Türkiye-Rusya İlişkilerinde Değişimin Dinamikleri: 2011-2016

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Özet	Anahtar Kelimeler
Bu çalışmanın amacı, 2011 ve 2016 yılları arasında Türkiye-Rusya ilişkilerinin incelenmesidir. Seçilen dönem iki ülke ilişkilerinde hızlı bir yeniden yakınlaşma sürecine sahne olduğundan, çalışma özellikle 2015 yılında Rus uçağının düşürülmesi sonucunda ortaya çıkan Su-24 siyasi krizinin etkilerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda çalışma, Türkiye ve Rusya arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin, 2015 krizinin olumsuz etkilerinden yüksek düzeyli siyasi işbirliğine, söz konusu kısa süre içinde nasıl ulaştığı sorusunun yanıtlanmasını hedeflemektedir. Belirlenen araştırma sorusunun incelenmesi amacıyla, uluslararası ilişkilerde bir dış politika analizi sunan neoklasik realizmin teorik çerçevesine başvurulmaktadır. Üç bölüme ayrılan çalışmanın ilk kısmı, ikili ilişkilerde meydana gelen göreceli güç dağılımındaki değişikliklerin politik etkilerini incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. İkinci kısım iç politik faktörlerin Türkiye-Rusya ilişkilerine etkilerine odaklanmaktadır. Son kısımda ise, Su-24 dış politika krizinin çözümü sürecinde devlet liderlerinin etkileri incelenerek çalışmanın analizi tamamlanmaya çalışılacaktır. Çalışma bu kapsamda, Türkiye-Rusya ilişkilerinde kısa süre içinde meydana gelen büyük değişimin; yapısal faktörler, iç politik gelişmeler ve bireysel dinamiklerin birbirini etkiyen ilişkisinin bir sonucu olduğu argümanını desteklemeye çalışacaktır.	Türkiye Dış Politika Rusya Su-24 Krizi

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Dynamics of Change in Turkey-Russia Relations: 2011-2016

Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze Turkey-Russia relations within the period of 2011 and 2016. Since the selected time period in bilateral relations has been characterized by rapid rapprochement after a severe political crisis, the study particularly concentrates on the impact of the Su-24 crisis caused by the downing of a Russian jet in 2015. The paper in this aspect aims to give an answer to the question of how bilateral relations between Turkey and Russia have been recovered from the detrimental effects of the 2015 crisis towards the achievement of high level political cooperation within a short period of time. In order to analyze this research question, the study draws on the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism as a theory of foreign policy analysis in international relations. The study in this respect is divided into three parts. While the first part intends to evaluate how the change of relative distribution of power in bilateral relations have affected the course of political relations between Turkey and Russia, the second part focuses on the impact of domestic factors that stem from internal political developments in both countries. The last part on the other hand attempts to complement this analysis with an overlook on the individual dynamics by analyzing the impact of state leaders for the resolution of the Su-24 foreign policy crisis. In this endeavor, the paper attempts to validate the argument that the dramatic change in Turkey-Russia relations is the outcome of intertwined relations between structural factors, internal political developments and individual dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Being the only Russian aircraft that was shot down by a NATO member after the Cold War, the Su-24 crisis led to the beginning of a process determined by economic sanctions and worsened political relations. Surprisingly however, the same short period between 2011 and 2016 was characterized by another turning point in Turkey-Russia relations. After a deteriorating period, the two states achieved to carry out various cooperation attempts in political and military fields. Moreover, the political cooperation attempts between the two states have culminated in joint military operations in Syria along with the increasing phase of Astana process, which aims to end Syrian war under the aegis of Turkey, Russia and Iran.

Therefore, in a short span of time, political relations between the two states have witnessed a rapid transition period from economic sanctions towards the actualization of high level political cooperation.

In order to find a viable answer to the question of which factors have led to the rapid betterment of bilateral relations from the deep-point of Su-24 crisis to the top point of ongoing political cooperation, the study draws on the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism as a theory of foreign policy analysis.

By establishing a linkage between independent and dependent variables, neoclassical realism distinguishes itself from other variants of realist theories. According to the representatives of this theoretical view, the analysis of international relations needs to be supplemented by additional variables. Norrin Ripsmann (2016, p. 8) explains these variables under the categories of leader images, strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institutions.

While the term of "leader image" deals with the influence of decision-makers in international politics, the term of "strategic culture" concentrates on the ability of political and military institutions to mobilize societal resources for particular policy aims. "State-society relations" on the other hand focus on the impact of domestic actors and interest groups over foreign policy-making processes (Lobell et. al, 2009, p. 23).

Another point that distinguishes neoclassical realism from structural realism becomes visible in the notion of balance of power. According to neorealist view, states tend to enact counter-balancing measures against rising powers (Reus Smith and Snidal, 2008: 133). Because of the zero-sum approach of structural realism which presupposes that the gains of one state equals to the loss of others, structural realism argues that states apply to the balance of power politics in order to achieve security for state survival (Walt, 1979, pp. 103-128).

In contrast to the abovementioned view, neoclassical realists put forward another explanation for alliance formation than balance of power theory. Randall Schweller, for example, argues that balance of power theory overstates the importance of security problem. This, in effect, leads to a misreading for the explanation of alliance formations (Rose, 1998, pp. 144-172).

According to Schweller, the achievement of security is not the main motivation of international politics. Instead, he claims that states tend to act in accordance with the expected gains rather than immediate threats. Schweller explains it through the notion of bandwagoning, which presupposes that states tend to act with more powerful actors in order to gain more benefits. According to this view, states apply to the method of bandwagoning in order to benefit from opportunities in international system (Schweller, 1994, pp. 72-107).

The usage of bandwagoning on the basis of expected utility confers another advantage for the analysis of foreign policy problems. This advantage is especially evident for the distinction between status-quo and revisionist states. While balancing policies are enacted by the aim of sustaining existing international order against rising threats, bandwagoning is implemented by the desire of achieving additional gains from international politics (Walt, 1990, pp. 147-181).

The utility of applying the concept of bandwagoning for the analysis of Turkey-Russia relations is twofold. One of these fields is observed through Russia's presence in Syrian civil

war. Since Schweller's theory of bandwagoning rests upon the idea that states that pursue revisionist strategies look forward to exploit policy opportunities like power vacuums in regional politics, Russia's military presence in Syria seems to reflect its regional and global ambitions when looking from Schweller's presumption of expected utility (Notte, 2016, pp. 59-69).

On the other hand, the concept of bandwagoning confers another theoretical utility for the explanation of Turkey's sidelining with Russia in Syrian civil war. In contrast to the initially opposite positions of two states, the current efforts for further cooperation like the introduction of Astana peace process under the aegis of Russia, Turkey and Iran illustrate that Turkey prefers to realign with Russia instead of the predictions of balance of power theory (Flanagan, 2013, pp. 165-170).

The question of why Turkey prefers to realign with Russia rather than enacting balancing policies despite Russia's increasing political and military presence in Turkey's neighborhood stands as a disjuncture from the perspective of balance of power theory. This discrepancy on the other hand constitutes a convenient field of inquiry for the implication of Schweller's concept of bandwagoning.

Additionally, neoclassical realism makes a distinction between restrictive and permissive strategic environments. While restrictive international environment refers to the imminency of foreign policy threats, permissive international environment points out the absence of immediate challenges against state security. From this distinction, neoclassical realists argue that the two types of international environment are expected to bring about different foreign policy strategies. While restrictive international environments compel states to implement short term strategies between the choices of balancing and bandwagoning, permissive international environments allow states to carry out long-term strategies outside the narrow alternatives of balancing and bandwagoning (Ripsmann, 2016, p. 8).

Given that the study takes its dependent variable from the rapid normalization of bilateral relations after the Su-24 crisis, the independent variable is formulated around the question of how the post-Cold War period has affected the relative distribution of power among the two states. More precisely, the study in this regard interrogates the question of whether the dissolution of the Soviet Union has reduced the necessity of counter-balancing policies from Turkey's foreign policy objectives vis a vis Russia.

In addition to the formulation of independent variable, the study adds two intervening variables for the analysis of Turkey-Russia relations. While the first intervening variable concentrates on the impact of leader images in crisis resolution process, the second intervening variable aims to interrogate how internal political developments in Turkey and Russia have affected the course of their bilateral relations.

From this point of view, the study argues that Turkey is located around a restrictive environment due to the security threats of Syrian civil war. This situation in effect compels Turkey to be torn between the alternatives of balancing and bandwagoning. Unlike permissive strategic environments that give room for long-term strategies in the absence of immediate security challenges, Turkey's positioning under the restrictive environment of Syrian war requires the implementation of either balancing or bandwagoning strategies. In

relation to this view, the study in the following part argues that Turkey's realignment with Russia -despite their initially divergent positions in Syria- reflects the realities of this restrictive strategic environment.

HOW DOES NEOREALISM EXPLAIN TURKEY-RUSSIA RELATIONS?

Neorealist tradition in international relations explains the changing dynamics in bilateral relations by taking the relative power capabilities of states as the starting point of analysis. According to this view, the implementation of counter-balancing measures takes place against rising threats. The rise of threats on the other hand is understood by the increase in material capacities. As the gap of material capacities between states enlarge, the necessity of implementing counter balancing policies also increase due to the perception of rising threats. The reducing power gap on the other hand diminishes the importance of balance of power politics (Nye Jr and Welch, 2014, pp. 7-43).

According to the studies that aim to analyze Turkey-Russia relations from a structural point of view, the dynamics of change in bilateral relations need to be explained in terms of structural changes after the Cold War period. Şener Aktürk (2007, pp. 338-340) for example applies this logic of comparison to the analysis of Turkey-Russia relations after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In his studies, Aktürk compares how the three pillars of material power gap between Turkey and Russia have changed over the course of post-Cold War era. Through comparing the shifts in economic, military and population sizes in this period, Aktürk reaches to the conclusion that the initial stages of post-Cold-War period brought about a convenient environment for the rapprochement in Turkey-Russia relations. According to him (2017, pp. 129-147), the main reason behind this rapprochement was the result of reducing power gap in terms of material power.

To begin with the economic dimension of this diminishing power gap, Aktürk states that Russia's economic difficulties led to a considerable decline of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while Turkey's GDP increased twofold in comparison to Russian economy during the 1990's.

In terms of military strength, Aktürk argues that Russia's internal problems in Chechen conflict illustrated how its conventional military capability and power projection ability was exposed to a visible reduction after the Cold War, while Turkey's successful military advancement against the terrorist organization of PKK like the capture of PKK's leader in 1999 displayed Turkey's developing military capacities (Aktürk,2014, p. 6).

Like the reducing power gap on the basis of economic and military strength, the demographic features also signaled a similar trend in this comparison. As a result of the secession of the Caucuses and Central Asian states in addition to Ukraine and Belarus from the Soviet Union, Russia's population retreated vis a vis Turkey's steadily increasing population growth.

Because the military, economic and population sizes between the two states became closer during the 1990's, Aktürk (2007, pp. 338-340) claims that the seriousness of balancing policies against Russia has lost its justification among Turkey's foreign policy goals.

As a result of this diminishing material power gap between the two states, Turkey-Russia relations gained an impetus for rapprochement (Öniş and Yılmaz, 2016, p. 72). Instead of implementing counter balancing measures, two states began to interrogate whether they may achieve to enlarge potential fields of cooperation. In addition to the mutual efforts to enhance cooperation in energy policies such the construction of Blue Stream pipeline, Russia became a new alternative for Turkey's attempt to diversify its foreign policy options. Especially in the field of defense policies, Turkey's desire to acquire technology transfer and develop an indigenous defense industry that were not backed up by NATO members, has found a new partner (Aktürk, 2014, p. 7).

The implementation of same comparison for the current political events on the other hand does not validate the theoretical propositions of structural thinking since Russia's assertive policies in this period have constituted an adverse impact on Turkey's security priorities. For example, while Russia's increasing naval power in the Black Sea region has increased the material power gap in favor of Russia, the 2008 Georgia intervention showed that Turkey's northern borders are exposed to a potential political instability (Özertem, 2017, p. 130).

Moreover, Russia's military capacities in the Black Sea region displayed a visible increase as a result of its annexation of Crimea following the Ukrainian crisis in 2014. As part of Russia's State Armament Program spanning between 2011 and 2020, a new complementary military program was endorsed in the Black Sea region. Russian Black Sea Fleet in this aspect was strengthened by the inclusion of four vessels between 2015 and 2017 (Erşen, 2017, pp. 140-141).

Furthermore, Russia's Armament Program is intended to improve its naval capabilities to carry out cruise-missile strikes that might confer additional advantages for Russia in order to reach beyond its near neighborhood (Delanoe, 2018). Russia's deployment of S-400 missiles system to the region is considered as an important step to establish an anti-access/area-denial zone (Gorenburg, 2018).

As a result of these factors, it is pertinent to raise the question that from the perspective of structural realism, Turkey is expected to carry out counter-balancing policies due to Russia's assertive movements. Yet, the question of why current Turkey-Russia relations are characterized by the efforts of cooperation instead of potential sources of divergence illustrates the inadequacy of merely applying systemic factors to the analysis of Turkey-Russia relations.

Given that the relations between Turkey and Russia are overshadowed by Russia's foreign policy actions in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean, it is proper to ask the question of how the current cooperation between two states takes place despite Russia's assertive actions around Turkey's northern and southern neighborhood.

This in turn necessitates the incorporation of state-level and individual factors as intervening variables. For this reason, the next part aims to interrogate the internal political factors that influenced the current course of bilateral relations.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF STATE-LEVEL FACTORS IN BILATERAL RELATIONS?

Since neoclassical realism claims that domestic political actors within state organizations may represent varying foreign policy visions, the concentration on political groupings in Russian politics is expected to find an answer to the question of how these political groups position Turkey's role in their respective foreign policy visions (Ripsmann, 2016, pp. 33-35).

The study in this aspect argues that Eurasianist perspective as the dominant policy view in Russian politics among these political groups attaches a special importance to the rapprochement in Turkey-Russia relations.

The origins of Eurasianism in Russian politics lies in the 19th century political debates for the determination of optimal foreign policy orientation that Russia needs to follow up between the alternatives of Westernizers and Slavophiles (Zimmerman, 2015, pp. 7-12).

As a result of philosophical movements during the 19th century, Slavophiles in this period advocated that Russia has a unique characteristic which requires a different path of development than Western countries. Westernizers on the other hand supported that Russia needs to adopt the features of Western civilization including its political system and cultural traits (Zimmerman, 2015, pp. 13-15).

After the disintegration of the USSR, the division between Westernizers and Slavhophiles has been revived in a new geopolitical setting. In a similar vein to the 19th century intellectual movements, political debates in this period concentrated on the question of whether Russia should follow a Western developmental path or instead pursue its own unique characteristics outside the scope of Western example. For the latter view, the main argument was gathered around the theme that Russia has unique historical and geographical features and these differences require Russian politicians for the implementation of a different developmental path (Zimmerman, 2015, pp. 30-35).

According to the arguments of Westernizers in Russian politics during the 1990's, Russia's development in economic and political sphere has rested on the incorporation of market economy along with a liberalized political system of parliamentary democracy (Senderov, 2009, pp. 30-40).

For the neo-Slavhophiles, the main endeavor was to struggle for the reunification with Belarus and Ukraine. This view has found its repercussions particularly for the economic cooperation efforts in addition to the attempts for the establishment of customs union with these states (Nugraha, 2018, pp. 105-110).

Neo-Eurosianist in this atmosphere has taken up anti-Western sentiments of Slavophiles thinking on the basis that Russia needs to implement its own unique developmental path. Instead of theoretical discussions between Westernizers and

Slavophiles, neo-Eurosianist view also preferred to attach more importance to the real political problems taking place around Russia's near neighborhood. For the purpose of reinstating Russian influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia, this political view also became a theoretical justification for Russia's attempt to restore its status in international politics. In addition to Russia-Georgia war in 2008, political developments in Ukraine as a result of the EU's rapprochement with Ukraine have exacerbated the anti-Western side of the neo-Eurosianist view (Senderov, pp. 30-36).

For the aims of Eurasianist, it is apparent that Russia is required to establish strategic partnerships with third countries. Among these partnerships for example, Alexander Dugin, the main representative of neo-Eurasianist thinking in Russian politics, pays a special attention to Turkey's geostrategic significance. According to him, realignment in Turkey-Russia relations is a vital requirement on the ground that Russia achieves its great power status and gains leverage against Western influence in Russia's near abroad. Furthermore, Dugin argues that Turkey-Russia realignment needs to be consolidated through the extension of this strategic partnership towards Iran. In his book, "Eurasian Mission: An Introduction to Eurasianism", Dugin (2014, pp. 12-15) clearly describes this situation as follows:

> "Our main regional partner in the integration process of Central Asia is Turkey. The Eurasian Idea is already becoming rather popular there today because of Western trends that have become interlaced with Eastern ones. Turkey acknowledges its civilizational differences with the European Union, and recognizes the importance of Eurasianism for its regional goals and interests, as well as in countering the threat of globalization and a further loss of its sovereignty. It is vitally imperative for Turkey to establish a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation and Iran. Turkey will only be able to maintain its traditions within the framework of a multipolar world. Certain factions of Turkish society understand this situation, from politicians and socialists to the religious and military elites. Thus, the Moscow-Ankara axis can become a geopolitical reality despite a long period of mutual estrangement."

From the perspective of this view, the resolution of Su-24 crisis appears to be strictly linked with the abovementioned policy vision. Despite the initially soaring bilateral relations under the pretext of Russia's economic sanctions on Turkey, both states have achieved to bring about a rapid normalization in their relations. This rapidly changing dynamics in bilateral relations therefore supports the argument that Eurasianist foreign policy perspective gives a special importance to Turkey's constructive role for the implementation of Russia's strategic goals on the basis of multipolarity in world politics (Tellal, 2017, pp. 129-147).

In order to achieve this goal however, Eurasianist perspective emphasizes the necessity of consolidating Turkey's realignment with Russia such as the current bilateral relations for the resolution of Syrian civil war (Piet and Simao, 2016, pp. 17-25).

Like Russia's domestic views that enabled the normalization of bilateral relations, internal political developments in Turkey have also brought about positive results for the development of Turkey-Russia relations. The consequences of the terrorist attack on July 15, 2016 constituted a major turning point for the prospect of Turkey-Russia relations (Kalkışım and Erdoğan, 2018, pp. 339-410). As a result of Turkey's dissatisfaction with regard to the US'

attitude towards this terrorist attack, Russia's overt support to Turkey brought about a positive effect to overcome the negative impact of Su-24 crisis (Mankoff, 2016).

As a result of this support, Turkish Foreign Minister stated that "Russia gave us unconditional support during the attempted coup. We want to thank President Putin and all of Russia's officials for that support" (The Mocow Times,2017).

On August 10, 2016 Turkish Foreign Minister also argued that "Unfortunately the EU is making some serious mistakes. They have failed the test following the coup attempt. Their issue is anti-Turkey and anti-Erdogan sentiment." (Reuters, 2017)

Moreover, Turkish Foreign Minister has explicitly articulated how Turkey has been alienated by the US policies by stating that "sooner or later the United States of America will make a choice. Either Turkey or FETÖ"(Daventry, 2017).

Another factor that led to the betterment of Turkey-Russia relations is linked with the off-shore balancing strategies of the US (Walt, 2019, p. 9), which requires supporting local actors in Syrian war.

As a term emphasized by the representatives of offensive realists like John Mearshimer, off-shore balancing refers to the implementation of balancing policies through supporting local actors without the direct involvement of the US. According to Mearshimer, the historical development of US foreign policy has mostly favored the enforcement of off-shore balancing policies as a result of the US's distant geographical location. Mearshimer (2001, pp. 150-200) in this regard argues that the US foreign policy only favors direct involvement when the alternative of off-shore balancing strategies ceases to be a viable option.

The main reason of Turkey's opposition to the US military support for YPG terrorist organization originates from its legitimate border security concerns that could be deteriorated by the establishment of a PKK- affiliated political structure in northern Syria. Since YPG is a branch of PKK terrorist organization, there is a growing concern over Turkish policy-makers on the ground that any advancement by YPG in northern Syria may find its repercussions in Turkey's southern borders. Turkey's concern on this issue was clearly stated by President Erdoğan on June 29, 2015 as follows: "I say to the international community that whatever price must be paid, we will never allow the establishment of a new state on our southern frontier in the north of Syria." (The New York Times, 2018)

This situation has also been deteriorated due to the debate on creating safety zones in Syria. The safety zone proposal has been put forward by Turkey due to the increasing level of security threats on Turkey's southern borders. Yet, the proposal was not supported by the US on the ground that safety zones could have drawn the US into Syrian civil war. Considering the US's determination to maintain its off-shore balancing strategy in order to avoid ground involvement in Syria, Turkey's safety zone proposal could not find a favorable reply from the US decision-makers.

The US avoidance in this aspect was illustrated by the former President Barack Obama in G20 summit in Turkey as follows: "A true safe zone requires us to set up ground

operations, who would come in, who could come out of that safe zone? How would it work? Would it become a magnet for further terrorist attacks? How many personnel would be required and how would it end?" (Guardian, 2017).

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL FACTORS FOR THE RESOLUTION OF FOREIGN POLICY CRISES?

Although the abovementioned domestic political dynamics have constituted a significant motivation for the betterment of bilateral relations, these factors do not explain how the two states have achieved to overcome the severity of Su-24 crisis within a very short period of time. Therefore, this part of the study endeavors to supplement the arguments that were deliberated in the previous parts by leaning towards the impact of individual actors in foreign policy crisis. In this endeavor, the study firstly aims to elucidate how neoclassical realism evaluates the positions of decision-makers in moments of foreign policy crisis. Afterwards, the study attempts to evaluate the respective positions of Russian and Turkish Presidents during the management of Su-24 crisis.

In order to analyze the role of individual actors in international politics, neoclassical realism presents two components for their research programme (Rathbun, 2008, pp. 294-321). These components consists of the clarity of threats and type of strategic environment which individual actors are involved in. Neoclassical realism makes a distinction between restrictive and permissive environments. While the former type represents the immanency of security threats and challenges, the latter stands for a more loosened situation in which security threats are not directly encountered with. Among these two components (i.e., the clarity of threats and type of strategic environment), neoclassical realism argues that it becomes possible to assess the role of individual factors in foreign policy analysis (Walker, Schafer and et.al, 1999, pp. 610-616).

According to this view, the combination of restrictive strategic environment with the immanency of direct security threats enhances the decisive influence of leader images. In such circumstances, other intervening variables such as the impact of domestic groups orientation are expected to fall behind the influence of individual dynamics (Rose, 1998, pp. 144-172).

As a prominent representative of neoclassical realism, Steven Lobell puts a special emphasis on one particular decision-maker among a wide range of relevant policy actors. This particular decision maker is called as Foreign Policy Executive (FPE). According to Lobell (2009, p. 56.):

> "The FPE (i.e. state leaders) assesses threats at the systemic level, but also at the sub-systemic and domestic levels. Specifically, threats can emanate from other great powers and extra-regional actors, regional powers in the locale, or domestic opponents. The implication is that state leaders can act on one level, but the objective is to influence the outcome on another level(s)."

Since the management of policy crisis requires the implementation of effective responses, neoclassical realism argues that the autonomous role of state leaders enhances the capability of implementing efficient policy actions.

Like Lobel's emphasis on the autonomous role of state leaders in crisis situations, Norrin Ripsman claims that the domestic constraints such as legislative control may retard the enforcement of rapid reactions. Since state leaders in such circumstances are expected to overcome the undesirable consequences of political crisis, institutional limits on decision-makers may limit FPE's reaction ability (Ripsmann, 2018, p. 6).

Within the framework of these theoretical positions, it is pertinent to concentrate on the question of how the respective state leaders behave in moments of foreign policy crises. According to the studies that analyze the foreign policy vision of President Putin, the main pillar of Russian President's policy approach is based on pragmatism.

According to a study made by S.B. Dyson and M.J. Parent, the notion of President Putin's pragmatism refers to the elimination of ideational factors from the conduct of Russia's foreign policy. For them, the pragmatic aspect of President Putin's foreign policy approach stands as complementary to his opportunistic view of international politics, which entails the utilization of power vacuums in regional politics (Dyson and Parent, 2018, pp. 84-100).

The complementary dimension of Putin's pragmatic approach may also be observed through the development of Turkey-Russia relations in Syria. Since the prospect of Russia's political influence in Syria necessitates establishing favorable relations with regional states like Turkey and Iran, the opportunistic dimension of President Putin's foreign policy vision brought about the result of being pragmatic in his relations with Turkey's decision-makers (Williams and Souza, 2016, pp. 42-45).

The two dimensions of President Putin's foreign policy approach (i.e., opportunism and pragmatism) become evident through the assessment of Russia's assertive foreign policy actions.   According to the abovementioned study, President Putin's rhetoric which emphasizes the precedence of Russia's sphere of influence under the framework of near abroad doctrine demonstrates the opportunistic aspect of President Putin's foreign policy vision.

Yet, in order to find an international support to this rhetoric, Putin's pragmatism necessitates obtaining the support of regional states (Dyson, 2001: 329-346). As stated in the previous part, Turkey's opposition against the US policies in Syria constitutes an important motivation for this purpose. Therefore, one of the main determinants of individual factors for the normalization of Su-24 crisis seems to be motivated by the two dimensions of President Putin's foreign policy vision.

The studies that aim to analyze the leader image of President Erdoğan on the other hand lay special emphasis on his talent of being resilient in moments of foreign policy crisis. According to these studies, like Putin's pragmatic dimension in the conduct of foreign policy-making, President Erdoğan also benefits from the advantage of implementing pragmatic policies (Derman and Oba, 2016, pp. 45-67).

Besides his pragmatism on the international stage, however, President Erdogan also takes the advantage of being flexible during the resolution of political stalemate. Therefore, while President Putin's foreign policy approach contains the implementation of opportunism

and pragmatism, President Erdogan's policy view contains the tenants of both pragmatism and resiliency (Görener and Uca, 2011, pp. 358-371).

As an example of his flexibility in foreign policy, it will be proper to remind that President Erdoğan attempted to alleviate the severity of Su-24 incident by stating that "if Turkish authorities had known the aircraft was a Russian one, it would not have been shot down" (Özertem, 2017, p. 124).

Moreover, this statement came after a short period when President Erdoğan replied to a question which asked whether Turkey would apologize for the downing of Russian jet by clearly stating that "We are not the ones who should apologize; those who trespassed on our aerial territory should" (The Independet, 2017).

Although these two statements seem to represent two contradictory positions at first sight, they become consistent when looking from the perspective of flexibility, which gives room for maneuverability during the management of foreign policy crisis (Derman and Oba, pp. 45-67).

Consequently, the ability of both state leaders in terms of being resilient during the management of foreign policy crises has contributed to the alleviation of Su-24 crisis. Considering the fact that short-term crisis situations give more autonomy to the decisions of state leaders, the ability of foreign policy executives became a decisive element for the successful resolution of this foreign policy crisis (Walker, p. 367).

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to explain the dynamics of change in Turkey-Russia relations between 2011 and 2016. By asking the question of how bilateral relations have normalized so rapidly following a severe political crisis in international politics, the study aimed to put forward a theoretical analysis under the tittles of structural, domestic and individual factors.

Through examining the arguments of structural realism, which argues that the decreasing material gap between states reduce the urgency of counter-balancing policies, the study concluded that the systemic factors originating from the shifts in relative power distribution between the two states after the Cold War fall short of illustrating the impact of domestic and individual factors that have contributed to the rapprochement of Turkey-Russia relations.

Accordingly, the second part of the study is spared to the analysis of domestic factors behind the betterment of Turkey-Russia relations. The study in this respect claimed that the foreign policy orientations of Eurosianist perspective in Russian politics have played a facilitating role. Since the foreign policy notion of this perspective argues that Russia needs to resist a unipolar world order under the dominance of the US, the study concluded that the implication of this policy view enabled the rapid normalization of bilateral relations.

The last part of the study on the other hand has leaned on the question of how individual factors have affected the course of Su-24 crisis. The study in this aspect concentrated on the theoretical arguments of neoclassical realism, which argues that the

moments of foreign policy crises require the implementation of rapid movements by state leaders. By analyzing the traits of foreign policy executives in two states, the study concluded that the individual talents of the two state leaders contributed to the current rapprochement in bilateral relations.

Consequently, the question of how Turkey-Russia relations normalized within a very short period of time after one of the most severe policy crisis in the post-Cold War era lies in the combination of structural, domestic and individual factors. Since such a combination requires incorporating a theoretical framework, the study tried to draw on the theoretical arguments of neoclassical realism. By briefly examining how neoclassical realism constitutes its self-coherency in the first part, the study moved on the analysis of bilateral relations and it finally reached to the conclusion that the dynamics of change in Turkey-Russia relations consist of the interrelated effects of structural, domestic and individual factors.

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