz expressed the Turkish desire to discuss any question and to co-operate rather than compete with its great neighbour. Chernomyrdin, for his part, declared: "If Turkey shakes the hand extended by Russia, we shall become strategic partners in the economy in the twenty-first century... We shall be able to do much together in third countries

and contribute to the insurance of stability and tranquillity in the region."

Economic Co-operation: Exemplary by Historical and Regional Standards - until 1998

Co-operation rather than competition has dominated the economic sphere in Turkish-Russian relations. Both sides showed resolute political will to expand its boundaries. Economic exchanges - i.e. foreign trade, both official and unofficial, tourism, and retail business and construction activity by the Turkish business community - sustained peak levels for several years in the mid-1990s.

Bilateral economic relations fall under two general headings: trade and services. Mutual trade reached \$8-10 billion annually until Russia's financial crash in August 1998. Official trade accounted for \$3.5 billion of this figure in 1998, with Turkish exports to Russia worth \$1.347 billion and imports \$2.152 billion. The balance in 1998 trade figures is made up of unofficial trade, also called 'shuttle trade'. Estimated figures quote this trade, unregistered due to its informal nature, as having reached a peak of \$6-10 billion annually in 1991-96. It entered a downward trend even before the 1998 Russian financial crisis.

Russia is Turkey's single major supplier of natural gas. It has formed the biggest single item in Turkish-Russian trade since 1987, when Russia began initial deliveries. Currently Russia is scheduled to deliver 14 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas annually to Turkey. The Blue Stream project negotiated in December 1997 is expected to increase the annual volume to 30 bcm by the year 2010. Reportedly, the Russian media estimate that the total amount of earnings from natural gas exports to Turkey will reach at least \$7 billion annually in the year 2020.

The bright picture in Turkey's foreign trade with Russia drastically reversed after 1998, in favour of the latter. According to the Turkish-Russian Business Council figures, Russian exports reached \$3 billion in the year 2000, while Turkish exports fell to \$600 million. A similar gloomy trend from the Turkish perspective is evident in Turkish businessmen's construction activity. The total value of construction activity by Turkish businessmen had reached \$5.5 billion by 1998. In the year 2000, it fell to \$100-150 million.

The developments of the last few years indicate that the Turkish economy in general and the Turkish business community in particular have been seriously losing ground in the Russian market.

Against this background, the near monopoly enjoyed by Russia presently as Turkey's single major natural gas supplier raises serious apprehensions. Russia's monopoly position is likely to be sustained at least until the end of the next decade, so long as no alternative gas pipeline from major potential supplier countries such as Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan is constructed. It is the risks involved in over-reliance on a single supplier as opposed to the energy security that inheres in purchases from diversified suppliers that assigns genuine merit to the US-backed Trans-Caspian natural gas pipeline. At this point, the project is in a limbo. The Russian-Turkmen agreement in summer 2000 for the annual sale of 50 bcm of natural gas to Russia in the next few years has certainly been a major blow to its chances of realisation.

THE PUTIN ERA

Vladimir V. Putin's single most important domestic priority had surfaced during his tenure as acting Prime Minister: to end Chechen separatism, with the use of brute force if necessary. In his first

state-of-the-nation address as President of Russia, on 8 June 2000, he singled out two others: restoring state power and promoting economic growth. These three issues and themes have preoccupied Putin's domestic policy agenda, defining until now the basic direction and style of his government.

Putin's views on the global situation and Russia's place in it were elucidated in a series of official documents issued (or reissued in one case) in the first part of 2000. Among these were: a National Security Concept, a Defence Doctrine and a New Foreign Policy Concept.

Clearly, important continuities exist between the foreign and security policy priorities and threat perceptions of the late Yeltsin and early Putin administrations. Like its predecessor, the new administration insists that Russia is a great power but plans to turn this claim into reality by almost single-mindedly focusing on the economic imperatives of building and consolidating power. It strongly rejects the United States-centred unipolarity of the post-Cold War world order, insisting on multi-polarity as the cornerstone of world peace and stability. Multi-polarity can be promoted, according to Russia, through co-operation with China, India and Europe in order to counterbalance, together with Russia, the power of the United States. And, like Yeltsin, Putin is vehemently opposed to NATO enlargement, to say nothing of NATO itself.

The difference in the Putin approach is the suggestion of a more sober, downsized global outlook reflecting specifically the calculation that Russia's limited economic means need to be deployed rationally for the country eventually to grow into a true great power. Unveiling the Foreign Policy Concept on 10 July, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov described the new approach as pragmatism aimed at overcoming internal economic difficulties. That Russian foreign policy "should effectively help solve domestic tasks," as he put it, amounted to a virtual revolution in conceptual terms in the traditional definition of a country's foreign policy objectives. In addition to security, he listed, "favourable conditions for Russia's economic growth," as areas of vital importance.

In other words, Russia's economic development through the proper utilisation of market mechanisms and institutions and a more rational deployment of economic resources is seen as the panacea to domestic and external challenges the country faces - the most important of which is Russia's "economic weakness," according to Putin. In his state-of-the-nation address, the president laid out his equation starkly before the Russian nation: "Russia must not remain a 'weak state'...the only realistic choice for Russia is to be a strong country." Accordingly, the Putin blueprint for Russia's revival as a strong state and as a power in the top echelons of the global hierarchy seems clear: to strengthen the economy and use foreign policy to help bring this about.

Another area in which Putin has been successfully innovative has been in his approach to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Clearly, the CIS remains a top priority area for Russian foreign and security policy. Putin's policy initiatives so far indicate a firm determination to reinforce Moscow's influence especially in the states of Central Asia and the southern Caucasus. Yet, the new Russian leader has pursued a more subtle and business-like approach. Instead of treating the CIS states as a uniform collectivity whose integration must be tightly gauged by Moscow, he promoted the idea that integration could flexibly proceed at multiple-speeds and levels.

This nuanced and measured approach has borne fruit in two areas in particular: economic co-operation and security co-operation in the fight against terrorism, generally understood as ethnic separatism, Islamic terrorism and domestic opposition. On 10 October 2000, a Five-Nation Eurasia

Economic Community, including Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, was established in Astana, Kazakhstan. It was followed by a Six-Nation Summit, including Armenia, which resolved to create security structures, such as a Rapid Reaction Force, under the umbrella of the Collective Security Treaty of 1992. At the CIS Summit in June 2000, it was decided to establish a joint 'anti-terrorism centre' in Moscow, headed by a Russian from the Foreign Intelligence Service.

In explaining the New Foreign Policy Concept, Foreign Minister Ivanov had said that defending economic interests meant "first of all, the [interests in the] fuel and energy area." Russian diplomacy in the CIS states in the year 2000 has recorded numerous successes in getting there. The agreement between President Putin and President Niyazov of Turkmenistan in early summer 2000 for the sale of 50 bcm of natural gas (for re-export to third countries such as Turkey) is a prime example of the new drive to accelerate Russia's energy diplomacy as a means to increase foreign currency earnings, fuel the domestic economy and regain geopolitical clout. Putin has pursued this new thrust in a whirlwind diplomatic campaign, not only in the energy-rich CIS states, including Azerbaijan, but also with major energy-importing European countries as well as China.

It is against these trends and developments in Putin's Russia that Turkish-Russian relations should be assessed.

Sustaining a Steady Course under a Purposeful, Correct Putin

By all appearances it looks like both Moscow and Ankara have done their best to maintain a correct course in their bilateral relations in order to assure that controversial issues do not escalate into crises. Both sides seem reluctant to revert to a new phase of tension and acrimony.

This has been most apparent concerning the question of Chechnya. Putin's high-powered offensive strategy on Chechnya has been his most controversial move in the eyes of the world and in Turkey. Despite this, however, Turkish officialdom has chosen to conduct business as usual with Russia.

Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit decided to go ahead with the official visit to Russia in November 1999, at the height of the second Chechen War. His decision demonstrated the importance he attached to upgrading the relationship at the risk of alienating the Chechens, the estimated 5-6 million Caucasus diaspora in Turkey, and the domestic opposition of Islamists and 'real democrats'. Before the visit, Ecevit described Chechnya as "an internal problem of Russia," underlining the Turkish belief in the importance of the territorial integrity of Russia.

Ecevit's visit gave new life to security co-operation between the two countries. In an interview with the press, then-Prime Minister Putin said: "We denounce terrorism in all its manifestations. Russia has never supported and will never support any terrorist aspirations directed against Turkey, no matter where they come from."

Clearly Turkish officials have their own experience with the PKK (the Kurdish Workers' Party) in mind when the issue of separatism in general and terrorism in particular come on the agenda. The second Chechen War has rekindled the inherent potential for Turkish-Russian tension regarding developments in the Caucasus, even when Turkey adopted a clear policy of non-involvement in what it considers Russia's internal affair. Official Turkey seems to be exclusively concerned with the humanitarian dimension of the conflict, as frequently reiterated by Foreign Minister Cem.

It is important to recall at this juncture that then-President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Yevgeny

Primakov's prudence in winter 1998-99 saved Turkish-Russian relations from diplomatic disaster when they refused to grant asylum to PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, as requested by members of the Duma. Öcalan was soon deported from the country. Yet, some members in the Duma, in particular those who belong to the Liberal Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, continue to table a range of motions on the house floor designed to hurt Turkey.

The political spirit and economic priorities of President Putin's foreign policy clearly formed the driving force behind the visit paid by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov to Ankara in October 2000. The desire for expanded economic co-operation in the form of the sale of Russian natural gas, electric power and armaments was the core message conveyed by the visit. Russia is still hopeful that its strike combat helicopter, KA-50-2, might in the end win the Turkish tender. Turkey plans to buy 145 helicopter gunships, at an estimated cost of \$4 billion. The initial selection in summer 2000 tilts in favour of the American Bell company's offer. Kasyanov's visit also highlighted the intention to intensify security co-operation between the respective law enforcement agencies.

Putin's energy diplomacy in Central Asia and the Caucasus is likely to have significant negative repercussions on two pipeline projects that Turkey has pursued over the years with the support of the United States: the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Trans-Caspian natural gas pipeline. The reason is simple. Several energy-rich states in the region have agreed to sell great volumes of their fuel to Russia who will in turn re-export the fuel to third countries. Such voluminous sales to Russia will undercut the Baku-Ceyhan and the Trans-Caspian pipelines by depriving them of the required throughput for these transport routes to be economically feasible.

These projects are important to Turkey not only because they would help meet the country's increasing energy needs and accrue foreign exchange earnings from transit fees, but equally importantly because they are perceived as instruments that would boost Turkey's regional position.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Looked at through the lenses of history, Turkish-Russian relations in the 1990s entered what may properly be called a 'Golden Age'. This assessment may sound paradoxical to those observers of the relationship over the last decade who have seen more geopolitical rivalry and tension between them than genuine signs of friendship, solidarity and co-operation. Yet, especially for policy purposes, it is important to take a long view in order to understand and appreciate the true significance of current developments.

The core element of this Golden Age has been the evolving image of Russia as a power no longer dominated by territorial and ideological expansionist aspirations and the aggressiveness that flows from such objectives. Put differently, foreign policy goals as pursued by the Russian authorities have not been expansionist in the traditional sense of the word - even if there still are political and intellectual circles in Russia that advocate such a course. Certainly, Moscow strives to regain its former influence in the world as a great power. This is not an unjustified position since Russia does possess all the real and potential attributes of a great power. With the exception of its approach to the Caucasus, this aim has not generally been pursued by strong-arm tactics.

This optimistic portrayal of Russia does not mean that Turkey's traditional apprehensions have been thoroughly eliminated. There will always be misgivings and questions about a much larger and potentially much more powerful neighbour who is at the same time the second nuclear super power.

But the crucial fact is that Russia is no longer unanimously viewed in Turkey as the enemy. There are pockets of opinion that still hold onto this view. But a greater number of influential circles have shed this perception. Clearly, the leading role of the business community has been crucial in this transformation. Business leaders know very well that mutual interdependence woven by mutual trade would eliminate many of the remaining traces of enmity.

Regrettably, the same mental and psychological transformation has not occurred to the same degree in Russia. The Russian political élite seems to be caught in deeply ambivalent feelings and perceptions of Turkey. Russia's weakness, Turkey's membership of NATO and the traditionally over-exaggerated perception of pan-Turkism as Ankara's ploy to break-up the Russian empire, combine to fuel Russian ambivalence. Now that it is perfectly obvious that no Turkic world is in the offing, at least for the foreseeable future, the Russian élite might be open to reassessing their views of Turkey more realistically. Such reconsideration would not merely help consolidate Turkish-Russian rapprochement, but would immensely contribute to regional peace and stability.

* This term was first coined by the author in her chapter entitled, "Turkish-Russian Relations in the 1990s: From Adversity to Virtual Rapprochement" in Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayar (eds.) *Changing Dynamics of Turkish Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000).
