

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

LEADER-TO-LEADER DIPLOMACY IN PEACEMAKING: THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

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Abstract

Leaders are central to the individual-level decision-making process in international relations, with their personality, beliefs, and political understanding significantly shaping outcomes. In the context of peacemaking, a complex process involving multiple actors and stages leaders play a determinative role in fostering dialogue and negotiation. Traditional approaches to peacemaking often focus on institutional or structural factors, but the emerging concept of leader-to-leader diplomacy offers a new lens for understanding how leaders influence bilateral and multilateral relations. This framework emphasizes four dimensions: entrepreneurship, intense interaction, flexible thinking, and interpersonal friendship. This article explores the role of leader-to-leader diplomacy in peacemaking efforts during the Russian-Ukrainian War, highlighting its significance in the broader context of international conflict resolution. Key initiatives, such as the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, the Dolmabahçe Talks, and the Black Sea Grain Initiative, illustrate how leader-to-leader diplomacy facilitated critical breakthroughs. The Antalya Diplomacy Forum marked the beginning of large-scale negotiations, while the Dolmabahçe Talks facilitated by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President Volodymyr Zelensky, and President Vladimir Putin represented the first and only major peace talks during the conflict. These efforts underscore the importance of entrepreneurial leadership and flexible thinking in advancing peacemaking processes. Additionally, the multilateral dimension of peacemaking, exemplified by deep interactions between regional leaders through visits and phone calls, further demonstrates the practical application of leader-to-leader diplomacy. The study argues that leader-to-leader diplomacy was instrumental in the Russian-Ukrainian War, offering a robust framework for analyzing peacemaking processes in other international conflicts. This approach can enrich both theoretical and practical understanding of the role of leaders in the peacemaking process in international relations.

Keywords: *Leader-to-Leader Diplomacy, Russian-Ukrainian War, Attempts at Peace, Grain Deal, Peacemaking.*

JEL Codes: *F5, F51, F53.*

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BARIŞ YAPIM SÜREÇLERİNDE LİDER DİPLOMASİSİ: RUSYA-UKRAYNA SAVAŞI²

Öz

Liderler, uluslararası ilişkilerde bireysel düzeydeki karar alma sürecinin merkezinde yer almaktadır; kişilikleri, inançları ve siyasi anlayışları, özellikle de barış inşa süreçlerinde sonuçları önemli ölçüde şekillendirmektedir. Barış inşaaı, birden fazla aktörü ve aşamayı içeren karmaşık bir süreç olarak geleneksel yaklaşımlarda genellikle kurumsal veya yapısal faktörlere odaklanmaktadır. Ancak, lider diplomasisi kavramı, liderlerin ikili ve çok taraflı ilişkileri nasıl etkilediğini anlamak için yeni bir perspektif sunmaktadır. Açıkalın'ın lider diplomasisi kavramı aynı zamanda dört boyutlu bir analiz çerçevesi ortaya koymaktadır; girişimcilik, yoğun etkileşim, esnek düşünce ve liderler arası dostluk. Bu makale, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı sırasındaki barış inşa çabalarında lider diplomasinin rolünü incelemekte ve bu kavramın uluslararası çatışma çözümündeki geniş kapsamlı önemini vurgulamaktadır. Antalya Diplomasi Forumu, Dolmabahçe Görüşmeleri ve Karadeniz Tahıl Girişimi gibi kilit girişimler, lider diplomasinin sürecin oluşmasındaki kolaylaştırıcı rolünü ele almaktadır. Antalya Diplomasi Forumu, geniş kapsamlı müzakerelerin başlangıcını işaret ederken, Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Cumhurbaşkanı Zelenskiy ve Cumhurbaşkanı Putin'in diplomatik çabalarıyla gerçekleşen Dolmabahçe Görüşmeleri, çatışma sırasındaki ilk ve tek geniş kapsamlı barış görüşmesidir. Bu çabalar, barış inşa süreçlerini ilerletmede girişimci liderlik ve esnek düşüncenin önemini ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, liderlerin birbirleriyle ikili ziyaretler ve telefon görüşmeleri aracılığıyla gerçekleştirdiği derin etkileşimler, lider diplomasinin somut örneğidir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, lider diplomasinin Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı'nın barış yapım süreçlerinde büyük bir etkiye sahip olduğunu ve diğer uluslararası çatışmalardaki barış inşa süreçlerini analiz etmek için alternatif bir çerçeve olarak kullanılabileceğini ortaya koyarak, barış inşa süreçlerinde liderlerin rolü bağlamında hem teorik hem de uygulama alanını zenginleştirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Lider Diplomasisi, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı, Barış Yapım, Tahıl Koridoru Antlaşması, Anlaşma.

JEL Kodları: F5, F51, F53.

“Bu çalışma Araştırma ve Yayın Etiğine uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.”

² Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet, makalenin sonunda yer almaktadır.

1. INTRODUCTION

International relations as a field has a broad focus on leaders in the decision-making process. When it comes to the role of leaders, their effects in shaping the outcomes of conflicts and peace processes have long been a subject of scholarly interest. Leaders, as the primary decision-makers at the individual level, bring their unique personalities, beliefs, and political understanding to the table, often influencing the trajectory of bilateral and multilateral relations (Hermann, 2005; Kaarbo, 2015). While traditional approaches to peacemaking predominantly focus on structural and institutional factors (Galtung, 1996; Wallensteen, 2015), the role of leaders is partially analyzed.

The evolving nature of the international system—characterized by complexity including shifting alliances, multipolar dynamics, and the increasing influence of personal relationships—calls for a more concrete understanding of how leaders interact with one another to shape peace processes. Their ability to navigate complex political landscapes, build trust, and foster dialogue is critical to the success of peacemaking efforts (Kelman, 1996; Saunders, 1999). Research showed that leaders can act as mediators, entrepreneurs, or even spoil peace processes, depending on their motivations, perceptions, and interpersonal skills which are partially ignored in the literature (Bercovitch & Schneider, 2000; Stedman, 1997). This gap in the literature brought the concept of leader-to-leader diplomacy to the agenda, which shifts the focus from individual leadership traits to the interpersonal and relational dimensions of leadership in conflict resolution (Horowitz et al., 2015; Post, 2014).

Leader-to-leader diplomacy represents a new framework by emphasizing the direct, personal interactions between leaders as a driving force in peacemaking. Unlike the existing peacemaking literature, which often relies on formal institutions and intermediaries, this approach highlights the role of leaders along with leadership style and personality including face-to-face interaction and interpersonal friendships in overcoming diplomatic challenges in peacemaking (Byman & Pollack, 2001; Zartman & Touval, 2007; Açıkalın, 2021). This approach is particularly relevant in contemporary conflicts, where traditional diplomatic channels often fall short in addressing the nuanced dynamics of war and peace (Kissinger, 1994; Zartman, 2000). The Russian-Ukrainian War stands out as a uniquely complex and multifaceted case. Unlike many other conflicts, this war is not only a regional dispute but also a global crisis with far-reaching implications for security, energy markets, and geopolitical alliances. The involvement of major global powers, the intensity of information warfare, and the deeply entrenched historical and cultural tensions between the parties make this conflict particularly resistant to traditional peacemaking approaches. In this context leader-to-leader diplomacy can be employed as a critical tool for advancing peace efforts. Several high-profile diplomatic initiatives driven by the personal engagement of leaders have been undertaken in relation to the Russian-Ukrainian War, underscoring the importance of direct, leader-to-leader interactions.

In this respect, this article aims to explore the role of leader-to-leader diplomacy in peacemaking efforts during the Russian-Ukrainian War using the framework

developed by Açıkalın based on four dimensions, which are entrepreneurship, intense interaction, flexible thinking, and interpersonal friendship. The paper is structured as follows: first, it touches upon the existing literature about the role of leaders in peacemaking processes. Second, it provides a theoretical overview of leader-to-leader diplomacy and its relevance to peacemaking. Third, it examines the application of this framework to the Russian-Ukrainian War, focusing on key diplomatic initiatives.

1.1. The Role of Leaders in Peacemaking

The United Nations (UN) defines peacemaking as "action to bring hostile parties to agreement by peaceful means" (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Article 33 of the United Nations Charter specifies the following options for resolving disputes between states: negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial resolution, and recourse to regional organizations or arrangements (UN Charter, 1945). When conflict parties believe that their concerns are being addressed and that legitimate authorities are treating them equally and fairly, rather than forcing the parties to comply, the peace that results is more likely to be durable and long-lasting (Müller, 2013).

Along with the UN definition, the peacemaking process includes numerous actors from bottom to top as well as external ones (Richmond, 2001). Basically, peacemaking begins with a willingness to discuss the conflict and depends on creative issue-solving skills such as honest communication, effective listening, step-by-step problem resolution, and collaborative decision-making (Wertheim, 2002; Ker-Lindsay, 2010). The question of which actor will have a leading role in the peacemaking process doesn't have an easy answer. The influence of actors can be varied and changed depending on the conditions and dynamics of conflict. Negotiations led by state officials have the potential to signify a definite commitment to dispute resolution to the opposing parties, thereby enhancing the likelihood of a successful outcome. In this respect, actors who play the role of peacemakers serve as mediators, assisting competing parties in reaching a peaceful resolution of their issues.

On the other hand, political leaders can be considered the most influential actors who are far more prepared to make difficult negotiation decisions than lower-level diplomats. Mediation initiated by disputants themselves may instill a greater readiness to compromise, thus leading to a more effective outcome (Greig and Dielh, 2005). However, some scholars take attention that leaders may lack the necessary skills or willingness to navigate complex negotiations, resulting in prolonged stalemates or failed agreements (Zartman, 2007). In order to understand how leaders can create more effective results, one needs to consider the nature of the relations between leaders. Armstrong (1993) and Kupchan (2010) point out that skilled leaders who are interested in negotiated conflict resolution have a variety of communicative tools, ranging from leveraging personal relationships, to creatively framing grand bargains (or, conversely, fractionating issues), in order to send valuable signals and make other symbolic gestures that demonstrate their cooperative goals. It is for this reason that the dialogue between leaders can create a special bond between the two counterparts through interaction, namely leader-to-leader diplomacy, which can lead to significant advances in the peacemaking process.

1.2. Leader to Leader Diplomacy as a Notion and Approach

Leader-to-leader diplomacy can be considered an ideal setup for addressing conflicting interests, highlighting the intersection of diplomacy and leadership. In initial literature, the notion of personal diplomacy has emerged. Meese III (2004) suggests that personal diplomacy, as a concept, refers to the direct involvement of political leaders, often heads of state or government, in diplomatic negotiations and international relations. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which relies on professional diplomats and formal institutions, personal diplomacy emphasizes the role of individual leaders in shaping foreign policy outcomes through their personalities and leadership styles with counterparts. According to Robertson (2002), this approach is often characterized by informal channels of communication, face-to-face meetings, and the leveraging of personal characteristics to achieve a foreign policy agenda.

The concept of personal diplomacy is particularly prevalent in the analysis of the foreign policies of US Presidents, namely how the personal differences and approaches of American presidents affect foreign policy making (Dumbrell, 2013; Muehlenbeck, 2008; Marsh, 2017). For instance, figures like Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill used personal diplomacy during World War II to forge the Allied partnership, relying on their personal rapport to overcome ideological and strategic differences (Dockett, 2022). In addition to this, personal diplomacy has been employed in moments of crisis or when traditional diplomatic methods have reached an impasse, offering a more flexible and dynamic alternative to long negotiating processes (Kissinger, 1994; Berridge, 2015). For example, Fischer (2000) pens an article on how Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan employed personal diplomacy to minimize Cold War tensions culminating in landmark agreements such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

The concept of personal diplomacy has gained increased importance, especially over the years with the emergence of strong leader profiles in various countries around the world. Especially in the last decade, research agendas have found ground in the same meaning with alternative naming which brings leader to leader diplomacy or leader diplomacy. Leader diplomacy has evolved into a broader and more meaningful concept beyond Robertson's initial definition of personal diplomacy. Ohnesorge (2022) suggests that foreign travel by senior decision-makers at times beyond conventional state visits, as well as speechmaking, frequently contain symbolic acts defined as iconic gestures that epitomize a given policy or program and/or draw broad, or even global attention. Furthermore, this trend has been prompted by the growing complexity of global concerns such as climate change, transnational security threats, and economic interdependence, which necessitate long-term multilateral collaboration between leaders rather than instant relations (Hocking, 1999; Bjola & Holmes, 2015).

Although criticism towards the increasing role of leaders and leader-to-leader diplomacy related to the danger of overreliance on leaders can create a dependency that undermines local agency and grassroots initiatives and when peace processes are

dominated by a few individuals, it can stifle the development of community-driven solutions and local peacebuilding efforts, which are often more sustainable in the long term (Lederach, 1997; Lee and Özerdem, 2015), growing interest for leader to leader diplomacy continued. There are new definitions of leader-to-leader diplomacy that address the capitalization of political leaders' symbolic and strategic influence while ensuring that their acts are supported by a professional diplomatic corps and integrated into long-term foreign policy plans (Paterson, 2011; Falkner, 2016). In addition to this, Açıkalın's definition and framework of the leader to leader diplomacy underlines that leader-to-leader diplomacy involves leaders managing the diplomatic relations of the actors they represent in the international system by emphasizing their personal relationships and characteristics with four dimensions (2022). Also, Açıkalın defines four main dimensions of leader-to-leader diplomacy which are entrepreneurship, intense interaction, flexible thinking, and interpersonal friendship will be used as a framework and analytical tool in order to give insight into the peacemaking process in the Russian-Ukrainian war.

1.2.1. Entrepreneurship

As the 1990s transitioned into the new century, the present social, economic, and political settings were continually influenced by the acts of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial endeavors (Fernald et al, 2005). As mentioned earlier, as the international system evolves into a multi-actor structure, there has been increasing interest in individual actors, particularly leaders. In light of this reality, Obschonka and Fisch points out that given the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in today's economy and political agenda, as well as Schumpeterian personalities' distinct power orientation, one might expect Schumpeterian personalities to be on the rise in mainstream politics, particularly among highly influential politicians in positions of power (2018). The definitions of the concepts of entrepreneur and entrepreneurial leader have diversified and intersected over time in relation to the concept of the political leader (Frohlich and Oppenheimer, 1972; Prieto, 2010). One of the contemporary definitions made by Açıkalın (2021); entrepreneurial leaders are considered individuals who alter the direction and flow of world politics.

1.2.2. Intense Interaction

In initial studies in which the concept of leader-to-leader diplomacy first emerged, there is a notable emphasis on the importance of face-to-face relationships and communication processes between leaders (Stogdill, 1948; Zimmerman and Gill, 2008). Face-to-face interaction among political leaders is a cornerstone of effective decision-making, particularly in complex and high-stakes scenarios. When leaders engage in direct in-person discussion, they can communicate more effectively, leveraging nonverbal cues such as body language, tone, and facial expressions to convey nuance and build trust. This level of interaction fosters a deeper understanding of differing perspectives and creates opportunities for collaboration. For example, face-to-face meetings during negotiations have historically been instrumental in

breaking deadlocks and achieving breakthroughs, as seen in the Camp David Accords of 1978, where direct dialogue between leaders led to a peace agreement (Quandt, 1986). Such interactions enable leaders to address sensitive issues with empathy and clarity, paving the way for mutually beneficial outcomes.

According to research by Fisher, Ury, and Patton (2011), direct communication reduces misunderstandings and allows leaders to focus on shared interests. In the digital diplomacy era, the irreplaceable value of in-person interaction remains evident (Holmes, 2018).

1.2.3. Flexible Thinking

Flexible thinking in political leadership refers to the ability of leaders to adapt their strategies, policies, and decision-making processes in response to changing circumstances or unexpected challenges (Evans and Bahrami, 2020). This allows them to navigate crises, build consensus, and respond effectively to the needs of their constituents. For example, during times of global pandemics, the value of flexible thinking in maintaining stability and public trust is demonstrated by leaders who can adapt quickly to implement new policies or adjust existing ones (Heifetz, 1994; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

Furthermore, flexible leaders realize the value of cooperation and compromise, since no single position has all the solutions. They may design more resilient and successful policies by interacting with various stakeholders and encouraging inclusive conversation (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In summary, flexible thinking is a key component of effective political leadership, allowing leaders to negotiate complexity with confidence, and achieve significant change in chaotic world politics.

1.2.4. Interpersonal Friendship

There is a range of political conceptualizations and key components in the literature that explain the notion of friendship between two or more state leaders. These include: developing reciprocal relationships on an equal footing, striving to improve each other's situation, performing a moral duty together, and assuming high-level moral responsibilities with mutual personal sacrifices (Roshchin, 2014; King, 2007; Oelsner, 2013; Van Hoef, 2019). Interpersonal friendships between political leaders can play a significant role in shaping governance, diplomacy, and policy outcomes. These relationships often transcend formal political structures and can foster trust, collaboration, and mutual understanding, which are critical in resolving conflicts or advancing shared goals (Aldous, 2012). Such friendships can create open communication, enabling leaders to navigate complex negotiations with greater ease and empathy.

Also, research in political psychology suggests that leaders with strong interpersonal networks are better equipped to handle crises, as they can draw on the advice and

encouragement of trusted peers (Post, 2014). These relationships highlight the importance of personal connections in fostering a more collaborative and humane political culture, even in chaotic environments.

1.3. The Russian-Ukrainian War

The conflict in Ukraine can be seen by some as part of a renewed geopolitical rivalry between the West and Russia (Demedziuk, 2017; Liu and Shu, 2023). While Ukraine has deep cultural, economic, and political ties with Russia as a former Soviet Republic, Ukraine has tried to forge its own path during nearly three decades of independence. This has meant the country favored close cooperation with Western institutions and countries, including the European Union and NATO (Wolff, 2015). That said, while the more nationalist and Ukrainian-speaking population in the western parts of the country generally favors greater integration with the European Union, the mostly Russian-speaking communities of eastern Ukraine prefer closer ties with Russia (White and McAllister, 2010; Kulyk, 2016). In this respect, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict did not begin in 2022, but instead has deeper roots that manifested in the de facto attack with the Annexation of Crimea in 2014. The illegal annexation of Crimea is of great importance for regional and global dynamics and constitutes a historical turning point which was the first military invasion of another sovereign state by a state on the European Continent after WW2 (Özçelik, 2023). The Russian-Ukrainian War started on 24 February 2022 with Russia's attack on Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. The Kremlin refers to the invasion of Ukraine as a 'special military operation' (Cavandoli and Wilson, 2022).

There is no doubt that the consequences of this conflict have great importance, not only from the perspectives of Ukraine and Russia, but also in the context of regional and global balances of power. The resistance of the Ukrainian state and army, led by Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky, against the Russian invasion, caused a significant change in the West's policy towards Russia. In addition to serious economic sanctions against Russia, the West began providing critical weapons, equipment, intelligence, and training support to the Ukrainian army. On 23 September 2022, Russia held referendums on accession to Russia in Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and the Kherson regions of Ukraine. This development shows that Russia is using the same method in the current war as it used when annexing Crimea in 2014, which is in violation of international law. Following the referendums, it was announced that 98.42% of people in Luhansk, 99.23% in Donetsk, 93.11% in Zaporizhia, and 87.05% in Kherson voted in favor of joining Russia (Polityuk, 2022). In March 2024, for the first time, Russia referred to the conflict as a war, rather than an operation, which reflects Western intervention in the conflict (Osborn, 2024). Following changing dynamics on the front, Ukraine also initiated game-changing attacks on Russia, such as attacking warships etc. However, the attack on the Kursk region of Russia by Ukraine in August 2024 brought the conflict onto Russian soil (Barry, 2024).

Although conditions on the war front and geopolitics in the region are constantly changing, by September 2024 world witness a hybrid and asymmetric conflict

environment in which the leaders of the two countries are the determinative actors in the conflict processes (Tutar and Bağ, 2023). In the wake of the third year of the war, peace-making attempts appear both complicated and complex. In the current situation, Western countries officially support Ukraine with advanced military equipment, while diplomatically following policies of punishment and isolation towards Russia, including multidimensional embargoes (Floyd and Webber, 2024). While some European leaders are keen to enlist China in attempts to halt Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Beijing refused to attend the peace summit, citing a lack of involvement and recognition from both Russia and Ukraine (Bohman et al, 2024).

In this respect, Türkiye has a unique position, related to geography, as the only member of NATO to attempt to bring the two sides together for peace talks in 2022, and to later facilitate the signing of the Grain Deal Agreement. The following section focuses on how President Erdoğan's leader-to-leader diplomacy facilitated peace talks, multilateralism, and the Grain Deal Agreement.

1.4. Leader-to-Leader Diplomacy in Russian-Ukrainian War

Leaders have begun to play a highly visible role in multidimensional diplomatic relations, including undertaking mediation, chief negotiator, and facilitator roles in conflict resolution and peace-making processes (Hamlin and Jennings, 2007; Açıkalın, 2021; Prorok and Cil, 2022; Nosova, 2023). This has also provided an undeniable contribution to the diplomatic efforts of a country. In other words, as facilitators for peace, leaders both improve the image of a country and make a positive impact on the stock of countries globally (Handelman, 2012; Kim and Lee, 2021).

Both leaders in the Russian-Ukrainian War have particularly well-defined roles. The persona of President Putin is a risk-taking leader, meanwhile, Zelensky is seen as a classic wartime leader (Davlikanova, 2024; Serafin, 2022). These pervasive roles mean that, regardless of the types of leadership, the personas of the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, and the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, are at the forefront and critical in decisions made to lead to the outcome of the conflict (Tutar and Bağ, 2023; Yurchenko, 2024). In light of this reality, it is extremely challenging to convince both sides to initiate peace talks personally in the traditional diplomatic manner, so leader-to-leader diplomacy is extremely useful. Since the beginning of the war, different European leaders like German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Macron, and former Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi attempted to open a dialogue between President Zelenskyy and President Putin for peace that remained limited and inconclusive (Sabbagh, 2022; Ulatowski, 2024; Brighi and Giusti, 2023). In order to limit the scope of this article, the research will only focus on the efforts made by Türkiye and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Specifically the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, the Dolmabahçe Peace talks, visits by Olaf Scholz and Mark Rutte, and the Grain Deal Agreement, will be considered in terms of leader-to-leader diplomacy.

1.4.1. Antalya Diplomacy Forum

Thanks to the efforts of Türkiye and President Erdoğan, the first meeting of the parties was held on 8 March 2022, just ten days after the start of the war, on the margins of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF) hosted by Türkiye. President Erdoğan personally convinced President Putin and President Zelensky by phone to send their delegations. The meeting was held around a U-shaped table with the participation of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov, Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba and their delegations. In the opening speech of ADF (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2022), President Erdoğan underlined the importance of Türkiye as follows;

Türkiye is both a Mediterranean and a Black Sea country. Ukraine and Russia are our Black Sea neighbors and friends. We deeply regret that the crisis between our neighbors has turned into a hot conflict. The escalation of the tension to this stage disturbed us the most and worried us the most.

Pirinççi underlined that although no concrete progress was actually achieved as a result of the meeting, this meeting had critical importance in three respects. Firstly, it was the highest-level meeting between the two sides since the beginning of the crisis, not just the war (2022). Tziarras also stressed that the fact that Turkish mediation had made the two sides willing to conduct negotiations represented a diplomatic achievement for Ankara (2022).

1.4.2. Multilateralism in Peacemaking: Visits by Scholz, Duda and Rutte

Following the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian War, Türkiye's leading diplomacy, thanks to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's honest approach in bilateral relations, to achieve a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine enabled two of Türkiye's important partners in the international arena to meet on common ground and establish a sustainable dialogue. In the meeting between President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on 14 March 2022, the contributions of Germany, an important economic, political, and military actor in the European Union and NATO, to the peace process and steps to be taken jointly with Türkiye were discussed (Tosun, 2022).

Under President Erdoğan's leading diplomacy, Ankara became the center of diplomacy as the war entered its first month (Mamishova, 2022). In a joint press conference with Polish President Andrzej Duda, who came to Türkiye after German Chancellor Scholz, President Erdoğan said: 'We agreed that diplomatic efforts should be accelerated to end the war. As Türkiye, we continue our initiatives to achieve a ceasefire' (Altaş, 2022).

Türkiye's intensive efforts to consolidate its role as a mediator were recognized globally. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's intensive leader-to-leader diplomacy efforts, based on the transparent policies adopted by Turkish foreign policy, increased the importance of Türkiye's mediation role in the Russian-Ukrainian War. The main

focus of the meeting with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte at the Presidential Complex on 22 March 2022 was the Russian-Ukrainian War and Türkiye's mediation role. President Erdoğan said during the meeting, 'We are aware of the difficulty of the conditions, but we will continue our sincere initiatives that see diplomacy as the only way out' (Haberler, 2022). Dutch Prime Minister Rutte thanked President Erdoğan and said, 'Türkiye has great political and military importance for the alliance (in NATO). I would like to say that we support Türkiye (in mediation) as one of the few countries that has an open phone line to the two countries (Ertan, 2022). All these visits and concurrent phone calls with leaders are clearly concrete examples of intense interaction as part of leader-to-leader diplomacy, as defined by Açıkalın (2021). In addition to this, President Erdoğan's personal approach and efforts in the peace-making process in Ukraine successfully manifested on a multilateral platform.

1.4.3. Dolmabahçe Peace Talks

As mentioned above, since the first day of the Russian-Ukrainian War, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was the only head of state who has been able to initiate peace talks through leader diplomacy with the leaders of the two countries. As a result of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's intensive efforts, peace talks started in early March 2022 on the margins of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum and were followed by the delegations meeting in Dolmabahçe. It should be noted that ADF talks played a facilitating role in large-scale negotiations. President Erdoğan made the opening remarks of the Dolmabahçe talks (2022) before the delegations began discussions,

Since the first day of the crisis, we have made sincere efforts at all levels to prevent escalation. We have tried to fulfill the requirements of neighborliness, friendship, and humanitarian closeness, and to emphasize the bonds between us. I personally carried out intensive diplomacy with many of my counterparts, especially your esteemed heads of state.

There is no doubt that the Dolmabahçe Talks were also a result of President Erdoğan's personal efforts with leader-to-leader diplomacy. Duran underlined that President Erdoğan personally spoke to around 40 leaders since the war broke out (2022). Michaelson emphasized that despite the hurdles, the atmosphere was warmer and the results more fruitful than prior sessions in Belarus, or discussions between Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers in Antalya, southern Türkiye (2022).

Türkiye, which played a major role in bringing the parties together at the Dolmabahçe Palace and thus opened the way for dialogue, took a major step towards achieving ceasefire talks and political reconciliation between the parties through this friendly initiative. In addition, the Dolmabahçe Talks can be considered the most concrete and tangible in terms of draft and content (Lechner, 2024).

1.4.4. Black Sea Grain Initiative

The most significant outcome of Türkiye's diplomatic peacemaking efforts was the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI), an international agreement between Russia, Ukraine, Türkiye, and the UN that established a "grain corridor" by ensuring that Ukrainian grain could leave the ports of Chornomorsk, Odesa, and Pivdennyi (Abu Hatab, 2022).

Based on the agreement signed in the Dolmabahçe Palace of Istanbul on 22 July 2022, officials from Türkiye, Ukraine, Russia, and the UN were to inspect ships crossing the Bosphorus towards Odessa to ensure they were not carrying any weapons, while the warring parties committed to not attacking commercial ships in the Black Sea. After the Black Sea Grain Initiative Joint Coordination Centre was established, UN Secretary-General Guterres called the Black Sea Grain Initiative an "unprecedented agreement" and "a beacon of hope" in a world where it was direly needed (United Nations News, 2022).

The entrepreneurship dimension of leader-to-leader diplomacy should be touched upon in relation to the Black Sea Grain Deal Agreement. The primary agreement was to successfully bring two sides of the war together with the UN, but it also emerged as an innovative solution for the food crisis in Africa (Vladislav, 2022; Pedrozo; 2023). In addition to this, the Black Sea Grain Initiative also contributed to maritime security (Kakabadze, 2023). In addition to the entrepreneurship dimension, leader-to-leader diplomacy between President Erdoğan and other leaders was key in its formulation. In this respect, firstly President Zelensky, and then other world leaders and ministries, thanked President Erdoğan and Türkiye for the agreement (France 24, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Peacemaking is a highly complex process that involves numerous actors, both individually and institutionally. Leaders are undeniable figures in this process a determinants of conditions, as well as results from negotiations. In other words leaders, especially through their interactions with their counterparts, have the potential to produce more concrete results. Leader-to-leader diplomacy has been used as a new concept and framework to rethink on individual level of the decision-making process.

On February 24, 2022, Russia initiated military action in Ukraine, crossing into the nation from Belarus in the north, Russia in the east, and Crimea in the south. President Putin described it as a "special military operation" aimed at protecting Donbass residents, but also at "demilitarizing and denazifying Ukraine." He denied that Russia intended to take Ukrainian land or "impose anything on anyone by force". However, during the last two years, Russian soldiers have waged a full-fledged attack on the country. Russia signed annexation treaties in early October 2022 that recognized Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia as part of the Russian Federation, despite the fact that these territories are not entirely under Russian authority.

Since the outbreak of the war, there have been different peacemaking attempts initiated by different actors. However, Türkiye successfully managed to build unique neutrality since the war started. There is no doubt that Türkiye's attempt under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is worth analyzing in terms of leader-to-leader diplomacy. This article's scope is also the main limitation of this paper addresses only the role of a leader in the peacemaking process. In order to understand the role of leaders from a holistic perspective, the four dimensions of the leader-to-leader diplomacy framework by Açıklan were employed. These four dimensions of leader-to-leader diplomacy were examined in relation to the ADF, visits by Scholz, Duda, and Rutte Visits, talks in Dolmabahçe, and the Black Sea Grain Deal through President Erdoğan's visit.

In light of this analysis, there are three main implications that can be highlighted in terms of the role of leader-to-leader diplomacy in the peacemaking attempts related to the Russian-Ukrainian War. Firstly, President Erdoğan's leader-to-leader diplomacy facilitated peace talks both in ADF and Dolmabahçe who has been the only leader who managed to talk with both sides. In other words, hosting two parties, both in Antalya and İstanbul was only made possible by the mediating role and friendship between President Erdoğan through leader-to-leader diplomacy. Secondly, the multilateral dimension of peacemaking emphasizes the actual use of leader-to-leader diplomacy. To bring peace to the Russian-Ukrainian war, regional leaders and international stakeholders have participated in extensive exchanges, including high-level visits, phone talks, and multilateral summits. These initiatives demonstrate how leader-to-leader diplomacy goes beyond bilateral conversations, creating a greater tapestry of collaboration and coordination. Last but not least, the Black Sea Grain Initiative can be deemed a positive outcome of both flexible thinking and the entrepreneurship dimensions of the leader-to-leader diplomacy of President Erdoğan.

Consequently, although criticism for overreliance on leaders and ignorance of other actors can remain for future research, this work also has the potential to contribute to literature regarding the role of leaders in the peacemaking process vis a vis leader to leader diplomacy in different cases with different leaders.

BARIŞ YAPIM SÜREÇLERİNDE LİDER DİPLOMASİSİ: RUSYA-UKRAYNA SAVAŞI

Liderler, dış politikada karar alma süreçlerinin birey düzeyindeki analitik bileşenlerinden birisidir. Liderlerin kişilikleri, inançları, geçmiş yaşantıları ve ideolojileri bir arka plan olarak karar alma süreçlerinde önemli bir unsur bağlamında uluslararası ilişkiler literatüründe çalışmalara konu olmuştur. Bu çalışmalar çatışma çözümü, barış yapım ve barış inşası gibi alanlara da etki etmiştir. Alan yazında barış yapım süreçlerinde liderlerin farklı etkilerine yönelik çalışmalar ortaya konmuştur. Liderler diyalogu teşvik ederek, güven inşa ederek ve karşıt taraflar arasındaki çatışmalarda arabuluculuk yaparak barışın sağlanmasında önemli bir rol oynamaktadırlar. İlham verme, etkili iletişim kurma ve farklı bakış açılarıyla empati kurma becerileri, bölünmeler arasında çatışma tarafları arasında köprü kurmalarına ve uzlaşma için ortak bir vizyon yaratmalarına olanak tanıma potansiyeli sağlamaktadır. Bununla beraber, liderlerin bu süreçler içerisinde hem anlaşmaların sonuçlanması, yürütülmesi ve çatışmadan barışa psikolojik ve sosyolojik zorlukların aşılmasında önemli rol oynamaktadır.

Bu bağlamda, lider diplomasisi kavramı çatışma ortamlarından barış yapım süreçlerine geçişi anlamlandırmak ve diplomasi ile liderliğin kesişimini ortaya koymak için analiz çerçevesi olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Erken dönem literatürde kişisel diplomasi olarak da bilinen bu kavram; siyasi liderlerin, genellikle devlet veya hükümet başkanlarının, diplomatik müzakerelere ve uluslararası ilişkilere doğrudan katılımını ifade ettiğini öne sürmektedir. Profesyonel diplomatlara ve resmi kurumlara dayanan geleneksel diplomasinin aksine kişisel diplomasi, bireysel liderlerin kişilikleri ve muhataplarıyla olan liderlik tarzları aracılığıyla dış politika sonuçlarını şekillendirmedeki rolünü vurgulamaktadır. Açıkalin lider diplomasisi kavramını yeniden tanımlayarak girişimcilik, yoğun etkileşim, esnek düşünme ve kişiler arası dostluktur kapsayan dört boyutu da eklemiştir.

Lider diplomasinin dört boyutu girişimcilik, yoğun etkileşim, esnek düşünme ve kişiler arası dostluktur. Girişimcilik, liderlerin kriz anlarında ve çatışmaların çözümünde etkin ve inovatif çözümler sunabilme kapasitesini ifade etmektedir. Öte yandan, yoğun etkileşim liderler seviyesinde yüz yüze ve dijital ortamdaki görüşmelerin nicelik ve nitelik olarak yoğunluğunun karar alma süreçlerindeki önemini vurgulamaktadır. Üçüncü olarak, esnek düşünme uluslararası sistemin değişen koşullarına ayak uydurabilen dinamik ve belirsizliğin yüksek olduğu süreçlerde liderlerin esnek düşünme yeteneğinin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Son boyut olarak, liderler arası dostluk liderlerin bir mevkidaşlık perspektifinde birbirini anlayarak ortak diyalog alanlarını oluşturulmasının anlamını ortaya koymaktadır.

Şubat 2022 yılında başlayan Rusya-Ukrayna savaşı hem Avrupa bölgesinin hem de küresel barışa yönelik önemli bir sınaıma olmuştur. Rusya-Ukrayna savaşı her anlamda çok aktörlü çok karmaşık bir yapıya evrilmiştir. Ukrayna'ya ait dört şehir referandumla Rusya'nın toprakları haline gelmiş ve bu bölgelerde çatışmalar halen sürmektedir. Savaşın ilk gününden itibaren aralarında NATO, AB ve ABD'nin de

bulunduğu küresel liderler askeri yardım sağlayarak, Rusya'ya yaptırımlar uygulayarak ve diplomatik çabaları şekillendirerek çatışmayı etkilemişler ancak barış konusunda ortaya bir girişim çıkmamıştır. Türkiye sahip olduğu coğrafi konumu ve izlediği çok yönlü dış politikasıyla Savaşın ilk gününden itibaren barış yapım adına önemli bir aktör haline gelmiştir. Bu çalışma kapsamında Türkiye'nin barış yapım çabaları Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın lider diplomasisi bağlamında Açıkalin'ın lider diplomasisi tanımı ve dört alt boyutu çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir.

Bu dört boyut açısından analiz edildiğinde, Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın liderler arası dostluk özelliğini sergileyerek savaşın sona ermesi için hem arabulucu hem de ev sahipliği yapmasını sağlamıştır. İlk olarak Antalya Diplomasi Forumu marjında gerçekleştirilen ilk görüşmelerin geniş çaplı müzakereler için bir başlangıç rolü oynadığını söylemek mümkündür. Antalya Diplomasi Forumu marjında gerçekleştirilen bu görüşmelerin devamında Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın liderler ile yoğun etkileşim içerisinde olması ve Almanya Şansölyesi Olaf Scholz, Polonya Başbakanı Duda ve Hollanda Başbakanı Rutte'nin Türkiye ziyareti ve birçok liderle telefon görüşmeleri yoluyla derinlemesine etkileşim içinde gerçekleştirdikleri barışı sağlama sürecinin çok taraflılık yönünün de oldukça güçlü olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu yoğun çabaların sonucu olarak ortaya konan Dolmabahçe Görüşmeleri, Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Başkan Zelensky ve Başkan Putin arasındaki lider diplomasinin ürünü olan savaş içindeki ilk ve hala tek büyük ölçekli barış görüşmeleridir. Son olarak; Karadeniz Tahıl Girişimi'nin hem bir güvenlik hem de gıda anlaşması niteliği taşıması, Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın yürüttüğü lider diplomasisinin hem esnek düşünme hem de girişimcilik boyutlarının olumlu bir sonucu olarak görülebilir. Bu süreçlerin sonucunda somut bir barış anlaşması ortaya çıkmamıştır ancak başta Karadeniz Tahıl Girişimi olmak üzere elde edilen kazanımların insani hem de diplomatik sonuçları oldukça önemli olmuştur. Sonuç olarak, Rusya-Ukrayna savaşında liderlerin rolünün etkin olması ve barış yapım süreçlerinin içerisinde de lider diplomasinin öne çıkmasını sağlamıştır. Son olarak, lider diplomasisi farklı çatışma bölgelerinde de barış yapma süreçlerinde liderlerin rolünü analiz etmek için de kullanılabilecek bir kavram çerçevesi sunma potansiyeli taşımaktadır.

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Fikir veya Kavram / <i>Idea or Notion</i>	Araştırma hipotezini veya fikrini oluşturmak / <i>Form the research hypothesis or idea</i>	Şuay Nilhan AÇIKALIN
Tasarım / <i>Design</i>	Yöntemi, ölçeği ve deseni tasarlamak / <i>Designing method, scale and pattern</i>	Şuay Nilhan AÇIKALIN
Veri Toplama ve İşleme / <i>Data Collecting and Processing</i>	Verileri toplamak, düzenlenmek ve raporlamak / <i>Collecting, organizing and reporting data</i>	Şuay Nilhan AÇIKALIN
Tartışma ve Yorum / <i>Discussion and Interpretation</i>	Bulguların değerlendirilmesinde ve sonuçlandırılmasında sorumluluk almak / <i>Taking responsibility in evaluating and finalizing the findings</i>	Şuay Nilhan AÇIKALIN
Literatür Taraması / <i>Literature Review</i>	Çalışma için gerekli literatürü taramak / <i>Review the literature required for the study</i>	Şuay Nilhan AÇIKALIN