The Impact of Turkish-Russian Normalization Process to Security of the Black Sea

Prof. Kamer Kasım, Bolu Abant Izet Baysal University

Abstract

Security of the Black Sea is being discussed in different context after the Cold War era. At the beginning of 2000, the US argued that there is a security vacuum in the Black Sea and new security structure is necessary. The US even argued that NATO's Mediterranean operation (*Operation Active Endeavor*) should be conducted in the Black Sea. On the other hand Turkey argued that Turkish supported security mechanisms like BLACKSEAFOR, Operation Black Sea Harmony are enough to provide security in the Black Sea. In this regard, since Turkey and Russia are the two regional powers in the Black Sea, Turkish-Russian cooperation is important to provide security in the Black Sea. However, Turkish-Russian relations formulated by "compartmentalization" faced the biggest challenge when Russian SU-24 aircraft that violated Turkish airspace was shot down on 24th November 2015. Turkish-Russian normalization process started in June 2016 and accelerated with Turkish President Erdoğan and Russian President Putin's meeting in St. Petersburg on 9 August 2016. In this paper, Turkish-Russian relations implications of the Black Sea security would be discussed with particular focus on Turkish-Russian normalization process. In this regard, crisis in Ukraine, frozen conflict in Georgia and Turkish initiative projects for Black Sea security will be evaluated to have correct analysis of Black Sea security and stability.

Key Words: Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Black Sea, Security

Özet

Soğuk Savaş dönemi sonrasında Karadeniz'in güvenliği çok boyutlu olarak tartışılmaya başlandı. ABD 2000'li yılların başında Karadeniz'de bir güvenlik boşluğu olduğunu iddia ederek, yeni bir güvenlik yapılanmasına ihtiyaç duyulduğunu ileri sürdü. Hatta NATO'nun Akdeniz'deki Aktif Çaba Operasyonunun Karadeniz'de de yürütülmesi gerektiği ABD tarafından ifade edildi. Diğer yandan Türkiye kendisi tarafından desteklenen BLACKSEAFOR, Karadeniz Uyum Harekâtı gibi mekanizmaların Karadeniz'de güvenlik için yeterli olduğunu ileri sürmüştür. Türkiye ve Rusya'nın iki bölgesel güç olduğu düşünüldüğünde Türkiye-Rusya işbirliğinin Karadeniz'de güvenliğin sağlanmasındaki önemi görülür. Ancak Türk-Rus ilişkilerinde "kompartımanlaşma" olarak ifade edilen formül, Rus SU-24 savaş uçağının Türk hava sahasını ihlal etmesinden dolayı 24 Kasım 2015'de düşürülmesiyle bir meydan okuma ile karşılaştı. Bozulan ilişkilerde normalleşme süreci Haziran 2016 başladı ve Türkiye Devlet Başkanı Erdoğan ve Rusya Devlet Başkanı Putin'in 9 Ağustos 2016'de St. Petersburg'da görüşmeleriyle hız kazandı. Bu makalede Türk-Rus ilişkilerinin Karadeniz güvenliğine etkileri Türk-Rus ilişkilerinde normalleşme süreci temel alınarak tartışılacaktır. Bu çerçevede Ukrayna krizi, Gürcistan'daki dondurulmuş çatışma ve Türkiye'nin öncülüğünde Karadeniz'de güvenliğin sağlanması için ileri sürülen ve uygulanan mekanizmalar Karadeniz'de güvenlik ve istikrarın doğru bir analizinin yapılabilmesi için incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, Rusya, Ukrayna, Karadeniz, Güvenlik

Introduction

The Black Sea region was in a strategic position during the Cold War era. Turkey was the only NATO member state and the region was in the front line of the Cold War rivalry. The end of the Cold War changed strategic parameters in the region. Romania and Bulgaria became NATO members and Ukraine and Georgia declared their membership aspirations. Security issues in the region were discussed in different context after the Cold War era. Transformation of the Russian foreign policy from Euro-Atlantic perspective to the Eurasianist one in 1993 turned Black Sea into the competition zone. NATO's enlargement strategy to the Eastern Europe made Russia to follow more aggressive policy in the Black Sea, which became even more obvious with Putin's presidency. Russia implement a kind of "soft war" policy to restrict Western impact on Black Sea.[1] Russia became suspicious about Romania and Bulgaria's close military ties with the US and their proposals of new arrangements in the Black Sea.

The US's argument about existence of a security vacuum in the Black Sea and desire to operate NATO's Operation of Active Endeavour in the Black Sea was also another reason for Russia to be worried of. In this regard, Turkey did not support the idea that Operation Active Endeavor to be conducted in Black Sea. Turkey did not want to open any discussion about the Monteux Convention on the Turkish Straits.[2] In this regard Turkish and Russian view of Black Sea security converged in certain points. This was also result of improving Turkish-Russian relations. However, fluctuation in the relations and Russian policy towards Georgia and Ukraine impacted on Turkey's policy towards the Black Sea security. Turkey argued that mechanisms which are supported and initiated by Turkey were enough to provide security in the Black Sea. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Force (BLACKSEAFOR), Black Sea Border Coordination and Information Center and Operation Black Sea Harmony considered as mechanisms enough to provide security in the Black Sea. However, Russian invasion of Georgian territory in August 2008, Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 opened discussion about the Black Sea security. Turkish-Russian cooperation was criticized by Bulgaria and Romania, which considered this is a kind of cooperation between hegemons. It might be argued that Turkish-Russian cooperation provided some kind of "hegemonic stability" in the region. This argument only applies when Turkey and Russia acted with consensus in the Black Sea. But Russian invasion of Georgia, Russian annexation of Crimea and shot down of Russian SU-24 aircraft after violation of Turkish airspace on 24th November 2015 were the incidents put question mark on Turkish-Russian cooperation. The last incident particularly damaged the relations and Ankara and Moscow faced one of the biggest challenges in the relations since the end of the Cold War. Turkish-Russian normalization process started in June 2016 and accelerated with Turkish President Erdoğan and Russian President Putin's meeting in St Petersburg on 9 August 2016. This would definitely impact on the security of the Black Sea.

In this article we will discuss Turkish-Russian relations implications on the Black Sea Security. In this regard the normalization process in Turkish-Russian relations after 24 November 2015 incident will be focused on. The Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008 and the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 will be dealt with regarding Turkey's strategy and their implications on the Black Sea security.

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[1] Bruce Jackson, "The Soft War for Europe's East", *Policy Review*, http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/3202956.html, No. 137, June-July, 2006.

[2] Kamer Kasım, "Türkiye'nin Karadeniz Politikası: Temel Parametreler ve Stratejiler", *Journal of Central Asian and Caucassian Studies*, No. 5, (2008): 172-180. Web page of BLACKSEAFOR, ,http://www.blackseafor.org/english/homepage.php.

Black Sea Security in the post-Cold War Era

The disintegration of the Soviet Union changed strategic parameters in the Black Sea. Ukraine and Georgia became independent littoral states. Bulgaria and Romania became NATO members in 2004. In post-Cold War era, regional tensions even conflicts became a common phenomenon in many regions. In the bipolar world order the superpowers have the ability to control its allies in order to prevent them to go into conflict. In the post-Cold War era, however, ethnic and territorial problems were easily turned into the conflicts. Regional organizations are important to provide security and to prevent conflicts in the new era and regional powers with their increasing role are important for regional groupings. Turkey took initiative for cooperation in the Black Sea region. Turkey proposed BSEC as a model of multilateral political and economic initiative to foster interaction and harmony among its members. The BSEC was founded in 1992 as an intergovernmental organization with the aim of creating economic cooperation for the member states. BSEC covers a geography encompassing the territories of the Black Sea littoral states, the Balkans and the Caucasus with an area of nearly 20 million square kilometers and represent 350 million people. The BSEC became a platform where countries could put their political differences aside and work together for economic cooperation. The BSEC aimed to create a bigger trade volume between the member states and to solve financial problems for investment through a regional development bank (the Black Sea Co-operation Regional Development Bank). It was designed to establish a new multilateral co-operation venture, based on the principles of the market economy. The members would carry out joint projects, in various fields, such as transportation, information technologies, energy, tourism and agriculture.[3]

The BSEC has been criticized of lacking of effectiveness and efficiency. One of the reasons of this is the heterogenic character of its members. Another reason might be particularly in the early years of the BSEC is that the new independent members of the organization were also hesitated to give up their sovereignty rights to a supranational authority. Referring to the heterogenic character of the organization some argued that due to the diverse regional presence, cultural and linguistic differences, it is difficult to have a common regional identity.[4] This caused difficulties to have a common approach towards the regional problems. Later the Cold War type disagreements have also seen in the region. Bulgaria and Romania became a member of NATO, Ukraine and Georgia declared their membership aspiration and these developments were not welcomed by Russia, which is a regional power together with Turkey. There was even an argument that like the Cold War era the Black Sea continued to be a clash zone in terms of security debate.

Turkey also supported and engaged to provide security in the region with the mechanisms for practical cooperation in certain subjects. The BLACKSEAFOR engages search and rescue operations, humanitarian assistance; mine counter measures, environmental protection, goodwill visits and any other tasks agreed by all the parties.[5] Black Sea Border Coordination and Information Center aims to enhance information sharing in order to tackle illegal maritime activities. Operation Black Sea Harmony was launched by Turkey in order to deter terrorism and eliminate threats in the Black Sea. These mechanisms worked well with certain understanding between Turkey and Russia.

The US once argued that there was a security vacuum in the Black Sea and NATO's Operation of Active Endeavour should be conducted in the Black Sea also. The US military cooperation with Romania and Bulgaria were seen as a way of limiting the Russian influence

[3] See BSEC web page, http://www.bsec-organization.org/Pages/homepage.aspx

[4] Panagiota Manoli, *Reinvigorating Black Sea Cooperation: A Policy Discussion, Policy Report III*, (Germany: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010), 7-9.

[5] See web page of BLACKSEAFOR, http://www.blackseafor.org.

in the region. In this competition the other NATO member, Turkey argued that mechanisms which are supported and initiated by Turkey were enough to provide security in the Black Sea.[6]

Romania and Bulgaria came up with the new proposals aimed to restrict regional powers' influence in the Black Sea. Community of Democratic Choice was established in 2005. Romania hosted Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership in 2006.[7] These initiatives might be considered as weakened Turkish initiatives organizations. Turkey and Russia argued that the Black Sea region secured with the current mechanisms and region did not need new security measures involving states outside the region. This was a strong argument during the time of stability in the Black Sea. However, Russian-Georgian conflict in August 2008 shake the idea that Black Sea is quite secure and discussions were ignited about the Black Sea security. During the Russian-Georgian conflict Turkey initiated Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Pact, which aims to create cooperation and dialogue channels in order to prevent conflicts. However, it was too late and damaged occurred in the Russia's relations with the West in some ways resembles the Cold War era. The Russian-Georgian conflict was not only disturbed the Russia-West relations but also create the perceptions that stability in the Black Sea region was also fragile. This might be used to justify the new security arrangement proposals. States faced "frozen conflicts" and concerned with territorial integrity were seeking new security guarantees.[8] Russian annexation of Crimea also started discussions about security and territorial integrity in Ukraine.

Turkish-Russian Relations: Brief Analysis

During the Cold War era Turkish-Russian relations were hostage of the global competition. With the end of the Cold War Turkish-Russian relations became important in regional context. Despite the divergence of interest in certain regional issues, economic relations developed rapidly. Trade volume increased from $4.2 billion in 1997; $28.2 billion in 2007 to $31.2 billion in 2014. However, due to the Turkey's energy import, Turkey has to face huge trade deficit, which became -16.813.425 US Dollar in 2015.[9] In 1997 Blue Stream natural gas pipeline project was chosen by Turkey to get Russian natural gas through a pipeline built 2200 meters beneath the Black Sea. As a result of policy to buy Russian natural gas, Turkey imported 26.6 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Russia in 2015. Turkey buys % 55 of its natural gas from Russia.[10] Russia made also another proposal to bypass Ukraine to export its natural gas to the world markets called Turkish Stream. Russian President Putin announced the project in December 2014 as a replacement of abandoned South Stream pipeline project, which would pass through Bulgaria. The Turkish Stream was planned to deliver 32 billion cubic meters of gas per a year from the Russian Black Sea coast to Turkey and on to Greece. Turkey would take about 14 billion cubic meters gas from the Turkish Stream.[11] Turkey and Russia

[6] See NATO web page for Operation Active Endeavor, http://www.nato.int.

[7] Michael Emerson, "What Should the Community of Democratic Choice Do?", *CEPS Policy Brief*, no. 98, (8 March 2006), accessed November 15, 2016, https://www.ceps.eu/publications/what-should-community-democratic-choice-do.

[8] Kamer Kasım, "Türkiye'nin Kafkasya Politikası 2011", In *Türk Dış Politikası Yıllığı 2011,* ed. Burhanettin Duran, Kemal İnat ve Ali Resul Usul, (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 571.

[9] See Turkish Statistical Institute web page, http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1046.

[10] "Turkey's Energy Profile and Strategy*", Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, accessed November 3, 2016, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkeys-energy-strategy.en.mfa

[11] For Turkish Stream and Turkish-Russian energy relations see https://www.rt.com/business/355245-turkey-restart-tukish-stream/. "Turkey and Russia May Developed Turkish Stream Infrastructure Together", *Hurriyet Daily News*, http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-russia-may-develop-turkish-stream-infrastructure-together.aspx?pageID=238&nID=102566&NewsCatID=348, August 7, 2016.

also reached an agreement for the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power plant in Mersin/Akkuyu. The project worth $20 billion included four 1,200 MW reactors.[12]

Tourism also became another area for cooperation. The number of Russian tourists visits Turkey increased from hundred thousand in 1990's to 4.5 million in 2010 and despite some fluctuations, the number always exceed 3.5 million aftermath of 2012. In 2014, 4.5 million Russian tourists visited Turkey. In 2015 the Russian tourists visited Turkey dropped to 3.6 million. Turkish and Russian administrations encouraged mobility while abolishing visa requirements. Turkish contractors had more than 1,920 projects worth $62 billion in Russia since 1988. Turkish firms have the share of 19, 6 % in the Russian Federation.[13]

Although economic relations developed in many fronts, political relations were problematic. In 1990's Turkey's active policy toward the Turkic Republics was perceived by Russia as a challenge of its regional role. Turkey and Russia came up with the magic formula called "compartmentalization of relations "in order to prevent political disagreements to disrupt economic relations. This formula means that Turkey and Russia will separate political relations and issues from economic ones. This even reflected in Turkish-Russian energy relations. Political competition in the Caucasus and Central Asia did not prevent Turkish-Russian cooperation in Energy issues. However, this formula tested during August 2008 Russian Georgian conflict and Russian annexation of Crimea. In both of these tests relations were not damaged and continued with a little arguments. But when Russian aircraft was shot down by Turkish jets in Turkish airspace on 24th November 2015, relations were shaken and Russia implemented some economic measures afterwards. The cases of Georgia and Ukraine are directly related to the Black Sea security. The aircraft incidents also impacted on Black Sea security since the two regional powers of the region faced the biggest challenge in the relations.

Russian-Georgian Conflict, Annexation of Crimea and Black Sea Security

Tensions in Russian-Georgian relations were obvious after Saakashvili's election as Georgian President. This tension reached its climax in 2008. Russia sent so called railway troops to Abkhazia on 31 May 2008. Russia claimed that they are unarmed troops for repair railways. This followed conflict between South Ossetian militias and Georgians and Russian violation of Georgian airspace. When Georgian forces gained control in capital of South Ossetia Russian forces intervened the Georgian territory. NATO's refusal to implement Membership Action Plan to Georgia in Bucharest Summit in April 2008 encouraged Russia for this intervention. Russia had the understanding that although the West supports Georgia, it hesitates to give military commitment.[14] Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia's independence made the situation even more complicated.

One conclusion of the Russian intervention was the tension between the West and Russia. The US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that this was resembles the Soviet intervention of Czechoslovakia in 1968.[15] Russian intervention also put Turkey in difficult position. Turkey's argument, which was also supported by Russia that Black Sea is quite secure with the mechanisms existed, was weakened. Turkey proposed Caucasus Stability and Cooperation

[12] See for details of the Project http://www.akkunpp.com/index.php?lang=en

[13] See "Turkish Contractors Back in Russian Market", *Daily Sabah*, http://www.dailysabah.com/money/2016/07/04/turkish-contractors-back-in-russian-market, July 3, 2016. See also http://www.bbc.com/turkce/ekonomi/2015/11/151125_turkiye_rusya_ekonomi, November 25, 2015.

[14] Brain Whitmore, "Did Russia Plan Its War in Georgia?", *Eurasia Insight*, (15 August 2008), accessed November 12, 2016, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp081608.shtml.

[15] "Peace Plan Signed, But Russian Forces Appear to Advance", *Eurasia Insight*, (15 August 2008), accessed November 14, 2016, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101008_pr.sthml.

Platform during the crisis to prevent dispute further escalates. Turkey supported territorial integrity of Georgia. Turkey also did not want to sacrifice its relations with Russia. Turkey is very keen to keep Black Sea is secure together with other littoral states and current measures. Turkey is also very keen to protect Montreux Convention. Despite the fact that Turkey and Russia have common interest to provide security in the Black Sea with regional initiatives, Russian intervention to Georgia did not help Turkey's strategy regarding Black Sea security.[16].

Another important event, which opened discussion about Black Sea security was Russian annexation of Crimea. Besides its closeness of Turkey, Crimea is important for Turkey since Tatar community live there and they have close ties with Turkey. Tatars constitutes 12% of the Crimean population. After the Russian annexation of Crimea Turkey expressed its concern regarding the rights of the Tatar community. Turkey traditionally supports the territorial integrity of countries and opposed secessionist claims. For this reason the annexation of Crimea by Russia was not recognized. However, Turkey's position towards the annexation was different than the US and some European countries attitudes. While they imposed sanctions against Russia, Turkey did not join them and asked for negotiation with Ukraine and Russia to find mutually acceptable solution. Turkey avoided confrontation with Russia due to the Ukrainian crisis.[17]However, Russia had definite advantages in the Black Sea with the annexation of Crimea. This became a problem for Turkey particularly with the crisis in Turkish-Russian relations after the Russian aircraft was shot down. Despite Turkey's quite different policy towards Russian actions in Ukraine than its NATO allies, Russian reaction of aircraft incident caused concern in Turkey. This had implications on Turkey's view about Black Sea security. Historical legacy in Turkish-Russian relations are alive and this increase Turkey's caution about Russian strategic moves in the Black Sea. As a result of the Russian military modernization program, Russia added four submarines, two missile corvettes and several patrol boats to its Black sea Fleet.[18] Moscow's policy aimed to recover its strength which decreased substantially with the demise of the Soviet Union. Since the Black Sea situated in a strategic intersection of east-west and north-south corridors, whoever controls Black Sea can project power toward Balkans, Caucasus, East and Central Europe and even toward Mediterranean region. Therefore Black Sea became even more important for Russia's new global role, which was loudly expressed following the return of Putin's presidency in 2012. Russia revised its maritime doctrine in July 2015 and it is main objective is to create anti-access and area denial zone toward NATO in the Black Sea. Since the economic zones of Russia and Romania have become de facto adjacent; Russia shares maritime border with NATO and the EU in the Black Sea. Russia had several hundred kilometers additional coastline along the Black Sea with the annexation of Crimea. Besides Russia had an important Black Sea port Sevastopol and other ports in Crimea. With the control of the Kerch Strait Russia will not be busy to solve the demarcation of maritime borders issue between the Kerch strait and the Sea of Azov.[19]

Turkey's policy regarding Russian Black Sea strategy after the annexation of Crimea was a reflection of the situation in Turkish-Russian relations. During the time of tension and before the normalization process in Turkish-Russian relations Turkey was more concern about the Russian policies. President Erdoğan during his speech at the 10th Conference of Balkan

[16] See Kamer Kasım, "The August 2008 Russian-Georgian Conflict And Its Implications: A New Era In The Caucasus?", *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 9, (2010), 64-81.
[17] Levent Baştürk, "Turkey's Policy towards Ukraine: Crimean Crisis", *World Bulletin*, (2 April 2014), accessed November 18, 2016, http://www.worldbulletin.net/servisler/haberYazdir/132095/haber.
[18] Denitsa Raynova, "Nobody's Lake: Securing the Black Sea", (4 July 2016), acessed November 12, 2016, http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/nobodys-lake-securing-the-black-sea-_3933.html.
[19] Janusz Bugajski and Peter B. Doran, "Black Sea Rising Russia's Strategy in Southeast Europe", *Black Sea Strategic Report No.1*, Center for European Policy Analysis, February 2016: 4-8.

Countries' Chiefs of General Staff on 11 May said "The Black Sea has almost become a Russian lake".[20] On the other hand, Russia's Permanent Representative to NATO Alexander Grushko said that "The Black Sea will not become a NATO lake".[21]

Normalization process in Turkish-Russian relations as will be discussed below changed the attitude of both countries towards each other in wide range of issues including Black Sea. However, despite the fact that Turkish-Russian relations faced a big challenge after the aircraft incident, Turkey's policy was consistent regarding to provide security in the Black Sea with littoral states and existed regional mechanisms. Turkey was cautious about any proposal which may push the limits of Montreux Convention. The annexation of Ukraine and the Russian support of separatists in Donbas increased security concern in NATO countries, particularly, Romania expressed this concern and made a proposal for Black Sea security. First Romania asked for collective NATO naval presence in the Black Sea, which may not be accepted by Turkey since it would be in breach of the Montreux Convention to deploy naval ships from non-Black Sea states. Romania also proposed a hybrid fleet of ships from Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Ukraine and Georgia. However, Bulgaria even objected to take part in such operation. Another Romanian proposal was to form a multinational brigade under the command of the Multinational Division Southeast.[22]All these proposals in some ways required increasing NATO presence in the Black Sea. Among the proposals, the ones that offered presence of non-littoral states do not suit Turkey's argument about the Black Sea security.

Crisis in Turkish Russian Relations and the Normalization Process

Turkish-Russian relations formulated by compartmentalization faced the biggest challenge when Russian SU-24 aircraft that violated Turkish airspace was shot down by a Turkish F-16 fighter jet on 24th November 2015. After the repeated warnings, Turkey implemented its rules of engagement which is known by Russia. Russian President Putin called action as a stab in the back and Russia imposed economic sanctions against Turkey. Charter flights were suspended and package tours to Turkey were banned and Russians were discouraged to travel to Turkey, which targeted tourism industry in Turkey. In fact compare with the first five months of 2015, the number of Russians visited Turkey decreased 82.7 % in the first five months of 2016 from 801.915 to 138.181. Fruits and vegetables exporters and construction industry were affected by the Russian sanctions. However, Russia's sanctions were counterproductive. Russia had to import food products from other countries like Czech Republic and Poland, this reflected on the prices of fruits and vegetables. Fruit prices in Russia increased nearly 20 % over the first four months of 2016. The prices of food are the one of the major factors, which affected inflation in Russia.[23] The crisis posed a challenge in Turkish-Russian relations, which was at least in the economic front smooth since the end of the Cold War. Turkey and Russia realized that the normalization of the relations will be the benefit of the both countries.

The most important step for the normalization came with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's letter to the Russian President Vladimir Putin on 27th June 2016. Another key step

[20] http://www.milliyet.com.tr/black-sea-becomes-russian-lake--en-2243736/en.htm, 12 May 2016.

[21]"Russia Won't Let Black Sea Turn Into NATO Lake", *Pravda.Ru* , (31 May 2016), accessed November 14, 2016, http://www.pravdareport.com/news/hotspots/conflicts/31-05-2016/134579,bblack_sea_nato_russia-0/#sthash.9DLmmafU.dpuf.

[22] Denitsa Raynova, "Nobody's Lake: Securing the Black Sea", (4 July 2016), acessed November 12, 2016, http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/nobodys-lake-securing-the-black-sea-_3933.html

[23] "Russia's Embargo on Turkish Goods Fails to Affect Turkey", *Daily Sabah*, (22 June 2016), accessed November 16, 2016, http://www.dailysabah.com/economy/2016/06/23/russias-embargo-on-turkish-goods-fails-to-affect-turkey. See also a report prepared by the Russian Gaidar Institute for Economic Policy.

was the Putin's acceptance of the letter. Putin also decided to lift the sanctions against Turkey. The two leaders meeting in St. Petersburg on 9 August 2016 opened a new era to overcome crisis in bilateral relations. The ties between the leaders of the two countries played a crucial role in the process. Turkish President Erdoğan and Russian President Putin are the main actors for developing close relations in recent years. Putin's support of Turkey against coup attempt also accelerated the normalization process. Turkey's energy dependency to Russia and Russians importance of Turkey's tourism industry are important factors for Turkey to have smooth relations with Russia. On the other hand Turkey is an important customer of the Russian natural gas. Besides Turkey's location is important for Russian energy strategies. Russia wants to bypass Ukraine for its natural gas exports and Turkish Stream pipeline project is a vital part of this strategy. In terms of tourism, Russian administrations' sanctions punished Russian citizens who would like to go to Turkey for holiday.

Turkish-Russian relations have also important dimensions regarding the Caucasus and Central Asia. Smooth relations will increase Turkey's and Russia's influences in the region. For Turkic republics, particularly, good relations between Turkey and Russia means that they would continue their special ties with the both countries without offend one of them.

The Black Sea is an area of cooperation and competition between Turkey and Russia. While Turkish-Russian relations are tense Turkey's security concerns in the Black Sea gets higher and Turkey may consider new security alternatives to prevent the Russian expansion in the Black Sea. As was the case after 24th November 2015, the Black Sea was seen in a region pose security risks for littoral states. Ukraine, Georgia and Romania are particularly felt this in different degrees. For Georgia this risk became obvious in August 2008. Romania mentioned the risk and came up with different proposals. Ukraine faced the annexation of Crimea. For Turkey as long as mutual understanding with Russia existed, Turkey continues its strong support of regional security mechanisms of Black Sea. Increasing tension after the Russian jet's shot down created new cooperation between Turkey and Ukraine in the Black Sea. Turkey and Ukraine discussed to increase military cooperation and they even conducted joint military exercises.[24] However this picture changed rapidly with the normalization process of Turkish-Russian relations. Ukraine wanted Turkey not to be attended 47. General Assembly of Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, which was held in Moscow on 28-30 June 2016. According to Ukraine, Turkey should protest the Russian violation of its territorial integrity, which is against the basic principles of Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Turkey attended the General Assembly and the normalization process has been continued.[25]

The normalization of Turkish-Russian relations will have direct impact on the Black Sea security. Turkey would be keen to have closer cooperation with its NATO allies in the time of crisis in Turkish-Russian relations since Turkey also felt threatened by Russian annexation of Crimea and Russian invasion of Georgian territories. This threat perception particularly related to the fact that when Turkish-Russian relations faced challenged, dialogue channels were closed and Russia was quick to implement sharp measures like economic sanctions against Turkey. This indicated the fragile character of Turkish-Russian relations.

The normalization of relations mean that Turkey will return in its original idea for the Black Sea security. However, confidence building measures are necessary to make regional

[24] Damien Sharkov, "Ukraine and Turkey Launch Joint Naval Drill Amid Standoff With Russia", *Newsweek*, (8 March 2016), accessed November 16, 2016, http://europe.newsweek.com/ukraine-and-turkey-launch-joint-naval-drill-amid-russia-stand-434806?rm=eu.

[25] Ramazan Can, , "Ukrayna Türkiye'nin Rusya'ya Gitmesini İstemedi", Interview, Yurdagül Şimşek *Sputnik Turkey*, July 15, 2016, https://tr.sputniknews.com/roportaj/201607151023867479-keipa-rusya-turkiye-ukrayna-ramazan-can/.

security arrangements efficient. Turkey's relations with other littoral states, particularly, with Ukraine and Georgia are important in this context. Turkey's ties with these states would contribute a kind of confidence building in the region. The normalization in Turkish-Russian relations means that Turkey will be less enthusiastic about military cooperation with Ukraine. However, this does not mean that Turkey-Ukraine economic and politic relations have no potential for improvement. On the contrary Turkish-Ukrainian economic relations, particularly, have great potential. Ukraine economy will grow average 3.5 percent yearly in 2017-2021 according to IMF's projections. Despite the fact that Russian GDP is ten times larger than Ukraine's, Turkey's export to Ukraine almost 80 % of Turkey's export to Russia. Turkey became on the fifth place of Ukraine's trade partner in the first half 2016.[26] Turkey's active involvement in the Black Sea security and close relations with other littoral states are necessary to have more secure Black Sea. The way of providing security in the Black Sea depends on not just Turkey's policy and strategy, it is very much depend on Russian strategy as well. If Russia wants to keep NATO out of Black Sea or prevent the Black Sea become a "NATO lake" as said by Alexander Grushko, it needs to have close relations with Turkey and follow more compromising policy towards the crisis in Ukraine and frozen conflicts in Georgia.

Conclusion

Turkish-Russian relations are formulated as "compartmentalization", which means that economic relations conducted independent from the political ones. This enabled both countries act in economic field without obstacles comes from political disagreements in certain regional issues. However, this formula tested in different occasions. The first important test was the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008. Turkey supports Georgia's territorial integrity and Russian invasion posed open challenge of Turkey's policy. Despite this, Turkey followed cautious policy during the crisis in order to keep the level of Turkish-Russian relations. Another challenge was the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014. Turkey is interested in the situation of Tatars and Turkey as a principle in its foreign policy supports territorial integrity of countries.[27] If Russia take steps to improve and protect the rights of Tatars at least this issue will not be a problem in bilateral relations. However, because of the above mentioned principle Turkey will not recognize the annexation of Crimea. Russian policy towards Georgia and Ukraine challenged Turkey's view about the security of the Black Sea. Turkey argued that Black Sea is secure with the current mechanisms and it is not necessary to the involvement of non-littoral states for security issues of the region. However, it would be difficult to convince at least Georgia and Ukraine that Black Sea is secure after what happened in August 2008 and March 2014.

The biggest challenged in Turkish-Russian relations was the developments after Russian air craft's shot down in Turkish air space. Russia implemented some measures including sanctions and relations were in crisis, which would have implications in Black Sea security. In this period Turkey openly expressed its concern about Russian operations in the Black Sea. The normalization process in bilateral relations would definitely change Turkish and Russian view about Black Sea security. Turkey will be more confident to express its confidence of security mechanisms in the Black Sea. However, as was seen during the crisis, compartmentalization formula is not guarantee smooth relations between Turkey and Russia. The conflict in the Black Sea, Caucasus and the Middle East posed serious challenge in relations. Turkish-Russian

[26] Adam Blacer, "Turkey and Ukraine, The End of the Love Affair?", *New Eastern Europe*, http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/2124-turkey-and-ukraine-the-end-of-the-love-affair, 19 September 2016.

[27] See Kamer Kasım, "Türkiye'nin Asıl Hassasiyeti Kırım Tatarlarının Haklarının Korunması", interview, Hüseyin Hayatsever *Sputnik Turkey*, September 21, 2016, https://tr.sputniknews.com/columnists/201609211024926253-turkiye-kirim-tatar-rusya-hak-koruma/.

differences towards Syrian crisis, annexation of Crimea and territorial integrity of Georgia have potential risk areas. Besides Russian-Armenian relations and Russian policy towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict may also potential to challenge the bilateral relations.

Turkey showed clearly its will to improve relations with Russia. First of all, despite Turkey is not recognize the annexation of Crimea, it did not join the US and the EU's sanctions against Russia. In return Turkey has right to expect some changes in Russian policy in the areas that Turkey sensitive about. The Armenian allegations and Turkey's struggle against terrorist organizations are the ones that Russia should adjust its policies. It is not Russia's interest to Russian President's attendance of 24th April ceremonies in Yerevan and continuing occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan by the Armenian troops. Russia may also be more cooperative with Turkey against terrorism. To provide security in the Black Sea with the effort of littoral states is in the interest of Turkey and Russia. Therefore they have to cooperate in security issues and activate current mechanisms in order to make Black Sea more secure.

MARMARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ