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Türkiye's Foreign Policy vis-à-vis the War in Ukraine: A New Version of Active Neutrality

Armağan GÖZKAMAN*

Abstract

Facing one of the biggest military crises on the European continent, Turkish foreign policy has shown strong features of an updated version of active neutrality. The present research revolves around five main axes that characterize the endeavor of Turkish authorities: High-level mediation efforts, condemnation of—and political position toward—the war, synchronization with the Transatlantic Alliance, military cooperation with Ukraine, adherence to the Montreux Convention on the Turkish Straits and political relations with the Russian Federation. Türkiye's foreign policy setting has led to a stronger diplomatic visibility for the country and serves the objective of establishing it as an indispensable, front-line diplomatic actor.

Keywords

Turkish foreign policy, Russia-Ukraine war, active neutrality, Russia, Ukraine

* Professor, Beykent University, Department of International Relations, Istanbul, Türkiye.
E-mail: agozkaman@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-6849-273X.

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Introduction

The war that Russia has been waging in Ukraine since the 24th of February 2022 has been a major issue affecting peace and stability with repercussions that go well beyond the Ukrainian borders. Already in 2014, Russia had annexed Crimea following the Ukrainian Revolution and orchestrated a secessionist movement in Eastern Ukraine that led to a protracted conflict between Kiev and the self-proclaimed “popular republics” of Luhansk and Donetsk. As a prelude to the annexation, the Kremlin recognized the two breakaway regions. Only three days after this decision, and just minutes before from the Russian armed forces’ attack on Ukraine, Putin laid out the “reasons” why the latter was necessary: In his view, Ukraine was part of Russia and had no right to statehood. Further, he claimed that it was under neo-Nazi rule that was persecuting the Russian minority; it was therefore necessary to demilitarize and de-nazify the country.¹

As a key regional power and neighbor to both of the belligerents via the Black Sea basin, Türkiye had to assume an important role in the mediation processes, which proved extremely difficult from the very beginning. This role emerged from Türkiye’s deliberate choice of active neutrality. Thus, Ankara preserved relations simultaneously with Kyiv and Moscow. The country also succeeded in maintaining its position as an acceptable mediator. Türkiye had adopted its active neutrality policy earlier on, during WWII, vis-à-vis the Axis and Allied powers. To understand the new version, it is important to understand (1) the principles of foreign policy that determine Türkiye’s diplomatic moves, (2) how Ankara positions Türkiye with regard to the conflict, (3) the decision to close the Turkish straits to warships of the belligerent sides, (4) Türkiye’s attachment to the Transatlantic Alliance, (5) its defense cooperation with Ukraine and (6) the preservation of its relations with Russia.

Turkish Foreign Policy Principles regarding the Conflict

In line with the “peace at home, peace abroad” principle that has been adopted since the proclamation of the Republic, Türkiye prioritizes

peace, stability and prosperity among its foreign policy principles. Next, the objective of implementing “enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy” stands out in Türkiye’s relations with the outside world.² At this point, it is important to emphasize the logical connection between the adjective “enterprising” and the country’s willingness to take initiatives. One can argue that Turkish foreign policy makers are disposed to undertake regional and global responsibilities.

The above-mentioned guiding lines and policy choices inevitably lead to an active diplomacy with a multitude of geographic and thematic scopes, for which Türkiye has a plethora of assets, including a unique geographical location, considerable economic and human resources and a strong diplomatic tradition bolstered by a large diplomatic network. It is therefore not surprising to see Türkiye’s specific position in many international organizations; when it comes to conflict resolution and mediation, its key role is evident, particularly in the United Nations (UN), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Since the beginning of the war of 2022, Türkiye has aimed to implement a foreign policy that has taken shape on three grounds: Reacting against Russia’s unjust war while remaining an acceptable mediator for Moscow, maintaining good relations with Ukraine to continue to be among the potential guarantors in a future peace scenario and remaining on the same side with its Western (in particular, North Atlantic) partners. This highly delicate, three-pillar balance is difficult to maintain, yet Türkiye has been very successful in making it work. It should be noted that, while pursuing and seeking to maximize its national interests, Türkiye has endeavored to regain importance after a relatively long period of problems with its allies, with the aim of improving relations with traditional allies such as the US and the EU. A tangible improvement of relations will indeed require long-term efforts; nonetheless, proving an effective mediator in a conflict of such magnitude would be a very important achievement for Türkiye.

In addition to the objectives outlined above, the search for international prestige has been among the motivations of Turkish foreign policy. This search for prestige may relate to its intrinsic value or a specific objective.³ In the Turkish case, an objective that particularly stands

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out is to establish a position as a pivotal diplomatic actor. Domestically, policymakers in Ankara have enjoyed widespread support. Turkish society has been highly attuned to the Ukrainian people's

suffering and has supported Ankara's efforts to alleviate the humanitarian tragedy in the region. According to a survey carried out in late February 2022, around 69% of the respondents affirmed that Russia was waging an unjust war in Ukraine.⁴ A month after the war started, public approval for Türkiye's neutral policy vis-à-vis the two belligerents was as high as 91.5%.⁵ To the question, "How do you interpret the [official] visits of several statesmen and state representatives to Türkiye since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war?" 60.6% of the participants chose to answer that their Republic had become a "determining power" in foreign policy.⁶

With this popular support, Türkiye has demonstrated strong activism and carried out various mediation efforts through a very careful, balance-based approach. On February 24, the Foreign Ministry's press release hinted at Ankara's position by "rejecting" the "unacceptable" Russian operation that "violates" international law and "threatens" regional and global security. Soon afterward, phone calls between the defense ministers of Türkiye, Russia and Ukraine⁷ preceded the hosting of the first high-level tripartite meeting with the presence of Turkish, Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers in Antalya.⁸ Following Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu's separate meetings with Sergei Lavrov and Dmitri Kuleba in Moscow and Lviv, respectively, Istanbul hosted peace talks between delegations from the two countries in late March. Türkiye's mediation efforts paved the way for the agreement reached in July 2022 between Russia and Ukraine on the safe dispatch of foodstuff and fertilizers from Ukrainian ports. Abroad, Türkiye's pivotal role in the process has been recognized as essential.⁹

Condemnation of the War and Adherence to a Pro-Ukrainian Alliance of States

On February 22, Türkiye denounced Russia's recognition of the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Lugansk. In line with Ankara's support of Ukraine's sovereignty since the invasion of Crimea in 2014, a declaration of the Turkish Presidency pointed to the impossibility of accepting the above-mentioned recognition on the grounds that Ukraine's political unity and territorial integrity had been violated. It is therefore not surprising to see Ankara among the capitals that were quick to reprimand the military attack that started on the 24th of February, and to call for a ceasefire.

Ankara's diplomacy proved Türkiye's solidarity with a large group of states that aimed for a rapid cessation of Russian hostilities so that a peaceful end to the conflict could be reached. This credo determined Türkiye's position during the votes in the UN

General Assembly's (UNGA) 11th emergency session, which aimed to address the above-mentioned hostilities. One of the six main organs of the UN, the UNGA is a platform of deliberation to which all 193 members of the Organization send representatives. Ankara, as other capitals do, attaches particular importance to this UN body, for a number of reasons -despite the fact that the resolutions voted there are not legally binding. Legitimacy is one of them: Resolutions determine the appropriateness and moral acceptability of foreign policy decisions. The number of states that endorse them matters.

The UNGA is also a kind of barometer that demonstrates political inclinations within the UN: Debates and voting processes display member state's attitudes and preferences vis-à-vis the items on the institution's agenda. These preferences give rise to groupings that reveal which states subscribe to a given cause and form a kind of alliance while others adopt an opposing view or refrain from taking sides openly. What is more, the level of endorsement for an UNGA resolution indicates how

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strong international public opinion is. It is plausible to say that these two variables are connected: When public opinion rallies around an important question such as the conflict in Ukraine, the vote in the General Assembly has a higher chance of reaching the qualified majority.¹⁰

On March 2, Türkiye was among the 141 states that aligned themselves with UNGA resolution ES-11/1 condemning Russian “aggression” on Ukrainian soil “in the strongest terms” and demanding the withdrawal of all Russian forces from the country. Belarus’ involvement in the aggression against Ukraine, along with Russia’s decision to recognize the two breakaway republics in Donetsk and Luhansk, were also subject to condemnation in the text. These statements were largely in line with the foreign policy decisions adopted in Ankara.

The text of ES-11/1 includes a call on the belligerents to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.¹¹ The second resolution elaborated during the 11th emergency session and endorsed by 140 states, including Türkiye, focused more on humanitarian concerns and reiterated the call for Russia to withdraw its forces from Ukraine.¹² The third resolution merits special attention, as it relates directly to discussions regarding UN reform and indicates Türkiye’s position toward this matter. As mentioned above, the UNGA has the prerogative to discuss issues pertaining to international peace and security, and can refer them to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) when “action is necessary”. Cataclysm within tragedy, the aggressor in Ukraine is a permanent member of the UNSC whose veto power makes the institution ineffective. Elaborated in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, the third resolution is in fact a meaningful contribution to efforts to address the problem of inertia on a broader scale. Türkiye has clearly taken a place among the states that sponsored the resolution and consequently voted in its favor.

On April 7, 2022, the UNGA adopted Resolution ES-11/3 to suspend Russia’s membership rights in the UN Human Rights Council¹³ because of “grave concern at the ongoing human rights and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine” and “gross and systematic violations and abuses of human rights.”¹⁴ Türkiye was again among the 93 UN member states that voted in favor of the UN text and proved once more its choice to side with the international community.

The Regime of Turkish Straits: A Focal Point in the Conflict

Türkiye was the first state to qualify the Russian invasion as “war”. The country consequently invoked Article 19 of the Montreux Convention and closed the Turkish Straits to the war vessels of belligerent states, namely Russia and Ukraine. A peculiar aspect of the conflict in Ukraine is that access to the Black Sea is possible via the Strait of Çanakkale and the Strait of Istanbul, which are both subject to Turkish sovereignty. Early in the conflict, the Ukrainian Ambassador in Ankara requested that Turkish authorities close the Straits to Russian vessels intended for naval warfare.¹⁵ Since 1936, the provisions of the Montreux Convention regarding the Regime of Turkish Straits gives Türkiye the right—and the obligation—to do so in wartime. Türkiye’s qualification of Russia’s aggression as war on the 27th of February¹⁶ was more than a discursive act: It laid the legal ground for the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Convention.

Taking the decision to close the Straits to warships of the belligerents was not easy. The decision is the outcome of a comprehensive evaluation process, as it had the potential to bring about serious consequences for Ankara: Moscow could take it as an offence and Ankara could lose its neutral position—to which it has attached extreme importance since the beginning of the conflict. Nonetheless, it was incumbent on Türkiye to implement the relevant provisions of the Convention impartially. That is exactly what it did by invoking Article 19.¹⁷

Much to Ankara’s pleasure, international reactions have been positive. Three of them merit highlighting. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken “appreciated” Türkiye’s implementation of the Montreux Convention and Ankara’s official position on the issue, as declared by the Turkish foreign minister himself, and the country’s valuable support for Ukraine.¹⁸ Russian Ambassador to Türkiye, Aleksey Yerhov, also expressed his appreciation for Türkiye’s compliance with the Convention.¹⁹ Maria Zakharova, Spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, was among the political figures that expressed satisfaction regarding this decision.²⁰ Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy affirmed his gratitude as well. In a social media message that echoed the statement of the U.S. Secretary of State, Zelenskyy emphasized Türkiye’s preven-

tion of Russian war vessels' entry into the Black Sea and its considerable military and humanitarian support.²¹

Implementing the Montreux Convention has therefore been an occasion for Ankara to garner two major benefits. First, it proved once again Türkiye's geopolitical importance. The country's strategic geographical location positions Türkiye in the spotlight at a highly critical juncture. Second, the decision to close the Straits has consolidated Türkiye's pivotal role in the conflict, both for the warring parties and Türkiye's allies.

Solidarity with NATO despite the “Red Lines”

Although Ukraine is not a member of NATO, it gained a seat in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council soon after announcing independence in 1991 and took part in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) framework in 1994. A NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) crowned the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership (CDP) in 1997; the CDP reflects the highest level of political commitment that both sides have agreed to undertake.²² The NUC has been highly instrumental for Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration and has paved the way for further cooperation, including Ukraine's active contribution to allied operations and missions.

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 led NATO to attach particular importance to supporting capability development in Ukraine. On grounds of sovereignty and territorial integrity, NATO and its member states deplored and denounced not only the annexation, but also the recognition of two breakaway republics in the Donbass region along with the current military attack. Within NATO, a high level of support followed this condemnation to uphold Kiev's legitimate and legal right of self-defense.

Practical assistance accompanied the political support. Since 2014, NATO has multiplied its support to Ukraine by enhancing existing programs and adding new ones. Additional support came from member states in bilateral frameworks as well. After all, Ukraine was seen as a distinctive partner by the allies. The Bucharest summit of 2008 had already given a green light to a future membership of Ukraine. The

declaration of 2009 that aimed to complement the CDP also set up the prospect of membership for Ukraine. Yet the post-2014 period and especially the ongoing invasion have put this prospect on hold. Because Ukraine is not a member of NATO, the Russian assault does not trigger the mutual defense clause under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Therefore, the Alliance focuses on Ukraine's capability development and capacity building while providing financial and military assistance to the country.

From the inception of the conflict in Ukraine, Ankara has clearly shown its position of full commitment to the NATO alliance while preventing confrontation with Russia through meticulous diplomatic moves. Türkiye's reaction against the invasion was in line with its solidarity with NATO. It was also in line with the position of the European Union. The simultaneous and seemingly contradictory processes remind the outside world of Türkiye's value as an ally. What is remarkable about this value relates to a region that has a specific importance for the Alliance: Russia's ongoing attack against Ukraine goes beyond a mere military conflict—it represents a confrontation between democratic ideals and the Kremlin's revisionism which is a clear breach of the international law.²³ Türkiye therefore holds a key position in a region where the future of Europe unfolds.

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Finland and Sweden's decision to join NATO constitute a point that deserves attention for this study. Ankara clearly delineated its early objections to their inclusion and sought to maximize its national interests without putting the Alliance's forthcoming enlargement in peril. It was difficult to expect, from the beginning of the so-called crisis, a veritable veto against the enlargement. In principle, Türkiye has never been against the accession of new members to NATO. What Ankara did was in fact to use a window of opportunity that made it possible for Turkish policymakers to raise two issues that have been generating dissatisfaction: the support provided to the Kurdistan Workers' Party

(PKK)—especially by Sweden—and the arm export ban that these two states had imposed on Türkiye. Ankara managed to bring these issues to international public attention without creating a predicament for the Alliance.

Much ink has been spilled on a completely different scenario that Turkish authorities are assumed to have planned. Put simply, a blockage of Finland and Sweden's accession, even if not successful, would please Russia and ameliorate Russo-Turkish relations. According to this view, Ankara had planned to kill two birds with one stone: to negotiate with Helsinki and Stockholm to obtain concessions, and to consolidate its partnership with Moscow. At least two arguments refute this assumption. First, as noted above, Ankara was not against the idea of enlargement, and unambiguously put the emphasis on two, security-related issues. It was obvious that it would withdraw its objection as soon as it secured the necessary pledges from Helsinki and Stockholm. Second, the logic of the assumption entails that Ankara would definitely block the Alliance's expansion to Nordic territories. Türkiye would not give a go-ahead to the two candidates, the argument goes (as Türkiye in fact did at the Madrid Summit of June 2022), because if it did, Türkiye's relations with Russia would seriously deteriorate. This scenario would indeed be unacceptable for a state that seeks to remain a crucial diplomatic actor at any cost. The facts of the outcome and Türkiye's transparency in accepting the enlargement once Finland and Sweden's side of the bargain was sealed reveal the truth of its intentions.

Defense Cooperation with Ukraine

Türkiye has not only reprimanded Russian actions in the region, but has intensified relations with Ukraine on various grounds. The military field is particularly important in this regard, due to Turkish-made Bayraktar drones. The Bayraktar system's effectiveness is a justification of earlier "tests". The TB-2s proved very effective during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict of 2020 when Azerbaijan relied heavily on them against Armenian forces on the front line. Due to the key role that Bayraktar played in this conflict, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev awarded the company's Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Selçuk Bayraktar, with

the 'Karabakh Order'.²⁴ Previously, in Libya, the same drone system contributed to an operational success when used together with Turkish naval units in support of the UN-backed Libyan government's military operation to Al-Watiya air base.²⁵ Northern Syria is another region where the drone system showed its value.²⁶

Due to the advantages that the unmanned military system presents,²⁷ it has been easy for the Turkish company to export its products to Ukraine. It is important to underline that drone exportation to Ukraine is part of a broader setting where Ankara and Kiev have pledged closer cooperation in defense procurement. The two nations aim at technology transfer and joint fabrication of drones and have agreed to diversify their commercial transactions in the military field. It is in this context that Ukraine has ordered naval units from Türkiye. The Turkish and Ukrainian presidents have also signed an agreement regarding space technology that includes the coproduction of a rocket launcher.

Many commentaries have highlighted the fact that Turkish drones have had a major impact on the war in Ukraine. Various success stories in various geographies have drawn attention to how the nature of the war has changed. These successful missions have catalyzed the debates on the future of conflict.²⁸ Thanks to their low-cost, real-time intelligence gathering capacity and high-precision strike capability, TB-2s have helped reduce the asymmetry of military power between Kiev and Moscow. As Ukraine's Air Force spokesperson Yuri Ignat notes, drone tech has given the Ukrainian army a "qualitative edge" over the Russian forces.²⁹

On the downside, there is a risky scenario in which Türkiye could lose its neutral position in Putin's eyes due to its heavy involvement in Ukraine's resistance against the Russian military offense. Türkiye's military support has been revolutionary in the sense that it has seriously altered the flow of the war by creating an unexpected advantage with drone technology and boosting the morale of the Ukrainian nation.

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This could seriously deteriorate Türkiye's relations with Russia. Much to Ankara's relief, this scenario has not come to pass—yet. Nevertheless, the risk remains present at the time of this writing and will obviously become more pressing in time. On various occasions, Russian authorities have complained about the Turkish exportation of drones to Ukraine. That the transactions have taken place between private companies—not between states—does not prevent the Kremlin's ire. Nor does the fact that drone exportation to Ukraine started in 2019.

The following statements of the President of Türkiye's Defense Industries, İsmail Demir, illustrate the concern in the Turkish capital:

“Türkiye is the only country, I guess, that can give a call to both parties and invite them to the peace table. How can you do this if you send tens of thousands of weapons to one side? (...) We are much more careful. (...) We have to be able to talk to both sides, someone should be close enough to both parties to build trust. Our priority is to make sure that peace prevails.”³⁰

It seems possible to present the opening of a factory in Ukraine as a way out of this predicament. Even before the Russia-Ukraine war, the production of Turkish drones on Ukrainian soil had become a matter of consensus between the two states. The tragedy that unfolded after February 24 has certainly slowed down the project but has not led to its cancellation.³¹ The reason one can expect that the Kremlin will not object to a common production facility relates to Türkiye's earlier political choices: Ankara opposed Western sanctions against Russia and consequently refused to enforce them, and has not banned Russian commercial aircraft from Turkish airspace.

Good Relations with Russia in spite of all the “Risks”

In order to ensure the confidence of both Kiev and Moscow, Ankara has endeavored to keep the same distance toward and maintain good relations, as much as possible, with the two capitals. This made it necessary for Turkish policymakers to make political choices and undertake economic initiatives simultaneously with both countries.

The Sochi meeting held between the Turkish and Russian presidents on August 5, 2022, is emblematic in this regard. Among the meeting's outcomes, the agreement on payment in rubles stands out.³² The adoption of the Russian payment system (MIR)

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by five Turkish banks should be interpreted in this context. The Central Bank of Russia implemented the card payment system in 2017, and the ending of Visa, Mastercard and American Express operations in the country made MIR the main corporation for electronic fund transfers. Another important decision that came out of the bilateral summit in Sochi had to do with Türkiye's partial payment for Russian natural gas in rubles.³³ The political significance of this decision merits highlighting; on March 23, Vladimir Putin had announced—as a reaction to the military support provided to Ukraine—that Gazprom would not accept payments in euros or dollars from “unfriendly” countries.

Ankara's decision to adopting the Russian payment system and make payments to Russian companies in Russian currency has generated concern in Western countries, as has the increase in commercial relations between Ankara and Moscow. In the first seven months of 2022, an increase of 19.5% was observed in Türkiye's exports to Russia compared to the previous year, when the trade relations between the two countries remained limited due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Imports driven by the significant rise in global oil and natural gas prices as well as Türkiye's growing energy demands leapt by 112.9%, reflecting an increase in trade of more than \$17 billion in favor of Russia. In July alone, the rise in imports reached 75.2%, while 78.4 percentage points of growth were measured for exports compared to 2021. In volume, the increase in Turkish imports from Russia was more than \$1.9 billion.³⁴ Western politicians and analysts have interpreted these increases as the Kremlin's effort to compensate for its losses due to international sanctions.

That the expansion of commercial and financial relations between Türkiye and Russia could undermine the Western sanctions was stated explicitly in a letter that Wally Adeyemo, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of

the Treasury, sent to the American Chamber of Commerce in Türkiye in August 2022. With his letter, Mr. Adeyemo warned that Turkish firms could face U.S. sanctions if they enter into commercial activities with the Russian individuals under sanctions.³⁵ Although discussions have not taken place at the EU level, some media outlets pointed to the possibility that member states could consider financial restrictions or reductions vis-à-vis Turkish firms. A call on Western companies to leave Türkiye was among the options.³⁶

Turkish authorities rely on at least two arguments to counter such proposals. First, Türkiye is already among the states suffering the most from the consequences of the war in Ukraine. To subscribe to the international sanctions would have devastating effects for the Turkish economy, as the Western partners can well understand. Second, Türkiye has struggled hard to keep diplomatic channels open with Putin's Russia and has undertaken many high-level initiatives. Some of Ankara's achievements have proven highly useful not only for Turkish interests but also for the entire world. The most prominent example is certainly the grain export corridor brokered by Ankara in close cooperation with the United Nations. In less than a month after the signing of the Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports, more than 660,000 tons of agricultural product was authorized to leave Ukrainian ports.³⁷

Conclusion

At the time of writing, the cessation of Russian hostilities in Ukraine remains elusive. This renders diplomatic channels all the more important, and Türkiye's contributions all the more valuable. Türkiye's high level of efforts demonstrate the value that Ankara attaches to the resolution of the conflict. There are reasonable grounds to believe that that this perception in the Turkish capital will not change in the future.

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As mentioned in the introductory section above, the objective of this study is to demonstrate that, since the onset of the war Russia has been waging in Ukraine, pol-

icymakers in Ankara have pursued a policy of active neutrality built on three pillars. The first of these is political and military support to Ukraine. Kyiv has looked to Ankara as a guarantor for a possible peace process since the inception of Russian assault. It seems necessary to underscore that this has much to do with the attitude that Ankara has consistently maintained since 2014, when Russia illegally annexed Crimea and the conflict in Donbass started.

The second pillar has to do with relations between Ankara and Moscow. Despite intermittent clashes of interests and political divergences that sometimes infringe upon Türkiye's vital interests, Turkish policymakers still strive to develop strategic relations with Russia. The two states are in a special relationship characterized by a complicated nesting of strategic connections. Thus, for instance, Ankara does not participate in the Western sanctions toward Moscow. Instead, the two countries create new economic and financial frameworks together. This cooperation guarantees a front-line diplomatic position for Türkiye. A point that merits particular attention is that keeping diplomatic channels open with the Russian executive is extremely difficult, and Türkiye is among the very few international actors that are able to do it.

The third pillar involves Türkiye's relations with the "West," where the Transatlantic Alliance has a particular standing. As noted above, Türkiye's reactions to the conflict in Ukraine have exhibited a significant degree of alignment with Western partners, even when unity was not always easy to find within NATO or the EU with regard to Russia. The diplomatic visibility that emanates from Türkiye's mediation efforts has had a highly positive impact for its prestige vis-à-vis the Western world. Such visibility suits Türkiye's objective to establish itself as a pivotal diplomatic actor in the international arena.

Endnotes

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- 3 Jonathan Mercer, “The Illusion of International Prestige,” *International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (2017), p. 133.
- 4 2,000 people across Türkiye responded to a computer-aided web questionnaire in February 26–28, 2022. See “Araştırma: Türk Halkı Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı Hakkında Ne Düşünüyor?,” *Cumhuriyet*, March 17, 2022, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/araştırma-turk-halki-rusya-ukrayna-savasi-hakkında-ne-dusunuyor-1916740>.
- 5 The 2,000 participants in the survey were selected from 26 cities in Türkiye in accordance with the NUTS-2 (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) system. See “Araştırma: Rusya ve Ukrayna Savaşında Türkiye’nin Tarafsız Politikası Destekleniyor,” *DHA*, April 8, 2022, <https://www.dha.com.tr/yerel-haberler/istanbul/merkez/araştırma-rusya-ve-ukrayna-savasında-turkiyen-2051451>.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 The Minister of Defense, Hulusi Akar, called his Russian counterpart on the 1st and 8th of March to express the urgent need for a ceasefire and Türkiye’s readiness for taking responsibility. He also held a phone meeting with Russian and Ukrainian defense ministers to highlight the same points. See Sarp Özer, “Milli Savunma Bakanı Akar ile Rusya Savunma Bakanı Şoygu Telefonda Görüştü,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, March 1, 2022, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/milli-savunma-bakanı-akar-ile-rusya-savunma-bakanı-soygu-telefonda-gorustu/2519880>; “Milli Savunma Bakanı Hulusi Akar, Şoygu ile Telefon Görüşmesi Gerçekleştirdi,” *Cumhuriyet*, March 8, 2022, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/dunya/milli-savunma-bakanı-hulusi-akar-soygu-ile-telefon-gorusmesi-gerceklestirdi-1914165>; Barış Gündoğan, “Bakan Akar, Rusya ve Ukrayna Savunma Bakanları ile Telefonda Görüştü,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, March 11, 2022 <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/bakan-akar-rusya-ve-ukrayna-savunma-bakanları-ile-telefondagorustu/2532341>.
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