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Research Article

**AN ANALYSIS ON THE 2015 TÜRKİYE AND RUSSIA AIRCRAFT
CRISIS: COMPELLENCE, DETERRENCE AND BALANCING**

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ABSTRACT

It is possible to state that as a discipline, international security studies have developed within the framework of the realist paradigm and during the period of the Cold War. It is established that the field of security studies, which places a particular emphasis on the role of military power and states in international politics, is consequently designated as strategic studies. In this context, studies on coercion strategies have been implemented focusing on states' power. On the other hand, power distribution and balance of power in the system along with the ascend of neorealism have been underlined. In this study, the aircraft crisis taking approximately nine months between Turkish-Russian relationship has been examined utilizing both coercion (deterrence and compellence) and balancing strategies. The objective of the study is to clarify the agreement between Türkiye and Russia from the perspective of aforementioned strategies, perception of actors and cost-benefit calculations. In this qualitative case study, the process tracing method was used to reveal the cause-and-effect relationship between variables in a clear and definitive manner. In addition, document analysis technique was used to collect the data. It is concluded that given the estimated exorbitant costs to both parties at the conclusion of the crisis, the parties involved reached an agreement to conclude the crisis.

Keywords: 2015 Aircraft crisis, Compellence, Deterrence, Balancing, International relations, International security, Türkiye, Russia.

INTRODUCTION

States are the main actors of the international relations according to the realist paradigm and military power relations have been prioritized. States try to survive in anarchic international environment and the key deterrent of their policy is power. Viewed from this perspective, power relations have been focalized due to the long severity of realism with the impact of international relations discipline evolving through the Cold War. Initial studies are mostly strategic analyses in the form of historical and military interpretations. In this regard, compelling strategies such as deterrence and compellence have been emphasized. Realist paradigm has gained a more scientific view together with neorealism, manifestation of Kenneth Waltz, and it has been claimed that power distribution is the variant that influences actors' actions. Within this scope, explanations upon power balance and balancing strategies have theoretically escalated. In this study, aircraft crisis dated 2015 between Türkiye and Russia was discussed from the perspective of deterrence, coercion and balancing concepts.

However, it is seen that there is a table necessitating a wide cost-benefit calculation within the capacity and capabilities of actors. Russia whose aircraft was downed had to be careful with its response not to cause dire results while having the risk of losing deterrence. Likewise, Türkiye is a state having the internal and external balancing capacity and capabilities. In other words, Türkiye is a significant member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as well as being an actor with the increasing military power and the one empowering it with its own capabilities. In this context, intensified coercion by Russia towards Türkiye could bring about unaffordable costs for Russia.

In other respects, Türkiye is subjected to the impact of security deficiency of Syria even in the country, reencountering with the most significant power in the region would explicitly restrict its strategies. Additionally, the circumstances brought with the ascending period out of control could cause unaffordable costs to face for Türkiye as well. Yet, after about nine-month lasting crisis, it is evident that the parties ended the disagreement as they could not afford the costs within diverse aspects. In this respect, this study presents cost-benefit calculations actors did or could encounter within the perspective of deterrence, compellence and balancing concepts and tries to clarify the resolution of the crisis between these two countries. In addition to these main concepts preferred for the analysis, process tracing method was used in this qualitative case study. The process tracing method, which is frequently used in qualitative case studies in international relations (Gokce, 2022: 51; Suleymanoglu-Kurum, 2021; Ucagac, 2022: 16), is useful for determining how or why cases change within a certain process and the independent variables affecting this process. Process tracing transforms a historical narrative into a scientific explanation expressed in theoretical forms (George and Bennett, 2005: 386; Ucagac, 2022: 17; Balci, 2024: 14). For this reason, the process tracing method was preferred in order to present the 2015 airplane crisis case in a more

clear and understandable way. In order to collect the data, the document analysis technique used in qualitative studies was used. In this context, sources such as scientific publications, expert opinions, reports of research centers, news articles were scanned.

In the light of all these, the study consists of three parts. Conceptual frame of the study is presented in the first part. Russia's and Türkiye's perception about the crisis and strategies are presented in the second and third parts respectively.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the discipline of international relations, according to neorealism, states are the unique actors of international policy. These actors are unitary and rational agents. The fact that states are unitary means that they are not affected by their inner system. Stated in other words, no matter how diversified interest groups (political parties, nongovernmental organizations, individuals, groups) are, states are forms not affected by them (Balci, 2014: 124-125), which means a state is a unit. The implication of this unity is related to states' enacting actions. As these actors are units, it cannot be imagined that diverse interest groups are efficient during the period of enacting. Rationality of states tells that they will make the optimum decision, aware of all the options (Ari, 2009: 213). The hypothesis of a rational state has two indications. First; states are aware of their interests and prioritize as such. Second indication means the accountability of the cost-benefit brought by a possible action by states. Namely, states are actors doing cost-benefit analysis (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2014: 75-76).

The fundamental motivation of rational enacting is the necessity to retain presence of states and self-help in anarchic international system. In other words, states enact in a surrounding where they can trust no one while retaining their perpetuity and security. Within the framework of these action(s), states maintain decision-making processes and evaluate their options. With a wider perspective, rationality implies they are aware of the outer surrounding and also contemplate as the best way they manage to survive. In this context, states try to measure how their own actions affect the other states' actions. In the emerged table, various strategy options are encountered. While choosing among these strategies, evaluation for the probability of success along with costs and benefits are implemented. Also, states focus not only on the present but also the long-term consequences at the time of selection (Mearsheimer, 2009: 244).

In the aspect of benefit and success, wrong choices of the states do not refute the argument of being rational. Likewise, they enact with only the available data on hand. In this respect, since states do not generally have sufficient knowledge, they occasionally make wrong decisions (Mearsheimer, 2009: 244). Hence, the information states have about a particular topic implies their perception. At this point, difference between understanding and perception occurs. Understanding is

to know about a phenomenon or an incident with all the aspects whereas perception is the consequence of the act of thinking with missing information. As a matter of fact, security dilemma, often mentioned in realist paradigm, emerges as a result of perception, namely missing information (Balci, 2023: 69). Naturally, wrong cost-benefit calculation occurs and wrong decisions might be made.

During the rational decision-making process, it can be said to adopt a set of strategies afterwards evaluation of entire options and cost-benefit calculation made. After all, the relation between rationality and strategy concepts emerges at this point. Yet, strategy is mainly about actors' choice and requires precise comprehension of the danger and opportunities involved in the confronted incident, so this is one of the qualities of aforementioned rational actor. Besides, in the strategy as well as their choice, an actor is supposed to account for the possible steps of the opposite party against their choice. Consequently, the abstract of strategy is mutual commitment of selections (Freedman and Raghavan, 2008: 217). In light of these, actors' possible ways to select in terms of mutual actions (especially in case of a crisis or opponency) can be defined as strategic options. These options can be roughly classified as consensual strategy, controlling strategy and coercive strategy (Bingol, 2021: 14).

Consensual strategy implies adaptation of strategic options together with others without threat or use of force. Controlling force, on the other hand, involves use of force so as to limit any actor's strategic option. Finally, coercive strategy is the deliberate and intentional use of clear force to influence one another's strategic options (Freedman and Raghavan, 2008: 217). It means clear threat and obvious intention. For instance, it cannot be named as coercive strategy if Russia does not have an intention and a clear objective of threat towards Türkiye, even if Türkiye perceives a threat by Russia. Additionally, actual use can be a matter to make the other party feel the severity of the force even if threat of force is fundamental in coercive strategy, which can be divided into two subcategories as deterrence and compellence in terms of their objectives (Freedman and Raghavan, 2008: 217).

DETERRENCE AND COMPELLENCE

The early studies on deterrence, especially within the scope of nuclear weapons began to be implemented during the Cold War (Harrison et al., 2017: 20-21; Gundogdu, 2016: 2-7; Quackenbush, 2010: 741; Morgan, 2012: 8). Compellence means deterring the opponent from taking military action. This deterrence is accomplished threatening the opponent to encounter a possible cost-benefit risk more severe than the possible benefit in case of action (Snyder, 1961: 3, 40; Schelling, 1980: 195; Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 2001: 360; Gundogdu, 2016: 7). Compellence is a strategy intended to get an enemy or an opponent to take an action or deter them from taking an action (Schelling, 1980: 195; Snyder, 1961:

40; Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 2001: 360; Freedman and Raghavan, 2008: 217-218). In coercion, the other party is asked to take an action (Schaub, 2004: 389).

After giving the definition of deterrence and compellence concepts, the difference between these concepts can be discussed. In deterrence strategy, deterrent actor states what the unintended action is with clear threats and checks whether this clearly defined unintended action will or will not be taken by the other actor. Therefore, the deterrent one takes action after the other actor has implemented the unintended action in question. In other words, deterrence implies a retaliation after the other actor has performed unintended action (Freedman and Raghavan, 2008: 218). This point clarifies the clearest difference between deterrence and compellence. In fact, punishment in the form of retaliation can last until the other actor (compelled) has taken the intended action in compellence strategy (Freedman and Raghavan, 2008: 218). That is, while the opponent should not initiate an (unintended) action in deterrence, conversely, the opponent should initiate an (intended) action in compellence. An intended action (in compellence) can be terminating a previous action or initiating an action as in the way the coercive requires (see Table 1; Schelling, 1980: 195; Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 2001: 360; Snyder, 1961: 40).

In brief, deterrence requires the opponent avoid action whereas compellence asks them to take action (Schaub, 2004: 389). In this sense, move order is the basic diversity (Schelling, 1980: 195). Another matter is that the force of the deterrent is shown proactively in deterrence, on one hand, limited use of force is on point with compellence. On the other hand, there is no time limitation in deterrence; however, a date is set to stop the action in compellence (Freedman and Raghavan, 2008: 218; Bingol, 2021: 17). Thus, in deterrence, continuation is a matter with the presence of an unintended action. In compellence, conversely, a time limitation is needed since an action according to the coercive actor's strategic estimates is required. To exemplify, compellence can be as embargo placement or additional embargo or applying other enforcements under the circumstance that intended action has not been taken by the given time (Bingol, 2021: 17; Pape, 1992: 423).

Likewise, in deterrence, a responsive threat to apply these enforcements proactively can be presented. One another significant matter is relevant with the severity of compellence strategy usage. No matter how hard the punishment imposed upon the opponent is, some reservations can emerge for the intended action. First of all, punishment may not terminate when intended action initiated and, if applicable, current precedence may be lost. Meanwhile, another reservation may be the loss of compelled actor's reputation for obeying the compellent. Within these aspects, compellence is thought to be harder than deterrence, a set of guarantees need to be assured to reverse the threat and stop the punishment (Freedman and Raghavan, 2008: 218; Schaub, 2004).

Table 1. *Difference between Deterrent and Coercive Strategies*

Strategy	Compellent's Expectancy
Deterrence	Nonfulfillment of the unintended action by the opponent-inertia-maintaining the status
Compellence	Fulfillment of the intended action by the opponent -going into action-changing the current or actual state

Source: The table has been prepared by the authors

Even though deterrence and compellence strategies can differ definitively, in case of a crisis or disagreement, transitivity of both or encountering both of them is a possible matter. For instance, Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 emerged with the incident where Union of Soviet Socialist Republics began deploying missiles on Cuba's land in the first months of 1962. The President of The United States of America, (USA) Kennedy, declared that they would intervene Cuba in case of a threat for the USA and other countries of the continent (Sander, 2010: 324-325). Along with this, demand of the USA was to stop the placement of missiles. As is seen, a demand for stopping an initiated action and a threat to terminate it are in question. In this context, the USA's strategy is compellence (Freedman and Raghavan, 2008: 218).

On the other hand, it was learned that some other parts to fire the missiles were needed from Soviet Russia, with the evidence of Cuban missile installation air views. The USA determined a new strategy with this concern. According to this strategy, the new parts of missiles the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) would send caused Cuba to be blockaded over the sea. Blockade was implemented on October, 22 and the USSR was threatened to have their ships sunk on the route to Cuba if they violated the blockade (Sander, 2010: 325). What the USA demanded from the USSR was not to attempt breaking the blockade. In a word, the action had not been launched yet. Thereby, the USA's strategy can be considered deterrence. Also, nuclear deterrence is in question here (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 2001: 360). Likewise, the USSR stated they would respond when the USA fulfilled the threats in question. Within this framework, during the period of the crisis, mutual compellence and deterrence can be remarked (Freedman and Raghavan, 2008: 218).

A new phase was observed between the opposite parties as the crisis turned out to be reasonably dangerous: negotiation and mutual guarantees. The leader of the USSR, Krushchev sent Kennedy a letter on October, 27. Krushchev wrote they would dismantle the missiles in Cuba provided that the USA dismantled Jupiter

missiles planted in Türkiye. In addition, while territorial integrity and security of Türkiye was ensured, the same guarantee was asked from the USA for Cuba (Sander, 2010: 325-326). In the compellence strategy maintained mutually by the opponents against each other to obtain effective and successful compellence, credibility of the threat and guarantees are in question.

Lastly, from another perspective, these demands of Krushchev can be evaluated within the perspective of compellence strategy. Notably, a scenario can be imagined, in which the basic beginning of the crisis or the USSR strategy goes back the placement of Jupiter missiles in Türkiye. Indeed, the USA deployed the Jupiter missiles in Türkiye in order to enhance the deterrent force against the USSR. Within this frame, the USSR's deployment missiles in Cuba are an action of balancing, similarly, the USA's demand for dismantling the Jupiter missiles in Türkiye is an action compellence. It can be said that the USA, not bearing the cost of this compellence, came into agreement along with the guarantees the USSR assured.

On the other hand, common aspects of deterrence and compellence can be mentioned. As both of them are compellence strategies, they may be the same in terms of instruments. Thus, in both of them, military, economic and political threats can be utilized. The difference in here is the use of force in compellence. On the other hand, since a force not used yet in deterrence is a matter, credibility of deterrent threat has been emphasized in literature (Harrison et al., 2017: 20; Ari, 2009: 526). And yet, the emphasis is on balance in deterrence, and if the scales are heavy on one actor, solving the problem using force can become more attractive (Huth et al., 1993: 612). Along with this, these two matters (deterrence and capacity balance) are also valid for compellence. For as much as compelled party may regard the limited force as bearable, they may not believe other threats will be implemented or may see the war as a solution. Finally, as seen in 1962 Cuban Missiles Crisis, both of the strategies can involve commitments and guarantees for other party's factor of performing (or not performing) the expected action.

BALANCING

While arguing deterrence and compellence, credibility of threat was mentioned. The credibility of threat is bound to the capability of the other party to intimidate. This is related to the power of the actor. Additionally, states act with the purpose of balancing the threat or power, using these strategies. In this context, the power of the actor consists of either its own power or the capacity achieved with alliances. In this regard, balancing strategy occurs. In other words, deterrence and compellence can accompany balancing. Likewise, power distribution (system structure) determines the states' actions in anarchic international system. In this context, these strategies can intertwine within the process. However, during the Cold War, these concepts entered the international relations literature, the USA's

deterrent strategy against the USSR, aimed to balance the USSR (or prevent the USSR unbalance) and maintain the status quo. In this frame, aforementioned 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis can be again an instance here. One another case is the emerging occasion with Congress of Vienna in 1815. After the defeat of Napoleon, the power balancing (European adjustment) formed with Congress of Vienna is also an instrument of deterrence strategy against an actor breaking the status quo (Ari, 2009: 525; Balci and Bayram, 2024: 1414). In other words, the balance of power system operates on the principle of deterrence (Morgan, 2012: 86).

Another instance can be given as deterrence; the alliance an actor is in and presenting to other (potential enemy) actors or the compelling opportunity presented by the power acquired by this alliance. Yet, the capabilities the alliance presented may not be as trustworthy as deterrent or coercive. For example, the credibility for the USA's support of deterrent decreased after 1962 Missile Crisis (Ari, 2009: 527). In this context, for a state to ensure its security or survive (in anarchic international surrounding) in terms of compellence strategies, the most rational option is to increase its own capacity of power (Ari, 2009: 527). In light of all these, some balancing can be included closely related to deterrence and compellence. When balancing is concerned, the first to recall is the 'Balance of Power Theory'. The theory of Kenneth Waltz (1979) in his book named "Theory of International Politics" brought significant changes to realism and international politics studies. Waltz searched the reason of similar actions of the states with diverse ideology, political structure or identities (Ari, 2018: 138). With a great abstraction and reduction, he excluded the unaccountable characteristics of the states and reformed realism more scientifically. From this point of view, he stated that states' similar actions rooted in the structure of anarchic international system. System's structure defines the power distribution between the units in the system. Within this context, balance of power is provided with relatively even power distribution between the units. In this frame, according to this theory continuing with a simple thesis; one or more states tries to balance a power arising as to break status quo (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2014: 52). Thus, relatively even power distribution is provided again and security of all units is ensured (Muscato, n.d.). To the point of Waltz, the balance of power in the system tends to be self-obtained (Ari, 2018: 138). However, the choice of the states may not always be balancing. Sometimes states may prefer bandwagoning the arising power (Walt, 1985: 8).

On the contrary, Stephen Walt introduced Balance of Threat Theory implying Balance of Power Theory does not correspond with the cases (Balci, 2023: 70). According to this theory, Waltz claimed the statesmen's claims of power balance neglected other factors while they prefer possible threats and alliances. Although power, in states' estimates, (for instance in balancing and bandwagoning) is an important factor, it is not the only factor (Walt, 1985: 8). Within this context, states' demand for balancing is in question; still states balance not the power but the threat (Walt, 1985, 1987). Even if the opinions of both the thinkers differ in the issue of balancing, the significance of balancing in international politics was underlined.

In the context of this study, internal balancing, external balancing, negative balancing, positive balancing and offshore balancing concepts will be included. Internal balancing is a type of balancing where the state enhances its capacity and initiates balance upon it. External balancing, conversely, is a type of balancing done involving other states' capacity (alliance formation) under the circumstances of its own insufficient capacity (Waltz, 1979: 168). Within this scope, it is obvious for the states to do so to increase their capacity in both of the balancing types (Balci, 2023: 70; He, 2012: 159).

Moreover, positive balancing includes internal and external balancing. Negative balancing is contrarily a type of balancing preferred to weaken the capacity of the opponent instead of increasing the state's own capacity. Negative balancing can be done using economic and political instruments as well as military ones (Ozluk, 2017: 234-235; Steff and Khoo, 2014: 227-228; He, 2012). Lastly, offshore balancing was introduced by offensive representors of realism like Walt, Mearsheimer, Posen and Layne in neorealism (Ozluk, 2017: 240). This balancing type emerged upon the ideas about international system and evolved into multipolarity, and great powers began to appear from other regions while also coasting heavily to keep military entity in any region for being hegemon (or maintaining hegemon) over the world (Ozluk, 2017: 240-244; Layne, 1997: 112-113). Within this scope, it was aimed to proceed balancing through the alliances instead of keeping military entity against the rising power in a region (Wang, 2013). In this point, while the great power focuses on being hegemon in its own region, it is going to hinder a hegemonic power to emerge in other regions (Balci, 2014: 139). In other words, the powers in the region will balance one another and if not required, physical war will be avoided (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2016; Rahman, 2018). Thus, while the domination in the region continues, great costs will not have to be endured.

THE PERCEPTION AND STRATEGIC APPROACH OF RUSSIA

With the support of Russia for Assad regime in civil war in Syria, the destiny of the regime and the war changed. That is, the military entity of Russia in Syria and the support for Syrian regime can be defined as controlling strategy. Yet, military actions of Russia in Syria limited the other actors' strategic selections. Russia became the actor whose pressure was felt the most in the region. In this context, it is possible to say that Russia has an apparent deterrence on account of its military force. Because of that, the fact that Türkiye fell the Russian bombardment aircraft on November 24, 2015 could be understood as it might cause the risk of decreasing Russia's deterrence as well as a perception of threat from the perspective of Russia. Cost-benefit calculation and developing a strategy were required. In fact, it was probable for a responsive retaliation to bring about unaffordable costs for Russia.

In response to Türkiye's actions, several factors could be considered in Russia's strategic calculations from their perspective:

- 1) The fact that Türkiye shot down the Russian aircraft can decrease the deterrence of Russia. In face of the decreasing deterrent, other actors' actions against Russia can be in question. As such an image is desired to be avoided, an action against Türkiye is required.
- 2) If the action performed against Türkiye is a retaliation involving severe force, escalation between opponents can happen and this bears the risk of war.
- 3) Such a risk of war can lead to unaffordable costs for Russia. There are some reasons of this. First reason is strong military force; internal balancing capability of Türkiye is high. Secondly, as Türkiye is a member of NATO, external balancing capability of Türkiye is high. Also, due to Crimean annexation, the fact that NATO-Russia relations are tense could be a remarkable factor. One another reason is strengthening strategic opportunities of the USA opposing Russia in Syria. That is, from the perspective of the USA, Russia's presence in Syria (and Crimean annexation) could be interpreted as the will of Russia for being the rising hegemon in the region. Within this scope, balancing of this rising hegemon with the least cost consists a significant place in the USA strategy. In this context, retaliation, high level of threat and compellence to be applied against Türkiye can bring Türkiye closer to the USA. This can as well significantly restrict strategic opportunities of Russia by reinforcing offshore strategy of the USA.

Within the light of all these, Russia eventually decided to end the disagreement so that the threat imposed at this point would not proceed to bear unaffordable costs for itself. In the process, Russia's expectation of apology and other actions were in the direction that Türkiye will never perform such an action and Russian deterrence will be proved against other actors. As mentioned above, within the framework of three points and deterrence, compellence and balancing concepts, the work of the process can be defined. After the aircraft crash incident, Russia escalated the crisis in a controllable level. For instance, the decisions and discourses made within the first 24 hours by Russia is a combination of deterrence, compellence and balancing strategies. These decisions are (BBC News Türkçe, 2015a):

- 1) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov canceled the visit and stated that Türkiye is not a secure country and hence, recommended Russian citizens not to visit Türkiye. After that, Russian tourist agents began to cancel Türkiye travels.
- 2) S-300 Air defence missiles were sent to weaponize in the northwest of Syria where the aircraft crashed. Also, it was said that additional S-300s would be sent to Russian air force base in Syria by Russian Ministry of Defense.
- 3) Russian Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu expressed that fighter aircrafts would accompany the bombardment aircrafts (with air-to-air gunnery range)

to operate in Turkish border after the bombardment aircraft crashed and operations in Turkish border would continue.

- 4) The bill of law counting on punishment of the ones denying the so-called Armenian genocide was brought to Russian assembly. One of the opponent politics, Aleksey Navalny, supported the bill of law and stated that this bill would hurt Türkiye.
- 5) A decision regarding the ban on buying poultry meat from Türkiye valid after December 1 was taken. It was stated that the decision was taken not because of political reasons but because Türkiye had low food safety standards.

In the press conference held on November 25, Russia Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mariya Zakharova expressed that action of Türkiye would influence all the areas in relations. Also, Zakharova stated that Russian actions were about fight against terrorism and hence, the aircraft crash incident was related to Russian fight against terrorism. In this context, it was declared that Russia would continue fighting terrorism and search for supporters of terrorism (Yeni Asya, 2015). Here, in an undertone, there is an implication that Türkiye is a country disrupting the fight against terrorism in the region. Thus, this implication became clearer in the discourse of Lavrov on November 25. Similar with Zakharova (Ibid), Lavrov expressed the action of Turkish side to be purposeful, said that terrorists made preparations of Syrian actions in Türkiye and this must be known by all the opponents. In addition, Lavrov declared that they would be able to apply to UN for an investigation on how the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) got the support and how petrol trade was done (Haberrus, 2015; Agha, 2021: 440). Again, in the press conference held on November 25, he claimed that Türkiye supported radical Islamic organizations in Syria and protected ISIS due to the petrol trade Türkiye was conducting with this organisation (BBC News Türkçe, 2015b).

On November, 26 it was published that 39 businesspeople would be deported and trailer trucks carrying goods from Türkiye were stopped at the Russian border. On November 27, Russian Prime Minister Yuri Ushakov expressed that Erdogan demanded to make a phone call to Putin but Putin would not accept it until Türkiye had apologized. On November 28, Putin imposed sanctions, summarized as stopping export of some foodstuff, restricting Türkiye travels, ending visa liberalization, bringing restrictions to Turkish companies and imposing a firm hand on Turkish trucks and ships in Black Sea (BBC News Türkçe, 2015b; Uras, 2015). Even though Erdogan said on November 28 that Paris Climate Conference was an opportunity to change the way of mutual relations, Dmitri Peskov expressed that Putin would not join such a meeting on November 30. After the leader summit of the conference on November 30, Putin declared that the reason for Türkiye to crash the Russian aircraft was to ensure the petrol trade made with ISIS and other terrorist organizations (BBC News Türkçe, 2015b). On December 1, the Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev approved the list of stuff banned to be imported from Türkiye. The sanction to be in effect from January, 1 2016 includes fruit and vegetables such as tomato, orange, apple, onion (Anadolu

Ajansı, 2016; BBC News Türkçe, 2015b). Additionally, Russian Tour Operations Association explained that all Russian Travel Agencies canceled their tours directed to Türkiye (BBC News Türkçe, 2015b; Sputnik Türkiye, 2015a).

On December 2, Russian Vice-Minister of Defence Anatoly Antonov claimed that Türkiye was the greatest buyer of the petrol stolen from Syria and Iraq (Euronews, 2015b; BBC News Türkçe, 2015b; Tsvetkova and Kelly, 2015). On the other hand, an expectancy about resetting the relationship between Türkiye and Russia emerged. That is because Lavrov's visitation to Southern Cyprus Turkish Republic on December 2 and stating after the meeting with SCTR Foreign Minister Yannis Kasulidis that he would not refuse the request of his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu and would be able to meet with him at OSCE Summit to be held in Belgrade on December 2, 2015 (Aljazeera Türk, 2015; Sputnik Türkiye, 2015b; Hürriyet Daily News, 2015). Lavrov making a statement after the meeting expressed that he did not hear something new from his Turkish counterpart and Türkiye was still maintaining its stance. Also, he stated what was expected from Türkiye was quite clear (Milliyet, 2015). A strong implication of an expected apology.

On December 3 during his Annual Address to the Nation, Putin announced that sanctions towards Türkiye would not only remain with trade and Türkiye would be regretful with the action in question. In addition, Putin reclaimed his accusations towards Türkiye on petrol trade and relationships with terrorist organization. However, lack of military threat was getting attention (BBC News Türkçe, 2015c; Euronews, 2015a; Guardian, 2015). Finally, the most important side of the strategy applied to Türkiye was to close Syrian air base of Russia for Türkiye. Türkiye had to cut its support on the international coalition made up for fighting terrorism with the leadership of the USA. In this context, closing the air base of Russia remained the thesis, regarding Türkiye as being the secure region isolated from ISIS, out of possibility (Yetkin, 2015; Ersen, 2017: 92; Bali, 2022: 99). Also, the fact that Türkiye would not be able to give air support for the operations to be carried out on land significantly restricted Syria strategy of Türkiye.

In this respect, another significant concern for Türkiye has been terrorism. The presence of terrorist organizations at the border of Türkiye has been regarded as a major problem in terms of both regional and internal security of Türkiye. For instance, due to the terrorist attack took place in Suruç, close to Syria border on July 2015 by ISIS, more than 30 people lost their lives. Shortly after this attack, PKK launched further attacks within the borders of Türkiye. Along with this, Democratic Union Party/People's Defence Units (PYD/YPG), located in Syria and extensions of PKK also increased the scale of the threat. In fact, Türkiye described these organizations' goal of extending to the east of Euphrates as red line. Russia maintained relationships with these organizations before the aircraft crash as well closer relations from November 24, 2015 and onwards. Accordingly, Russia

reinforced its formal visits with PYD/YPG and PYD/YPG was allowed to set up an Office in Moscow in February 2016 (Ersen, 2017: 89-90).

The strategy of Russia against Türkiye can be said to be a coercive process having economic, military and political aspects. Although the disagreement between the opponents continued until the letter Erdogan sent to Putin on June 27, 2016, what has been told up to this point is enough for the general pattern of the crisis. Yet, the attitude of Russia towards Türkiye lasted within the frame of what has been stated. However, it should be noted that Russia began to soften its attitude before the letter sent by Türkiye. For example, in the formal visit of Greece in the end of May 2016, Putin made significant explanations about Türkiye. Putin expressed that they wanted to heal the relations with Türkiye and demanded only apology and compensation of damage. Also, Putin, emphasizing the steps taken for reasonable improvement of Turkish-Russian relations before the crisis for ages, pointed that they would never wish to fight against Türkiye and Turkish-Russian national fellowship. Putin stated that they had not damaged the positive relations and emphasized that Türkiye needed to take action, noting that there were various channels for communication (Aljazeera Türk, 2016a). Perhaps these words could be regarded as a signal to convey the letter sent in 2016 by Turkish decision-makers on July 27, 2016. Additionally, it should also be noted that what Putin described there was negative impacts of the sanctions imposed in April 2016 against Türkiye on Russia and cost of living raised (Sabah, 2016). Considering the tension already experienced with NATO and the USA's sanction on Russia as well, not compelling Türkiye too much can be seen as a rational method.

Lastly, politics of Russia against Türkiye can be evaluated in terms of deterrence, compellence and balancing strategies. This evaluation will help comprehending how Russia decided to end the disagreement. Initially, the most important problem for Russia was the damage on its image and the risk of losing its deterrence. In this context, sending S-300s to the region and additional missiles to the present bases, declaration of air-to-air escorts to bombardment aircrafts and ongoing operations at the border of Türkiye, and closure of Syria air base for Türkiye can be evaluated as deterrent strategy of Russia towards Türkiye privately and generally other actors in the region. In addition, these actions can be said to be positive balancing in order to increase military fortification. At the same time, bill of law on so called Armenian genocide can be regarded as a deterrent act.

Apart from the deterrence strategy, it can be said that Russia is trying to make a negative balancing. In fact, high internal balancing ability of Türkiye due to its own military capacity and its high external balancing ability due to being a NATO member could have caused Russia to face unaffordable costs to bear. In addition, although they have different point of views, compelling Türkiye too much or leaving it in a high-level security dilemma could force Türkiye to establish closer ties with the US. In this context, the USA's offshore balancing capability could have increased and Russia's rise in the region could have been prevented.

Emphasizing that what is expected from Türkiye is an apology and there is no desire to fight Türkiye can be evaluated within this framework. However, Russia also tried to limit Türkiye's external balancing capabilities (NATO factor). For instance, claims that Türkiye cooperates with terrorist organizations such as ISIS, that it disrupts the fight against terrorism in the region, and that it is not a safe country can be considered as negative balancing behaviors aimed at preventing Türkiye from receiving international support.

On the other hand, it is seen that Russia used economic tools in its strategy of coercion. It is also seen that the aforementioned economic sanctions were the decisions taken through legal processes within the framework of the principle of irreversibility in coercion. Indeed, this is to raise the credibility of the coercion. After the use of limited (economic) force, statements that punishment will not be limited to economic sanctions are also included in the strategy of coercion. In other words, giving the perception that the costs would increase for Türkiye, an attempt was made to ensure that the compelled party (Türkiye) would take the action desired by the coercive party (Russia). Indeed, the coercion carried out through these economic sanctions had significant impacts. The trade volume between Türkiye and Russia decreased to approximately 25 billion dollars by the end of 2015 due to the economic problems experienced by Russia, including the factors brought about by the annexation of Crimea. The trade volume in 2014 was 31 billion. However, the trade volume between the two countries decreased to 8 billion dollars in the first six months of 2016 with the sanctions imposed after the aircraft crisis (Ersen, 2017: 92; Demir, 2015: 1). Consequently, it is thought that the sanctions would cause a loss of 9-10 billion dollars in the Turkish economy (NTV, 2016).

THE PERCEPTION AND STRATEGIC APPROACH OF TÜRKİYE

It is possible to say that Russia was the coercive party during the crisis emerged after the Russian aircraft crash. Türkiye was careful not to face the risk of escalating the crisis in the face of Russia's coercive strategy and thought that communication could be established and the problem could be resolved. While it is obvious that Russia's current support for the Syrian regime limits Türkiye's strategic opportunities, it is possible to think that further tensions will not be in Türkiye's favor. In this context, it can be said that Türkiye tried to gain time while giving controlled responses to Russia's acts (Bali, 2022: 121; Agha, 2021: 443; Ozel, 2016). Thus, it is understood that Turkish decision-makers expected the effect of compellence to decrease and tried to find a solution. There are some factors included in the calculations of Türkiye's strategy in response to Russia's strategy of coercion. In other words, the crisis could have been viewed from Türkiye's perspective as follows:

- 1) Russia's coercive strategy of economic sanctions and military activities and the balancing strategies accompanying them could significantly hinder Türkiye's fight against terrorist organizations threatening its domestic and regional security interests.
- 2) As a result of an escalation, a possible war with Russia could bring about costs that Türkiye cannot bear.
- 3) Doubts about how reliable the deterrence provided by the USA and NATO may negatively affect external balancing.
- 4) Türkiye's isolation in the region may deepen with Russia's anti-Türkiye actions.
- 5) Apologizing to Russia could cause Türkiye to lose its deterrent power in protecting its borders. Furthermore, complying with the demands of the coercive (Russia) (apologizing) could create the perception that the compelled actor (Türkiye) will lose credibility or be humiliated.

Within this context, it can be said that Türkiye's strategy was not to apologize, not to respond harshly to Russia but to seek ways of balancing, and to refute Russia's accusations.

In this regard, it was stated that first of all, the nationality of the aircraft was unknown, the airspace violation continued despite the warning and therefore the aircraft was shot down. In other words, it was emphasized that Russia was not deliberately targeted and that Türkiye's action was a limited act of self-defense (Guner, 2017: 52; BBC News Türkçe, 2015b). Actually, on November 26, the President of the Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, stated that they would not apologize to anyone for protecting their borders, but that if they had known it was a Russian aircraft, they could have acted differently and that they were open to dialogue. Moreover, Erdogan particularly rejected Russia's accusations about a connection between ISIS and Türkiye and stated that Russia had to prove these claims. Erdogan even made a sharp statement saying if this relationship is proven, he will resign, but if they cannot, Putin should resign (BBC News Türkçe, 2015b; Euronews, 2015b; Business Times, 2015).

Similarly, at the AK Party Group Meeting on November 25, the Prime Minister of the time, Ahmet Davutoğlu, underlined in his statements that the aircraft was shot down as a result of a border violation, that the nationality of the aircraft was unknown, and that Russia had already been warned many times about its air violations before this incident. The Prime Minister also emphasized that Russia was a friend of Türkiye, that they did not want to experience tension and that they gave great importance to communication. Furthermore, it was stated in the speech that the developments were announced to the UN Secretary General and the members of the Security Council in a letter and that the permanent members of the Security Council were informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Habertürk, 2015). Davutoglu also stated in his article in the Times that Türkiye shot down an unknown aircraft based on its sovereign rights and in accordance with

international law, and that no state was targeted. Finally, Davutoglu wrote that Russia should focus on a mutual fight against ISIS and that they would work to reduce tensions (BBC News Türkçe, 2015d).

Erdogan referred to a Russian citizen in the oil trade with ISIS in Russia's statements about its relationship with ISIS. On the other hand, after the OSCE Summit, Çavuşoğlu stated that neither side wanted tension, that they expected Russia to review its decisions and leave its baseless allegations, and that Türkiye did not respond with sanctions against Russia and waited patiently (Milliyet, 2015). In the ongoing process, in response to Russia's harsh speech, sanctions and demand for an apology, statements parallel to the above statements were made by both the President and the Prime Minister. Türkiye also drew attention to the need to reduce tensions and find a solution through healthy communication instead of escalating the crisis with baseless accusations (BBC News Türkçe, 2015b). On the other hand, as a result of Russia closing Syrian air base to Türkiye and increasing threats along the border, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) were put on the border line on the highest level of alert (CNN Türk; Bali, 2022: 99). After the Syrian Civil War, Türkiye faced a wave of migration and the threat to Türkiye's domestic and regional security from terrorist organizations in Syria. Indeed, the humanitarian crisis occurring after the Civil War deeply affected Türkiye, sharing the longest border with Syria (Sehitoglu, 2024: 104).

The Trench Operations launched against the PKK in the Southeast in August 2015, the terrorist attack by ISIS in Suruç and the wave of migrants brought the establishment of a safe zone in northern Syria to the agenda. However, Russia's coercive actions emerged as an obstacle to this strategy. Also, the fact that Russia increased relations with the PYD/YPG was another factor increasing the scale of the threat (Ersen, 2017: 89-90). Furthermore, economic sanctions, Türkiye's isolation in the region and having different security priorities with the USA made Türkiye more willing to find a solution. In other words, Türkiye's security priorities changed within the framework of the threats it perceives (Ozan, 2017). In this context, similar to Putin's statements towards the end of May 2016 that he was more moderate, a development in May initiated a process in which security perceptions on the Turkish front differed and more significant steps were taken for a solution. After Davutoglu left his position as Prime Minister in early May 2016, Binali Yildirim became Prime Minister on May 22. Yildirim expressed the new government's foreign and security perspective as "increasing friends, decreasing enemies" (Ozan, 2017: 43). These statements showed themselves in the solution of the crisis with Russia, affecting Türkiye's security concerns the most, in other words, the biggest obstacle to solving the security problems originating from Syria.

As stated above, after the formation of the Yildirim government, Putin stated that they wanted to improve relations with Türkiye in Greece, that they never considered war which they expected a step from Türkiye and that there were many

ways to communicate. It was also stated above that Russia was also negatively affected by its sanctions. This picture provided Türkiye with the motivation to take steps towards a solution with Russia and also provided the opportunity to take the steps taken in the direction it wanted. Attempts at reconciliation between the parties began in April (2016). Many actors, including Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, were involved in the process. Following intense diplomatic traffic, on June 24, 2016, İbrahim Kalın and former state minister Cavit Çağlar delivered the letter to Putin (via Ushakov) in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meetings. It is stated that the letter included the expression “sorry” instead of an apology. Before Kalın left, Ushakov called Kalın and said that Putin had welcomed the letter and that they would make a statement on June 27. After a draft was sent to Türkiye on June 27, Putin gathered his ministers and announced that normalization had begun on June 29 in front of the cameras (Yetkin, 2016). On June 30, Putin signed a decree canceling sanctions against Türkiye and the sanctions were gradually lifted (Aljazeera Türk, 2016b; Bali, 2022: 115; Abay, 2016).

As a result, there has been a crisis between Türkiye and Russia for about nine months. While Türkiye resisted the costs arising from Russia’s coercive strategy, it also tried to falsify its accusations and show its legitimacy. Although there were disagreements with NATO and the USA, Türkiye was emphasized as a NATO member and its external balancing ability against Russia was shown. In addition, it is possible to say that this behavior was Türkiye’s deterrence strategy in terms of showing its capacity against possible uses of force against it. Apart from these, actions and statements that would escalate the crisis were avoided by not implementing counter-sanctions and by searching for communication channels. Thus, it was not faced with costs that were hard to bear. On the other hand, the reason why Türkiye wanted to end the crisis with Russia was not only the possible and current costs of what happened with Russia. For example, although Türkiye referred to the NATO alliance, it had different priorities in Syria with the USA, the alliance’s biggest actor. During the Cold War, it was relatively easier to direct relations between Türkiye and the USA as the “common threat” was the same. Yet, *“With the new security environment emerging with the collapse of the USSR in the international system after the Cold War, new threats have also emerged”* (Sehitoglu, 2023: 234). In other words, both the new threats emerging after the Cold War (and the disappearance of the old threat) and the Syrian Civil War led Türkiye to focus on imminent threats and the USA to focus on an offshore balancing strategy.

These two different paths essentially posed a deep threat to Türkiye’s security, as the USA supported and worked with the PYD/YPG, an extension of the PKK. In addition, Russia’s closure of Syria’s air base to Türkiye has increased the scale of the threat and insecurity. Upon these two situations considered together, Türkiye’s following the USA (bandwagoning) could also bring heavy costs to Türkiye. On the other hand, Türkiye improving relations with Russia and pursuing an openly

anti-US strategy could also bring great costs. Türkiye preferred improving its relations with Russia and pursuing a balanced relationship with the USA as much as possible. Although it is outside the scope of this study, Türkiye-Russia relations developing after the crisis created crises in US-Türkiye relations. However, Türkiye has seen these crises as bearable in its priority list and has built its strategy on such a balance (Balci, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Considering that the behavior of states is determined by the distribution of power among the actors and their perception of threats, as a result of any change in these two or when they do not want changes to occur; states determine some strategies in order to ensure their security or maximize their interests in the new situation. These strategies include deterrence, compellence and balancing, the concepts discussed in this study. These strategies can be used together in any crisis process. These strategies, preferred by states assumed to be rational, emerge as a result of how states perceive the situation and evaluate all options within the framework of this perception and the information at hand. In other words, in the rational decision-making process where all options are evaluated, a cost-benefit calculation is made and a decision is reached on which of the mentioned strategies to use. The rational actor's ability to assess the dangers and opportunities that the crisis or incident poses or may pose is a must for moving to the strategy stage. Moreover, in this process, the actor takes into account not only their own preferences but also the likely preferences of the other party. This point expresses the relationship between the phenomena of rationality and strategy.

Deterrence, for which early work was done during the Cold War, refers to discouraging the opponent from taking an action. Deterrence is realized when the opposing actor perceives that they cannot bear the cost if the threat is realized. In other words, what is essential in deterrence is to prevent the other party from taking an action. Coercion, on the other hand, refers to the opponent terminating the action it has initiated or initiating an action that the coercer wants. In other words, in coercion, it is essential to make the opponent initiate an action. In both of these strategies, the credibility of the threat is important, and that credibility is directly proportional to the power of the actor.

When it comes to power and threat, the balancing strategy stands out. In other words, actors may want to balance power or threat and thus have autonomy and security in their behavior. The balancing strategies that states may prefer can be roughly listed as internal balancing, external balancing, negative balancing, positive balancing and offshore balancing. Rational states decide which of these they prefer based on cost-benefit calculations.

From the perspective of rationality and the aforementioned strategies, Türkiye and Russia's strategies against each other in the 2015 airplane crisis, which was intertwined with complex security problems, seem to make sense.

The aim of the strategies emerging at the end of the comprehensive cost-benefit analysis process is to maximize their interests as much as possible and to avoid too high costs to afford. The crisis between Türkiye and Russia lasting approximately nine months after the incident of the aircraft was a clear case of such strategies. Russia implemented coercive strategies against Türkiye through military, economic and political means. In addition, in order to increase the scale of coercion and to prevent Türkiye from doing what was not wanted and to force to do what was wanted; efforts were made to eliminate Türkiye's balancing capabilities against Russia.

Indeed, the coercive strategies directed at Türkiye brought significant costs. However, what was wanted from Türkiye was not exactly achieved. In other words, Türkiye bore the costs and responded to Russia's coercive policies targeting its balancing capabilities with its own strategies. The resistance Türkiye showed also imposed costs on Russia, and a perception arose that additional costs could be imposed if it went further. However, Türkiye's security perspective also changed. Türkiye did not want to eliminate imminent threats and position Russia as the enemy that could be the most important obstacle for the country in this context. For this reason, Türkiye continued to call for an end to the crisis while avoiding behaviors that would escalate the crisis. As a result, it was observed that both of the actors preferred to meet on relative benefit(s) rather than bearing the costs.

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