

Turkey and Russia in Central Asia after 2003: The Shift from a Strategy of Competition and Conflict to a Strategy of Cooperation and Partnership

2003 Sonrası Orta Asya'da Türkiye ve Rusya: Rekabet ve Çatışma Stratejisinden İşbirliği ve Ortaklık Stratejisine Kayış

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ÖZET

Soğuk Savaşın sona ermesinin akabinde Sovyetler Birliği'nin uluslararası sahneden çekilmesi, Kafkasya ve Orta Asya'da bağımsızlığını kazanmış yeni ülkelerin ortaya çıkması Türkiye ve Rusya'yı kendi yerel ve uluslararası güvenlik politikalarını yeniden kurgulamaya zorladı. Putin'in 2000 ve Erdoğan'ın 2002 yıllarında iktidara gelmeleriyle birlikte Türkiye ve Rusya aralarındaki problemleri çözmek için yerel bölgesel yaklaşımlarında proaktif bir tutum sergilemeyi tercih etti ve bu geçiş coğrafyasında oldukça karmaşık bir nitelik taşıyan ekonomik, siyasi ve kültürel ilişkiler seti üzerinden bir etkileşim içerisine girdi. Bu bağlamda bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin Orta Asya'da izlediği grand stratejinin ilkelerini deskriptif ve normatif bir bakış açısından analiz etmeyi ve aynı bölgede Rusya'nın benimsediği ana stratejileri tanımlamanın yanı sıra Türkiye'nin stratejileriyle mukayese etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Nitekim her ne kadar Orta Asya ve diğer coğrafyalarda Rusya ve Türkiye arasında çok net bazı ihtilaflar bulunsa da bu ihtilaflar bu iki güç arasında askeri bir çatışmaya dönüşmemiştir. Buna ilaveten, çalışmamızın başından sonuna iddia ettiğimiz bir tezimizi ispata çalışacağız: Türkiye ve Rusya'nın bölgenin gerçeklerini dikkate alan normatif bir bakış açısıyla kendi yaklaşımlarını armonize eden uygulanabilir ve gerçekçi yeni bir plan geliştirmeleri ihtiyacı ve mecburiyeti... Tam da bu nedenle bu çalışma bölgede her iki aktörün kültürel, ekonomik ve siyasi ilişkilerini karşılıklı güçlendirebilmeleri için gerekli yapısal ve kurumsal şartları inşa etmeleri gerektiği tezine dayanmaktadır.

ABSTRACT

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the emergence of newly independent states in the Caucasus and Central Asia, forced Turkey and Russia to restructure their regional and international security policies. Since the Erdogan took power in 2002 and Putin took power in 2000, Turkey and Russia have been interacting with this transitional geography, with a complex set of economic, political, and cultural relations, each trying to take a proactive stance in the regional political approach to solving the problems between them. This study discusses the principles of Turkey's grand strategy in the Central Asian region from a descriptive and normative point of view and then proceeds to define and compare it with Russia's main strategies in the same region. While there are some clear conflicts between Turkey and the Russians in Central Asia and beyond, there are no military conflicts between the two powers. In addition, we will discuss through the study the need for both Turkey and Russia to develop a new, practical, and realistic plan regarding the Central Asian region, in order to combine their normative viewpoint with the reality of the region. The study asserts that in order to strengthen cultural, economic, and political relations with the region, the necessary structural and institutional conditions must first be created.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

*Orta Asya,
Türkiye ve Rusya'nın
Güvenlik Politikaları,
Soğuk Savaş,
Güvenlik Stratejileri,
Jeopolitik Zorunluluk,*

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*Central Asia,
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Turkey and Russia,
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The Security Strategies,
Geopolitical Necessity,*

1. INTRODUCTION

The expected collapse of the Soviet Union in the late twentieth century left many geopolitical changes, so that one of its most important results was the emergence of new entities and states that were somewhat loaded with the heritage of the Soviet state seeking to adapt to the international system. Among these countries were the Central Asian republics: Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. And after the relative recovery of the political system in Russia after the advent of Vladimir Putin to power on December 31, 1999, Russia sought in this situation to restore its previous glories at the global level or even at the regional level similar to the Central Asian region, which it considered its area of influence, especially since it has the vocabulary of power that qualifies it to compete with the United States internationally and to confront the regional forces, especially Turkey, or at least to confront Its strategy in the regions of Central Asia, which Turkey considers its vital field.

And as a realistic result of the intertwining of historical, cultural, religious, political, geographical and linguistic ties and knowledge. Russia and Turkey, in the context of their international strategies aimed at regaining influence for the Russians, finding a foothold for the Turks, and imposing their economic and military model. These two powers have sought to have a prominent position in these republics for many reasons related to their strategic priorities in the Middle East in particular and Asia in general. For this, various tools were used, including direct intervention, taking advantage of the republics' need for external support in general, to get rid of the crises that these republics inherited for decades.

The importance of the study comes through its connection with the subject of the study (*space-time, the Central Asian region, and the new century*). Where the Central Asia region, as we mentioned earlier, is one of the important regions in the world today, and it is a region that remained for a period of time under the control of Tsarist Russia and then lived for nearly seventy-five years under the control of communist rule, and although it has an Islamic majority, it lived cut off from the Islamic world Throughout that period, with its return to the fold of the Islamic world with a Turkish push after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, people were expecting more freedom, so these countries witnessed a remarkable trend towards religiosity, as well as the establishment of many political parties with Islamic orientations, but some of these popular trends collided with the intransigence of the ruling regimes that She is still running the country in exceptional circumstances. Hence, we present the main problem of the study: To what extent can the debate between the syndrome of cooperation and competition in Central Asia be dismantled between Russia and Turkey, in light of the impact of economic and geopolitical factors in extending influence in the region ? In order to answer this problem, the following sub-questions must be answered first;

- What is the geographical and geopolitical importance of Central Asia for Turkey and Russia?
- What is the strategy of Turkey and Russia in this space?
- What are the points of contradiction and contrast to the Turkish-Russian interests in Central Asia?
- What are the Russian-Turkish cooperation and partnership magazines in Central Asia?

As a supposed answer to this problem, the following hypothesis was put forward: The economic data and geopolitical shifts that afflict Central Asia play a major role in creating a competitive environment between Russia and Turkey.

To analyze the problem posed, and to try to research the hypothesis developed by the study, we used the descriptive method in order to explore and review the most important strategies and measures taken since Presidents Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan assumed power in their countries, as well as to track the development of the foreign policy of the two countries towards this region of the world. We will also use a case study approach to answer the problem through data collection and analysis.

2. THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF CENTRAL ASIA FOR TURKEY AND RUSSIA

Central Asia is a closed geographic region “*not in the full sense defined by international relations for the concept of the region*” (Duarte, 2014) located in the heart of the Asian continent, which has turned into a region of international attraction with major powers such as Russia, China and the United States of America, or some emerging regional powers such as Turkey and Iran (Selim, Mohamed El-Sayed, 2020).

There is no agreement in the geopolitical literature on the definition of Central Asia, except for the agreement that it is located in the heart of the Asian continent. Geoffrey Wheeler, one of the largest specialists in Central Asian affairs, defines a narrow geographical definition, as he limits it to some of the newly independent republics of the Soviet Union in the heart of Asia, namely: Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, and excludes the Republic of Kazakhstan (Wheeler, 1964). While the Encyclopedia Britannica defines Central Asia more broadly to include the region that extends east of the line extending southeast of the Ural Sea and the Caspian Sea to northwest China and Mongolia, and extends longitudinally from southern Siberia in the north to northern Iran and Afghanistan in the south (Britannica, 1823). This geographical area includes Mongolia, the southern part of Siberia, the northern parts of Afghanistan and Iran, in addition to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan (Britannica, 1823).

Figure 1. Central Asia Map



So, it is clear that Wheeler adopted a geographic-religious criterion to define the region, and the exception of Kazakhstan may be due to the large number of Russians living in Kazakhstan, which does not make the Kazakhs a majority in it, while the Encyclopedia Britannica relied on the geographical criterion. Central Asia is one of the strategic regions that lie within the geopolitical and strategic scope of the Eurasia region, and its geographical and natural extension has given it geopolitical importance as a link between Europe and Asia and a bridge linking the north to the south and the east to the west.

Finally, the Central Asian region is of great geostrategic importance, according to MacNaider (*the author of the geographical axis theory of history*), who said that whoever controls Central Asia controls the world (Al-Saad, 2020). Any region usually derives its status from its geographical location, the size of its resources, the importance of these resources in the international economy, the advantages inherent in them, the challenges and risks they pose, as well as some cultural and civilizational considerations. These are all found in Central Asian countries. The status of Central Asia is not a modern imposed by the emerging conditions in the period after the end of the Cold War. Since the third century BC, this region gained its strategic importance through what was known as the Silk Road extending from China to the Mediterranean, which today has turned into an important corridor for oil and gas pipelines (Arafat, 2007).

- **For Russia:** If we look at the Russian Federation and its geopolitical field towards this region, we find that it is related to its southern geopolitical field, whose center is the republics of Central Asia. The connection is made through Kazakhstan, which has a long border with it and shores in the Caspian Sea with Turkmenistan (Abbasi, 2007). The geostrategic and geopolitical field of the Central Asian countries established for Russia a geopolitical depth that reached the extent of the third century after this area was called the Silk Road from China in the east to the Mediterranean in the west. The specialists in Russian affairs agree on several considerations that gave importance to Central Asia for Russia (Javaid, 2021) which are as follows;
 - Central Asia is the heart of Asia, the center of the world, and an incubator for economic and commercial advantages.
 - It has a border contact with all relevant nations and nationalities in the Asian and Mediterranean continent, China, Turkey, and overlooks the Indian subcontinent, and it forms a buffer zone between the various economic and military powers (Javaid, 2021).
 - The expansion of its area enabled it to acquire different resources and multiple national differences, and Russia is aware of the size of the loss that could result in losing this.
 - Central Asia constitutes a social, political and cultural dilemma between Russia, Turkey and a bridge between Islam and Christianity, and Russia wants to be the link between those republics towards the global economy (transfer of gas and oil) (Al-Saad, 2020).
- **For Turkey:** Although Turkey does not have direct geographical links with Central Asia, it is the “*motherland*” of the peoples of those countries, due to its Turkish heritage, to the extent that Turkey does not call that region the term Central Asia, but rather calls it Turkestan to confirm its cultural identity (Hamzaoglu, 2022). There are many factors that make Central Asia of great importance to Turkey. First of all, the Central Asian countries constitute a geographical barrier between Russia and China, as we mentioned earlier, and occupy an area between China, Russia and Iran, all of which are competing countries to varying degrees for Turkey. Also, all Central Asian countries have access to the Caspian Sea, which is very rich in oil and gas, and represents the second largest oil reserves in the world (Al-Tayee, 2015). The large area of Central Asia, which amounts to nearly 4 million square kilometers, is larger than all the European countries combined. Despite the multiplicity of languages and ethnic groups in that region, the Turkish groups are strong and provide Turkey with natural access and penetration. Turkish soft power succeeded in exploiting this through a number of popular Turkish language TV series, university partnerships, and Islamic missionary activities. Thus, these strategies contributed to the increase in Turkey's popularity, at the level of the elites and masses in Central Asia. Given the geostrategic importance of Central Asia, Turkey's foreign policy efforts in this region have paid off (Sharifzada, 2019).

3. THE STRATEGY OF TURKEY AND RUSSIA IN THIS SPACE

3.1. Turkish Strategy Implementation Mechanisms

The Geopolitical developments have given Ankara an opportunity to reorient its policy towards the region. This new policy was approved and supported by the United States, which considers Turkey an important element in confronting what it calls the Iranian threat in the region. After the vacuum created by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Turkish penetration into Central Asia began based on the image of Turkey in the Muslim republics of Central Asia (*that is, the Turkish model of laic, democratic politically, advanced, economically developed and culturally open state*), which is what the regimes of the Islamic republics seek to emulate and reproduce since its independence. The cultural component has formed the cornerstone of the Turkish strategy in its relations with the group of emerging countries in Central Asia. The presence of a Turkish world (*that is, using the Turkish language*) extending from the Balkans to the western borders of China, with a population of more than 120 million people, gives Turkey the possibility to establish economic, cultural, and political ties quickly and facilitates the process of Turkish penetration without many obstacles. However, the developments that took place in the region with the presence of many factors constituted obstacles to of the Turkish Big Brother policy (Çiçek, 2019).

Among the most prominent of these factors are the deteriorating economic conditions in the region, in addition to the weakening of the cultural bond as a result of the policies of the Tsarist and Soviet eras that affected the

cultural identity of the peoples of the region (Eren, 2017). This forced Turkey to adopt a new, more realistic policy towards the region and towards the capabilities of the Turkish state itself. This realism was manifested in focusing on economic and energy considerations and became the main focus of Turkish policy towards the region - the Caspian Sea and Central Asia - which in turn received American support for the construction of pipelines to transport oil and gas from Central Asia to the Turkish port of Ceyhan via the “*Baku-Ceyhan 1,700 km long Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline*” line in order to avoid for its passage through Russian or Iranian territory in what is known as the “pipe war” (Wheele, 2013). In terms of economic cooperation, Turkey established the Turkish Agency for Technical and Economic Cooperation in 1992, which was entrusted with contributing to economic and industrial activities in Central Asia by providing financial aid and developing the banking and financial services sector (Wheele, 2013).

The Turkish private sector also played a prominent role in the economic, industrial and commercial construction in the independent republics. In terms of cultural and practical cooperation, Turkey has built scientific bodies from universities and high schools and provided thousands of university scholarships to students from Central Asian countries. Nevertheless, the Turkish strategy in Central Asia faces many obstacles, the most important of which are: intense economic competition from the most advanced economic powers, such as the European Union countries, China, Russia and the United States of America, the weakness of the Turkish economy and the lack of Turkish financial capabilities in the face of economic difficulties in the Central Asian countries, and conflict Turkish interests are with regional players in the region, especially Russia (Sharifzada, 2019).

In terms of security strategy, according to the analyzes, Turkey today shares "*particular concerns about destabilizing factors such as extremist movements, drug and weapons smuggling, and terrorist activities within the Central Asian republics... As such, the government provides financial assistance and military training to these countries along with their development*". Capacity assistance, while providing Turkish equipment and training to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to help prepare their forces for counterinsurgency. Working closely with the two countries' special forces in training since 1999, Turkey has hosted the NATO Partnerships for Peace Training Center in Ankara, where military personnel from different Central Asian countries have attended (Alagoz, 2021). In 2012, Turkey agreed to provide military assistance to Kyrgyzstan to fight terrorism, drug smuggling, illegal immigration and strengthen the defense and security sectors. In 2013, Turkey also proposed that it would help Kyrgyzstan convert the NATO military base in Manas into a commercial airport. The Turkish Aid budget has funded police training programs in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and judges and prosecutors have been trained in Kazakhstan (Wheele, 2013).

3.2. Russian Strategy in Central Asia

The collapse of the former Soviet Union led to a decline in Moscow's influence in the global strategic balance equation, which had negative repercussions on Moscow's international and regional relations, and led to the decline of Russian influence in many areas of the Soviet legacy. Central Asia is considered one of the most important strategic areas in which Russian influence began to decline immediately after declaring its independence from the Soviet Union, as it was the first to declare its independence only three days after the fall of the Soviet Union. It is noted that the Russian foreign policy towards this region is still hostage to the historical backgrounds related to the geopolitical location of the region and the requirements of Russian national security. Historically, the Central Asian region is considered a Russian sphere of influence, which political literature is accustomed to describing as Russia's back garden and subject to what these literature calls itself "*the Russian Monroe Doctrine for dealing with geopolitical excretions*" (Al-Saad, 2020).

This policy focused on confronting those challenges coming from all directions (China, Turkey, and Islamic movements) by reviving the Russian role in the region at all levels through a strategy with two perspectives, the first of which is “*European-Atlantic*” and the second is “*New Eurasian*” (Oliphant, 2013). According to the first perspective, Russia focused on integrating with Western civilization and encouraging Central Asia to move in the same direction, without actively interfering to protect its interests in Central Asia. But since 1999 and President Vladimir Putin took office, Russia began to shift towards a Eurasian vision that focuses on intervention to protect its interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus (Oliphant, 2013). After the September events, Russia felt that its national security was under serious threat due to political instability and the growth of separatist and Islamist movements in Central Asia. These challenges prompted Russia to maintain military bases in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan in the international competition for the militarization of Central Asia (Abenstein, s.d.).

In terms of issues related to economic cooperation and trade exchange, Russia is working to increase economic cooperation in the fields of energy, transport and water with Central Asian countries, especially within the framework of regional integration and cooperation initiatives in the Shanghai Economic Cooperation Organization (Oliphant, 2013). Where Russia plays a prominent role in directing its foreign activity, the Russian Federation has become the only republic among the republics that has achieved economic progress in a short period of time, despite economic slippage, and for this reason it has taken this juncture in reorienting its foreign policies in the region, on a pragmatic basis, and has been able to strengthen its relations. This process became a matter of temptation to the countries of the region and enabled the Russian leadership to formulate its policies (Al-Naeli, 2017).

Russia is no longer the first trading partner of the five Central Asian countries as a whole, having been replaced by China in this role. However, Russia's economic participation in Central Asia is more plural and includes sectors such as mining, exploration and construction, the military-industrial complex, communications, transportation, and agriculture. The total trade volume in 2011 amounted to 27.3 billion dollars. The main exports of Russia to Central Asian countries are primarily manufactured goods: foodstuffs, machinery, textiles, and transport equipment (Petrov, 2013).

In order to pursue its economic interests, Moscow has launched a number of initiatives within the framework of Partnership and Cooperation so far: the Customs Union, the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), the Eurasian Development Bank, the Anti-Crisis Fund, the CIS Free Trade Area Agreement, Moscow has a number of instruments (multilateral and bilateral) in the economic sphere, and has a tendency to underestimate the economic scope or possibilities available to it (Petrov, 2013).

A significant part of Russian aid as development assistance is directed to the low-income countries of Central Asia, and this is done at the bilateral level, and within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Europe and Central Asia. This fact reflects Russia's modest participation in international development assistance programmes. The total amount of bilateral humanitarian aid provided by Russia, for example, to Kyrgyzstan after violent clashes in April and June 2010 was estimated at \$25 million. That compares with \$1.1 billion to Kyrgyzstan from international financial organizations earmarked within 30 months to revive the economy, as well as rebuild and rehabilitate destroyed buildings in the south of the country (Omelicheva, 2018).

As for the security aspect, Central Asia is a field for an arms market, and Russia's contribution to restructuring its armies and improving its military capabilities was an attractive factor in restoring balance in the region at the regional and international levels (El Imara, 2005).

The issue of economic cooperation between Russia and the countries of Central Asia as a whole is closely related to security issues, primarily countering drug trafficking from Central Asia to Russia, the amount of which is estimated (about 20 billion dollars or more (Oliphant, 2013). In Russia, regardless of the humanitarian impact, it constitutes an economic dimension, as elsewhere, and a major priority concern. Drug trafficking is financially underpinned by the illegal economic sector, corruption, and organized crime in both Russia and Central Asian countries. According to the United Nations, the Russian drug market accounts for 20% of the world's business, with annual revenues from all drug sales amounting to nearly \$13 billion. Thus, Russia has the second largest volume of drug turnover after Europe, with figures indicated as 26% and \$20 billion, respectively, according to the UN report (El Imara, 2005).

Russia is the most powerful security actor in the region. On one hand, it has the means to respond to a crisis and a presumed responsibility to engage. But on the other hand, it also has a clear reluctance to intervene and will only do so if Russian territory or major interests are at stake. This was seen during and after the 2010 Osh massacres in Kyrgyzstan (Oliphant, 2013), to which Russia failed to respond, as it did not consider the violence a direct threat to its interests. As multilateral arrangements (*Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization*) play their role in Moscow's eyes, there is a strong feeling, and an important development in Russia's policy towards Central Asia, that bilateralism increasingly dominates in the security field. With the main focus on bilateral relations with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, in the field of security and economic cooperation.

And through our study of the Russian strategy, an important question comes to mind: Is Russia trying to dominate Central Asia through this policy? Alvin Rubenstein believes that Russia is primarily concerned with protecting its interests, foremost of which is the fate of the Russians in those countries and the stability of security in that region, and that Russia is weak to the extent that it does not threaten the countries of Central Asia, and that the most that we can witness is the emergence of the "*Russian Monroe Doctrine*" in Asia Central,

whose basis is that Russia maintains security in Central Asia and protects it from the domination of neighboring countries. While Arthur Sagadev believes that Russia is trying to reformulate the politics of tsarist and communism hegemony in a new modern Russian form, and that Russia has not abandoned "*the ideology of the great power and the policies of the Russian mother*" (Al-Saad, 2020).

4. COMPETITION AND CONFLICT OF RUSSIAN INTERESTS WITH TURKISH INTERESTS

The Central Asian region constitutes one of the regions that have great importance in the calculations of the strategic interests of the regional powers adjacent to the region and the international powers. This strategic importance of the Central Asian region stems from being a strategic foothold for many regional and international powers. (Turkey, Iran, Russia) and the internationals (USA, China, the European Union), the competition has become taking multiple patterns from the positive pattern that supports international relations and the consolidation of influence to the negative pattern trying to limit the influence of all conflicting parties or the exclusion of the parties (Arafat, 2007).

With regard to Turkish aspirations for regional influence in Central Asia, based on the feeling of similar linguistic and ethnic identity with the Turkish peoples in the region. However, the Turkish political and military power limits its movements in obtaining the field for political influence despite the investment of its economic power, and thus the issue is not easy to implement (Hamzaoglu, 2022).

As for the Russian Federation, it remains the central and influential factor in this region (the Caucasus and Central Asia), which sets the standards for local transformations in the region. We can see That the Russian leadership, especially the nationalists, who considered the revival of Russia's influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus as a sovereign national matter and a vital field for it, and on the other hand working to limit the movement of major actors such as the United States of America, the European Union and regional actors such as Turkey, Russia prefers to play the soft power card In this region politically and economically while maintaining Russian citizenship there (Hussein, 2012).

In addition to the old historical ties that link the Russian Federation and Turkey to the Central Asian republics, which extend to the era of the Tsars and the Ottomans, there are some vital factors that constitute a great contradiction in the policies, including (Hussein, 2012);

- The geopolitical dimension reflected on the national security and the higher interests of the country in Russia and Turkey.
- The economic factor of energy sources (oil and gas) and pipelines.
- The repercussions of the events of September 11, 2001 and the war on terror.
- The foreign presence (the United States) and the regional expansion of Israel and Iran.

Brzezinski summarizes Russia's situation in the Central Asian region by saying, "*Russia is much weaker than re-imposing its imperialist control in Central Asian , but much stronger than the possibility of getting it out of it for geographical, historical, cultural, ethnic and strategic reasons, and it will use all the available means to try to protect its interests in the region*" (Baev, 2010).

After the establishment of the Islamic republics in Central Asia, Turkey worked to establish national, religious, historical and cultural ties with these countries, which made these republics form with Turkey what can be called the Turkish world, which constituted a geo-economic, geo-cultural and geopolitical magnet for Turkey, given the resources that these republics enjoy Huge naturalness Turkey sought to frame its relations with these newly independent countries by planning to establish an economic organization with a national dimension, so it proposed the establishment of the Turkish World Council or the League of Turkish States (Baki, 2016).

Turkey aims to adopt a greater leadership role in Eurasia and make itself a bridge linking Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. That is why Turkey established a doctrine based on nationalism as part of a grand vision of the neo-Ottoman project in Eurasia in order to gain influence in this area inhabited by people who belonged to The Ottoman Empire gave its economic orientation what would prepare it to find a solid economic ground that would allow it to engage in energy transfer projects to the West (Baev, 2010).

The crisis that occurred between Turkey and Russia in 2015 showed the reason for the Turkish orientation towards the region, which is to benefit from the energy resource and perhaps to compensate for the Turkish

suffering from its dependence on Russia in this field. What can be observed from the Turkish interaction with Central Asia and the can be summarized in (Davutoglu, 2014);

- The emotional and nationalistic ideological engagement taken from the imperial obsession and its distance from realism supported by pragmatism, but turkey accepted the presence of competing regional and international powers with interests and influence such as Russia, Iran, and the growing American European ambition there.
- Turkey, after a few years of interest and enthusiasm towards the region, found its outcome weak, according to Bulent Aras, who goes on to say that despite the strategic and security importance of the Caucasus and Central Asia, it remains far from Turkey, and this proposition was supported by Professor Ahmed Davutoglu in his book Strategic Depth. He considered that Turkey was not sufficiently prepared to deal with this region.

When analyzing the Turkish political orientation towards the Central Asian region, we see it linked to two main goals (Aref, 1992);

- Creating an economic grouping capable of containing all these republics and recovering some of what they lost in the Middle East, and creating an effective economic ground in which to emerge as an influential economic force in the region.
- Finally, Turkey's attempt to impose a liberal, secular model accepted in the West and a barrier for Iran in generalizing the principle of exporting the revolution, especially since Turkish secularism is more acceptable to most Central Asian Muslims and is close to the Western European model.

5. TURKISH-RUSSIAN COOPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA AND FIELDS OF INTERACTION

The Central Asian region is of value to both Russia and Turkey. Their cooperation has many opportunities due to a number of objective factors;

- The advantageous geographical location of Turkey, which controls the Black Sea strait and plays the role of a bridge between Europe and Asia, opens new opportunities for Russia and the Central Asian countries to achieve their own economic and political goals.
- Russia and Turkey will help in strengthening their projects for regional cooperation, creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual interest for all participants in the integration process, in reducing tensions in the region (Dina, 2015).
- Turkey and Russia, as two major Eurasian countries with a large number of Muslims, can play the role of mediators in the relationship between the countries of Central Asia, the West and the Islamic world.
- The multi-dimensional policy pursued by all Central Asian countries can be used by Russia and Turkey to enhance in-depth bilateral cooperation with the countries of the region (Dina, 2015).
- Finally, Turkey and Russia are viewed favorably in Central Asia due to their somewhat neutral and somewhat restrictive positions in contrast to the “*guided*” approach of the West – with regard to internal political developments in the region, elections, human rights, democratic reforms, “*color revolutions*” etc. (Dina, 2015).

There are a number of areas that open opportunities for Russian-Turkish interaction;

- The cooperation between the two countries can occur within the framework of the emerging Eurasian integration (*the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union*) due to the relevant efforts of the economic ministries and government agencies of the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, interested in strengthening trade and economic relations with Turkey (energy, trade, and tourism) (Al-Tayee, 2015).
- There is a possibility of energy projects with the participation of Russia and the exporting Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), in addition to Turkey as the largest energy transit country in Eurasia.
- There is scope for cooperation between the military and diplomatic agencies of Russia and Turkey in the field of regional security. Since the main short-term problem is the ability to counter potential threats from Afghanistan after the United States and the International Security Assistance Force complete their

mission there in 2014, the best way to address this problem would be within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which includes, Russia and Asian countries Central, with Turkey, and Afghanistan as well (Abenstein, s.d.).

- Combating crime, drug trafficking, and illegal movement of people, goods, weapons, etc., provides certain opportunities for cooperation between Turkey and Russia in Central Asia. These interactions can be conducted by Russian law enforcement agencies (*Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, Federal Drug Control Service, Federal Migration Service*) and relevant government agencies of Turkey.

Turkey and Russia can expand bilateral cooperation in Central Asia, if we can protect the above-mentioned areas of mutual interest, against various political differences and pressures from the United States and some European countries, which are jealous of the formation of such partnerships. Given the nature of the new challenges posed by the unexpected situation in Afghanistan after 2014, Russia can continue to develop cooperation with Turkey in the region, despite the existing differences with it on a number of international issues, which is why there is no conflict of interest between Turkey And Russia in the region, the question at hand may only be some division of spheres of influence (Abenstein, s.d.);

- **Objectives:** In addition, both countries pursue their own goals in the region, which often differ in cultural and civilizational concepts as well as priorities, Russia seeks to use soft power tools to expand the influence of the Russian language and culture in Central Asia, creating an atmosphere of political alliance and partnership based on a common history. Turkey is promoting the idea of a "*common Turkish homeland*", common to Turkey and the language of Central Asian countries (Turkish), and is actively promoting the transition from the Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin alphabet in Central Asia to become the new cultural and political center of gravity and even the engine of the "*Turkish joint*" integration project, instead of the Russian one, so talking about a full partnership between the two countries in the Central Asian region is somewhat premature. As for Central Asia, we can talk about Russian-Turkish competition, especially in the fields of energy, culture, and economic integration (Dina, 2015).
- **Basis of Russian-Turkish Cooperation:** The basis of Russian-Turkish cooperation with Central Asian countries is the active rejection of radical groups. Both Russia and Turkey are interested in maintaining the secular nature of the political systems in Central Asian countries, which can contribute to eliminating potential instability in neighboring Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Russia is one of the few world powers that continue to enhance the security of the Central Asian region, ensuring the safety of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and other structures, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Which Turkey was granted the status of dialogue partner on April 26, 2013 it is the most promising form of Russian-Turkish cooperation in maintaining security in the region. Although the positions of Turkey and major SCO member states such as Russia and China have deviated from each other, a regional organization of the SCO caliber is gaining special significance for Turkey amid these new challenges. The primary activity of the SCO in combating the "*three evil forces*", namely terrorism, separatism, and extremism, could lay the foundation for cooperation between Russia and Turkey in Central Asia (Dina, 2015).

6. CONCLUSION

Because of its geographic location, Central Asia retained its stagnant position throughout the twentieth century, although the political character of the region has changed somewhat. The adage of globalization and technology is forcing the Central Asian Republic and its neighbors to change their foreign policy perception. Although these features apply to the majority of those developing countries that have become more important in international relations, there is one factor that makes Central Asia stand out, which is the geopolitical pluralism that exists on its borders, and the world in the twenty-first century is witnessing the beginning of a multipolar world, and with it, the rise of called the revisionist powers (Russia, China, Turkey, and India), along with Pakistan and Iran, although none of them can presently seriously threaten the global supremacy of the United States, the regional rivalry between them will only become more intense as more relative strength. Finally, our results are;

- Russia and Turkey benefited from geopolitical theories in formulating their strategies for competition and conflict within the most important region in the Eurasian sphere.

- Turkish dealings with Russia, even if common interests and benefits converge, will always be surrounded by fear of compromising national sovereignty and falling under the influence of its expansionist and monopolistic ambitions.
- There is no surprise in the Russian and Turkish interest in this region, because looking at the goals of Moscow and Ankara and their geopolitical interests, it is unsurprising and our vision towards this relationship, whose levels of proximity and specificity vary from one republic to another, one describes it as "*close and warm*", and the second as "*complicated and cold*", Each one has its own motives based on political and economic concerns at the same time.

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