

MARITIME STRATEGIC EVALUATION FOR ISRAEL 2020/21

Chief editor: Prof. Shaul Chorev

Edited and produced by: Ehud Gonen




אוניברסיטת חיפה
University of Haifa
جامعة حيفا


HMS

Maritime Policy & Strategy Research Centre
המרכז לחקר מדיניות ואסטרטגיה ימית

Turkey-Russia Maritime Relations

Ido Gilad and Tim Jenkins

Introduction

In recent years, Turkey has engaged in a range of ambitious programs in the military, energy and economic fields with the aim of reviving its historical power and expanding its geo-strategic position in the MENA region and beyond. In support of this "*Neo-Ottoman*" agenda, Turkey is acting at times aggressively in the maritime arena, through the "*Mavi Vatan*" or "*Blue Homeland*" doctrine; increasing its Naval assets and power projection capabilities in the near seas, as well as laying claim to energy resources in conflicted areas of the Mediterranean.

This activity has increasingly brought Turkey into contact with Russia, a traditional rival, who have competed in the maritime realm since the time of Tsar Peter the Great. The relationship between the two states have historically oscillated between one of cooperation and competition. Not including prior or subsequent skirmishes, 14 major wars have taken place between 1568 and 1918; beginning with the Russo-Turkish Wars which predominantly related to control of the Black Sea, and ending with World War I. In the current era the Russo-Turkish dynamic is complex, with overlapping areas of interest and conflict. Both Russia and Turkey can be observed enacting multifaceted strategies. The two have substantial and lasting areas of cooperation in energy, as well as in the maritime arena.

Background

Throughout history, competition between Turkey and Russia has taken place in the maritime arena. This rivalry stretches back 325 years to creation of the Russian Navy by Peter the Great who stated "*Any ruler that has but ground troops has one hand, but one that has a Navy has both hands*".¹ The primary role of the Navy was securing access to the open seas.

The Ottoman Navy dates back further, with its first shipbuilding facilities beginning in the 14th century under Bayezid the First, with the aim of controlling the straits, and grew into a significant naval power in the 15th and 16th centuries with their extension into the Mediterranean Sea.

1 ONI, (2015). *The Russian Navy A Historic Trastition*. Washington: The Office Of Naval Intelligence.

Peter the Great recognized the decline of the Ottoman Empire and its defeat by Vienna in 1683 as an opportunity for Russia to expand its power and gain access to the warm water ports of the Black Sea. He personally headed the construction of naval vessels, known as the Azov Fleet, and directed their use for a combined land and sea Russian attack on the Ottoman Azov fortress on the Don river estuary. Finding the surrounding waters too shallow for their needs, in 1696 first port for the Russian fleet in the Black Sea was established in the deeper waters of the Azov Sea at Taganrog, some 25 nautical miles west. Russian naval influence was expanded in 1774 to include the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, with the signing of the Küçük Kaynara agreement with the defeated Ottomans. Russian naval dominance over the straits was completed when the two nations cooperated to defeat the insurrection of Muhammad Ali whose armies extended from Egypt as far North as Syria. The Russian provision of Naval assistance to the Ottomans led to the signing of the Hünkâr İskelesi agreement in 1831, which lasted until the intervention of the West in 1841.

As demonstrated, the hegemonic aspirations over the maritime routes have long been a fundamental contact point between Russia and Turkey. During the creation of the modern Turkish Navy by Atatürk in the early 1920s, the Turkish Directorate of Naval Affairs purchased ships from the Soviet Union, in an early show of cooperation between the USSR and the New Turkish Republic.

The 1936 drafting of the "*Montreux Convention*", returned to Turkey control over the maritime transit routes from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. The convention relates to all shipping, though is perhaps most strategically significant to the transit of military vessels, as well as dangerous goods shipments, both in peace time and certainly in times of tension. Importantly however, this control does not extend to the levy of fees or taxes for use of the narrow straits, which are subject to regular norms of freedom of navigation.

In recent years the Eastern Mediterranean nations have focused on the potential for exploration and production of subsea fossil fuels and its transportation, by vessels as well as through pipelines. The strategic competition for energy resources among the regional actors raises the economic and geo-political significance of the zone, also known by the term of "*Energy Diplomacy*".

This geographical area of importance is significant for Turkey, positioned in a geo-strategic junction in the heart of the Eurasian continent, between the Caucasus, the Balkans and the Middle East. From a historical perspective, Turkey's influence over the region stems from the time of the Ottoman Empire with its geographical

conquests, as well as its role as leader of the Sunni Muslim World which ended with the declaration of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923.²

For the Russian Federation (RF), as the successor of the Soviet Union, much importance is given to its peripheral territories, which act as a buffer zone against foreign aggression. This is especially relevant in its South West which provides strategic access to the Black Sea, and from there and exit through the Bosphorus and Dardanelle Straits to the Mediterranean and beyond. This importance can be seen in various Russian activities in the area, of note Russia is planning to hold its annual command and control (C2) exercise in the Black Sea, this year named "*Caucus 2020*" in September.

Nonetheless, in recent years Turkey has reminded the Russians of its own regional aspirations through control on this significant maritime junction, which is perceived as Turkish inland waters. A reminder of its maritime dominance over the straits was observed in Turkey's posturing towards Russia immediately after the downing of a Russian Sukhoi-24 fighter plane over the Turkish-Syrian border in November 2015. In the subsequent diplomatic exchanges, Turkey was quick to signal to Russia their ability to close, or deny access to the strategic choke point in the event of further escalations. Surprisingly, the mutual connection between the two leaders were tightened after the crisis, with Erdogan and Putin renewing the spirit of coordination which prevailed between them throughout Putin's first decade of rule, prior to the outbreak of the "*Arab Spring*".

Some of the expressions for mutual partnership is also evidenced by the Turkish procurement of Russian weapons, such as the advanced S-400 air defense systems, which were declared operational by Turkish Army forces in 2019.³ An offer for additional units was raised by Russia as late as June 2020. The Turkish acquisition has severely strained the US-Turkish relationship with the US withholding the delivery of F-35 aircraft to Turkey. This rift further strengthens the Russian position who have offered Turkey the possibility of acquiring Russian-made Sukhoi-35s in replacement of the F-35s.

Another initiative by President Erdogan which emphasizes the importance placed on maritime issues by Turkey, can be found in an enormous transport and infrastructure project, aiming to duplicate the strait's current passage by a parallel artificial canal. The project, known as the "*Istanbul Canal*", is still in the planning stages, though

2 Dewdney, J. (2020). *Turkey*. Retrieved 2020, from ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA.

3 Kasapoglu, C. (2020). Turkey's Critical "S-400 Moment" Has Arrived. *Eurasia Daily Monitor: The Jamestown Foundation*, 17(61).

is slated for completion in 2023 in order to symbolically honor the centenary celebrations of the foundation of modern Turkey by Atatürk. The centenary also coincides with the completion of two decades of Erdoğan's own rule. The artificial sea water canal is proposed to be cut west of the city of Istanbul and is planned to be approximately 40 kilometers in length, with a width of some 150 meters. This project is expected to reduce the current volume of vessels transiting the straits (about 40,000 a year). In addition, it would establish mooring areas, infrastructure projects including warehouses and storage facilities, also residential complexes on canal banks. The project is expected to contribute to the Turkish treasury through its maritime revenue, by fees and taxes to be collected upon vessel's passage, as being done in the existing Suez and Panama Canals, and projected in the future Russian "Arctic Suez Canal" project. Such fees currently cannot be collected from the transit of the Bosphorus straits. This futuristic flagship project of Erdoğan is expected to demonstrate Turkey's national maritime power, its status as a modern state, though perhaps most importantly, it places the Blue Homeland Doctrine (*Mavi Vatan*), at its top priority.⁴

Turkey's maritime orientation has therefore evolved fundamentally in view of the uniqueness of the country's geography. Most of its territory, the Anatolian Peninsula is bounded by the Azov and Black Seas to the north, the Sea of Marmara, the Aegean Seas to the west, and the Mediterranean Sea to the south. The length of the country's coasts (7,200 km) is 2.5 times greater than its land borders (2,816 km). About eighty percent of Turkey's population is concentrated along its coasts, while the city of Istanbul itself contains around twenty percent of the country's total population, and has held the status of Europe's biggest city since 2005.

Another indicator of Turkey's naval orientation in recent years is the development of and retaining bases and ports in distant territories, far from its own borders. Among them are the Island of Sawakin near the port of Sudan, Qatar and Somalia. This course expanded the naval influence of the Blue Homeland doctrine - as previously focused on the maritime space in its littoral waters (*Mavi Vatan*) towards the open seas (*Açık Denizlere*).⁵

Initially, the seizure of Northern Cyprus in 1974, led to the Turkish claim that the northern part of the island was in fact an independent Turkish territory. This argument

4 Kasapoglu, C. (2020). Turkey's Growing Military Expeditionary Posture. *Terrorism Monitor: The Jamestown Foundation*, 18(10).

5 Kasapoglu, C. (2020). Turkey's Growing Military Expeditionary Posture. *Terrorism Monitor: The Jamestown Foundation*, 18(10).

was followed by Turkey's claim to vast economic waters in the Mediterranean, mainly to the West and South of the island of Cyprus. Turkey's latest plans for new energy exploration off Cyprus' shores,⁶ could fuel Mediterranean tensions, as Cyprus together with Greece reject what they consider as illegal Turkish incursions into the Cypriot exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Since the creation of the 200nm EEZ with the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS), competition has arisen among states across the world, and in the Eastern Mediterranean in particular due to interests in the rights, production and exploitation of natural resources as were found in the region's deep sea. Sovereign entities, or non-state actors such as multinational corporations acting on their behalf, compete for rights and royalties for the exploitation of fossil fuel resources, most notably natural gas. In addition to resources, a number of other key maritime industries play an important role; seaborne trade, maritime transport, commercial fishing, sporting, tourism and other matters likewise are subjected to competition among the regional players.

The majority of Turkey's energy requirements are currently centered on fossil fuel energy sources. Historically, the majority of this energy was delivered in the form of natural gas, over 70% of which was provided by the Russian energy giant Gazprom. The gas is delivered through the "Turkstream" subsurface pipelines crossing the Black Sea from Russia before reaching Turkish shores. It not only served Turkey's own needs, but also provided revenue through taxation on the transit of energy exported to other consumers, mostly in Western Europe, with some in Eastern states, such as Bulgaria.

Turkey actively attempts to diversify its energy suppliers, with Azerbaijan overtaking Russia in natural gas supply in 2020. Figures show a decrease of up to 72% from Russia,⁷ placing them close to US LNG in terms of gas supply⁸ (see Figure 1). However, due to a "take or pay" clause in the Gazprom contract, Turkish companies are thought to be in significant debt to the company,⁹ which constitutes a point of leverage for Russia moving forward.

6 Kokkinidis, T. (2020). *Turkey Plans New Drilling Off Cyprus, Fueling Mediterranean Tensions*. Retrieved 2020, from Greek Reporter.

7 Mammadov, R. (2020). Turkey Makes Strides in Diversifying its Natural Gas Imports. *The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 17(97).

8 Daily Sabah. (2020). *Turkey's Purchase of Russian Gas Drops by 62% Year-on-Year*. Retrieved 2020, from Daily Sabah.

9 Mammadov, R. (2020). Turkey Makes Strides in Diversifying its Natural Gas Imports. *The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 17(97).

A further example for a departure from the fossil fuel dependency can be observed within the construction since 2018 of Turkey's first civilian nuclear reactor in Akkuyu, located in Mersin Bay on the Mediterranean Sea, by the Russian state-owned company Rosatom. According to plan, the project should be completed in the centennial year 2023. In addition, Turkey plans a string of other new reactors to be implemented across the country.¹⁰

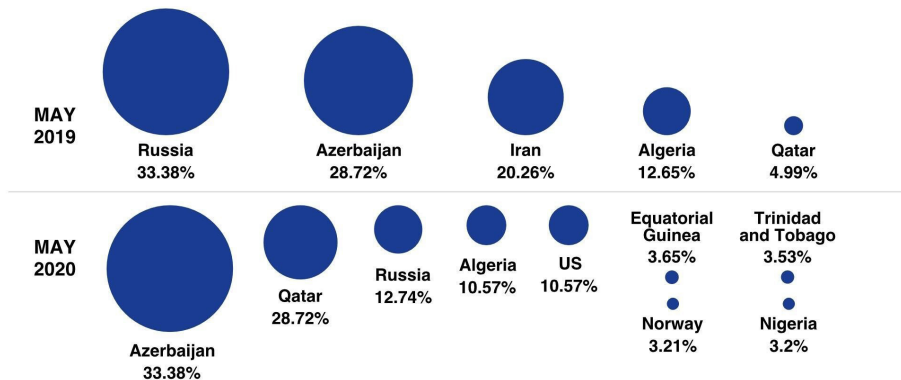


Figure 1: Turkey diversifies gas imports (Daily Sabah, 2020)

A number of potential alternative avenues of supply have been considered, the most prestigious of which for Turkey is based on its own independent maritime resource exploration for energy sources in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. From Ankara's point of view, such actions are within its rights, however such aggressive moves are viewed as illegal by neighboring states. Turkey has deepened its relations with Qatar, Somalia and Sudan to strengthen its energy supply routes, as well as for political and military considerations. Turkey seeks to secure alternative sources of energy from Libya too. The Turkish involvement there was encouraged by its successes and experience in the Syrian arena, partly in coordination with Russia.

Turkey's demonstration of its regional power projection capabilities has a number of key factors. First, Erdogan's evident Neo-Ottoman agenda, with his ideological view of Turkey as the leader of the Muslim world. Secondly, Ankara recognizes its aspirations towards membership in the EU are unlikely to come to fruition and recognizes a weakening in the traditional NATO alliance. Third, Turkey's view of the US and Western withdrawal from the Syrian arena and the Middle East more broadly, which has resulted in higher tolerance for Turkish military actions and has further motivated Ankara's adventurism and expansionism. Finally, all of the above factors

10 WNA, (2020). Nuclear Power in Turkey. Retrieved 2020, from World Nuclear Association.

aid in Turkey's quest for energy diversification through securing transit routes both to and through Turkey.

The use of such techniques, especially the use of Islamist proxies, has affected Turkey's fragile position on the continuum between Russia on the one hand, and the West on the other, specifically considering Turkey's status as a full member of the NATO alliance. Further inflaming tensions are Ankara's threats to allow large streams of refugees to cross over from Turkey to European countries, as well as tacitly allowing the transit of many through the Aegean Sea to Greece, negatively affecting relations with its Western allies. Russia benefits from this tension within NATO as will be further demonstrated below.

Competition in the Russo-Turkish Relationship

The multi-faceted relationship between Russia and Turkey has been the cause of competition, punctuated by periods of cooperation. This dynamic has continued bilaterally since Tsarist époque, throughout the 20th century during the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, until the present time following the foundation of the RF.

In the Black Sea, Turkey retains a comparative advantage in overall naval platforms with 69 surface vessels and 14 submarines,¹¹ and seeks to strengthen their anti-ship missile arsenal through production of its own advanced surface to surface missile "Atmaca". Erdogan is also acting to further build Turkey's naval capabilities, in line with the Mavi Vatan, Blue Homeland doctrine and beyond. In addition to the Atmaca missile program, Turkey is reinforcing its naval power projection capabilities with new systems designed to carry a range of weapons, including both manned and unmanned platforms.

By comparison in the Black Sea, Russia currently retains the comparative advantage in aerial assets. In addition, in terms of coastal based systems, Russia has greater strike capacity through its missile systems, such as the Kaliber series. Russia's excellent non-kinetic sharp power capabilities, including information operations, act as a force multiplier to the aforementioned systems. These combine to form a formidable exclusion doctrine, known "*anti-access area denial*" (A2/AD). Like the Turks, Russia is also expanding its naval force structure in the Black Sea including 20 new combat vessels, including 6 Frigates, 3 submarines as well as new missile

11 Gogwadze, G., Tskhakaia, G. (2019). Black Sea Security: Vision and Ideas. *Black Sea Security*, 4(36).

boats.¹² Putin himself attended a ceremony in Crimea for the building of two new amphibious landing ships,¹³ demonstrating the importance Russia places on this force expansion. This general trend is reflected also in the Mediterranean arena, through its bases in Tartus and Latakia.

Russia's expansionist tendencies became apparent in the period beginning with the 2007 Estonian "*First Cyber War*", followed by the 2008 invasion of Georgia, which supplied Russia with additional seaport in Abkhazia on the Black Sea. The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 increased and strengthened Russia's position and control over the Black Sea region. Demonstrating its power, Russia conducted in this maritime arena a large-scale maneuver in early 2020, which included missile launches, and was notably attended by President Putin and high-ranking Russian officials. Russia is strengthening its global maritime position, and developing its fleet as a top priority. This trend can also be observed in the Mediterranean arena. Russia's participation in the fighting in Syria since 2015 supporting the Assad regime has rewarded it with further forward operating bases for its land, sea and air forces, specifically in the ports Tartus and Latakia, as well as air power based at the airport of Khmeimim in Latakia province. This strategy in Syria has successfully facilitated an expanded Russian footprint in the region, with a 49 year lease granted to Russia over the strategic port of Tartus, doing much to consolidate its aspirations for power projection capabilities into the future over the entire Eastern Mediterranean, beyond their Black and Caspian Seas bases.

These various outposts could serve Russia as a potential multi-directional maritime deterrent over Turkey in the vectors; of the Black, Caspian, North and Eastern Mediterranean Seas. The consolidated forward operating bases and asset concentration on the eastern Mediterranean allows Russia to advance its A2/AD Doctrine over not only the Syrian coast and Eastern Mediterranean, but also significantly expands Russian influence in the Central Mediterranean, specifically the North African Coast, Algeria, Egypt and perhaps most importantly Libya.

In the Chaos of the Libyan Civil War following the UN mission which led to the overthrow of Qadhafi, multiple actors have vied for dominance in the war-torn country. Turkey chose in 2019 to support the UN recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), based in the capital of Tripoli, also supported by Qatar and Italy. The move gave the Turks access to Libyan energy sources, both on land and sea

12 CGS. (2020). *Policy Paper: Trends of the Security Situation in the Black Sea Region*. Kyiv: Center for Global Studies. p. 2.

13 Ibid. p. 4.

facilitated in part through the creation of a new EEZ, demarcating the Libyan and Turkish maritime borders.

The parties who support the opposing Libyan Eastern National Army (LNA) include Russia, Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the UAE. This has led to tensions recently between France and Turkey, both NATO members, who allegedly support opposite sides in the conflict. Most recently, in a significant escalation in the maritime domain, a French Naval Frigate tried to board a Tanzanian flagged vessel suspected of carrying weapons to Libya, banned under the UN embargo. The French complained that, in contravention of NATO rules and international norms, they were prevented from boarding the suspect vessel when three Turkish warships targeted the French frigate with weapons system radars, forcing the abortion of the mission, as well as French Naval participation in a NATO drill in the Aegean Sea,¹⁴ and culminating in the French suspending their related NATO activities.

Trilateral relations between Turkey, Russia and third parties are also worthy of examination; an important example can be found in the current dynamics between Russia, Turkey and Egypt. Russia is cultivating deep ties with both regional powers in regards to energy and infrastructure, including civilian nuclear reactors, as well as the supply of military equipment. At the same time, there is considerable tension between Turkey and Egypt. While the Egyptian-Turkish rivalry is but one of many in which Russia plays a role on both sides, it is a particularly poignant example as it takes into consideration many of the core values of Turkey as outlined above. This can be observed most recently as the two have taken opposite sides in the Libyan conflict, with Egyptian troops formally entering into Libya in 2020. In addition, Egypt fundamentally rejects Turkey's association with the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and Qatar, as well as Erdogan's desire for leadership of the Sunni Muslim world. Furthermore, the signing of the Turkish-Libyan EEZ deal had caused considerable concern over fossil resources, most notably gas field exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean. These tensions, as well as others, have led to a regional treaty called the EastMed Gas Forum (EMGF), settled in Cairo, between Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Jordan, Italy, Israel and the Palestinian Authority. What is clear is that the Russians seek to expand their interests with all parties, in the furtherance of its own pragmatic interests.

14 Corbet, S., Cook, L. (2020). *France Freezes Role in NATO Naval Force Amid Turkey Tensions*. "The suspension is from NATO operation "Sea Guardian" (held since 2016), with the purpose to prevent terrorism, weapons proliferation, and other maritime threats in the Mediterranean arena".

Turkey is well aware of the Russian relative advantage in the military fields, as well as in the energy market. However, Turkey does not ignore some possible scenarios in relation to the future of the Russian Federation which may increase its own strategic position. Factors such as the declining Russian population over the next decade and its anticipated effects on the Russian economy and national resilience. The population decrease has not yet taken into account recent potential effects caused by the Covid-19 crisis. In contrast, the Turkish population shows no sign of decrease. In addition, there is a relevant question about "*the day after*" President Putin. Even though formal legislation was introduced in June 2020 extending Putin's presidential term until 2036, Putin is currently 67 years old, thus a sudden change in leadership could be expected to have negative effects on the Russian economy and cause uncertainty in their strategic direction.

Cooperation in the Russo-Turkish Relationship

Russia seeks to retain its position in energy supply, as well as expanding its political influence in the region, strengthening its role as "mediator" among the players various conflicts. This status could for example increase dialogue with Turkey as well as the GNA in Libya which Turkey, still mindful of Russian energy cooperation, may support.

The Russian company Novatek, with its probable affiliation with Putin administration, is linked to some of the regional exploration initiatives for fossil energy, together with other foreign companies such as the French TOTAL and Italian ENI. Their activity commenced in March 2020, West of the Lebanese coast. Turkey also put efforts into conducting research in this maritime space, as it does in other locations in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. To this end, Turkey currently owns and operates three research vessels. As demonstrated, Turkey shares with Russia various areas of mutual interest and activity, both in the military and energy realms. This could potentially lead to a deepening of cooperation between the two in related areas, from maritime assets to intelligence sharing and military procurement. Both states share the mutual interest of reducing the impact of the emerging EMGF. Turkey is the forum's key opponent and Russia's relative power in the energy field is expected to be weakened by the EMGF, which as a consequence could possibly bring both into closer cooperation as noted above. A recent "*Tweet*" in June 2020, obeisantly on behalf of the Turkish Foreign Minister may represent a probing of Israeli interest to a return to bilateral negotiations

on maritime and energy issues and coordination.¹⁵ Strengthening this assumption, in July 2020, Turkish Admiral (Ret.) Yayci presented a map on national television, outlining the potential borders of a new EEZ with Israel (see figure 2). It could also be assumed that a condition of such talks would be the withdrawal from the EMGF by the Israeli side. Russia, due to its ties with Turkey, may tacitly support these initiatives even if it does not openly acknowledge Ankara's approach.

Erdogan has not forgotten Putin's support during and in the wake of the failed coup attempt of 2016 while other Western nations protested Erdogan's trampling of human rights in response to the coup. The Russian Deputy foreign minister has recently pointed out that the relations between the two countries reflect the strategic partnership between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan.¹⁶



Figure 2: Admiral Chiat Yayci, 25 July 2020¹⁷

- 15 Mehmet kara@emehmetkara twitter from 18th June 23:03: "Turkey foreign minister Cavosuglu says: Turkey can work with Israel in East Mediterranean if Israel cancels the agreement they made with Greek administrated Cyprus. earlier we said we can work with everyone except Greek administration Cyprus". ehmet kara@emehmetkara twitter from 18th June 23:17 in addition Israel earlier had some attempts to bring their natural sources to world market via Turkey because they know very well that Turkey is the most feasible way
- 16 MEMO. (2020). *Official: Russia-Turkey Relations Based on Solid Foundations*. Retrieved 2020, from Middle East Monitor
- 17 Twitter@Haberturk tv / @ersoyakif1.

Conclusion

As demonstrated above, the oscillating nature between numerous wars and confrontations, with periods of cooperation in Russo-Turkish relations are an historical and lasting feature between the two states, comprising multiple factors, central among them geography and the strategic maritime access routes from the Black Sea. Nonetheless, the current dynamic can be viewed through a prism of strategic pragmatism, with both sides acting to capitalize on regional instabilities and uncertainty while remaining cognizant of the factors which are likely to unite or divide the nations, in order to keep the balance while managing domestic expectations.

An example of this can be seen in the recent and controversial decision by Erdogan to reverse the decision of Ataturk regarding the status of the UNESCO listed Hagia Sophia Museum, by converting it into a mosque, in line with the Islamic and Neo-Ottoman tendencies of his domestic base. The building dates to the 6th century and was built as the central Cathedral of Byzantium until its conquest in 1453 by the Ottomans, and has traditionally been the source of tensions with the Eastern Orthodox Church. Hence, the relatively subdued response to this affront by President Putin, who uses the Russian Orthodox Church as a tool of state, can arguably be viewed in light of this strategic pragmatism. Russian energy projects such as the new nuclear power plants, as well as gas, could be assumed to figure prominently in the Russian cost benefit analysis. In addition, Turkey's consistent drift away from its EU aspirations and the West, highlighted in the current tensions with its NATO partners, is a boon for Russia in fragmenting the alliance, and causes Turkey to seek alliances elsewhere, with Russia acting to encourage Turkey into expanding their strategic partnership.

Turkey under Erdogan is viewed by many observers as a Neo-Ottoman revisionist power. As with numerous countries, Turkey sees a trend towards a multi-polar world in which control of, or at least a strong presence in the world's sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and strategic choke points are imperative. In the perception of Ankara, the rulings of UNCLOS regarding EEZs has deprived it of the share in the natural resources the Eastern Mediterranean, which has led it to draw bilateral EEZ boundaries with Libya, much to the consternation of its neighbors. Furthermore, its lack of financial benefit from the shipping passing through the Bosphorus straits has been a prime motivator in Erdogan's Istanbul Canal initiative. These factors have driven the Blue Homeland, *Mavi Vatan* doctrine and the Turkish push to increase its naval power both in its littoral waters, as well as further afield; as evidenced by its established bases in Sudan, Somalia and Qatar, as well as the use of Misrata and Tripoli Ports in Libya, with construction of a permanent base said to be taking place in Misrata. In addition, in late July 2020 unconfirmed reports surfaced of a Turkish

port deal in Muscat Oman.¹⁸ Whilst the reliability of the reports regarding Oman are in question, there is no doubt that Turkey wishes to expand its influence over the Persian Gulf, strategic straits of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman beyond its current operating base in Qatar.

The current Corona-19 pandemic and its long-term effects on demographics, energy prices and geo-politics are yet to be fully understood, though the flux created in the world order and supply chains can be expected to cause all parties to seek strategic advantage wherever possible. How this will affect the Russo-Turkish relationship remains to be seen. What can be sure, is that Erdogan will continue to use the "*Turkish Bazaar*" strategy to negotiate with regional states in the economic, military and maritime realms.

Bibliography

CGS. (2020). *Policy Paper: Trends of the Security Situation in the Black Sea Region*. Kyiv: Center for Global Studies. Retrieved 2020, from <https://geostrategy.org.ua/en/analysis/briefs/analitichniy-zvit-tendenciyyi-bezpekovoyi-situaciyi-u-chornomorskomu-regioni>

Corbet, S., and Cook, L. (2020). France Freezes Role in NATO Naval Force Amid Turkey Tensions. Retrieved 2020, from Military.Com. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/07/01/france-freezes-role-nato-naval-force-amid-turkey-tensions.html>

Daily Sabah. (2020). *Turkey's Purchase of Russian Gas Drops by 62% Year-on-Year*. Retrieved 2020, from Daily Sabah. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/energy/turkeys-purchase-of-russian-gas-drops-by-62-year-on-year>

Dewdney, J. (2020). *Turkey*. Retrieved 2020, from ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Turkey>

Drad, S. (2020). *The Bay is on a Hot Plate Surprise About Turkish Military Bases in Oman*. Retrieved 2020, from ElDorar The Arab and Muslim World. https://eldorar.com/node/154179?utm_source=Jubna&utm_medium=Native&utm_campaign=jubna_trending

Goguadze, G., and Tskhakaia, G. (2019). Black Sea Security: Vision and Ideas. *Black Sea Security*, 4(36). Retrieved 2020, from <https://geostrategy.org.ua/en/black-sea-security/chornomorska-bezpeka-no-4-36-2019/844>

Kasapoglu, C. (2020). Turkey's Critical "S-400 Moment" Has Arrived. *Eurasia Daily Monitor: The Jamestown Foundation*, 17(61). Retrieved 2020, from <https://jamestown.org/program/turkeys-critical-s-400-moment-has-arrived>

18 Drad, S. (2020). *The Bay is on a Hot Plate Surprise About Turkish Military Bases in Oman*. Retrieved 2020, from ElDorar The Arab and Muslim World.

Kasapoglu, C. (2020). Turkey's Growing Military Expeditionary Posture. *Terrorism Monitor: The Jamestown Foundation*, 18(10). Retrieved 2020, from <https://jamestown.org/program/turkeys-growing-military-expeditionary-posture>

Kokkinidis, T. (2020). *Turkey Plans New Drilling Off Cyprus, Fueling Mediterranean Tensions*. Retrieved 2020, from Greek Reporter. <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2020/07/15/turkey-plans-new-drillings-off-cyprus-fueling-mediterranean-tensions>

Mammadov, R. (2020). Turkey Makes Strides in Diversifying its Natural Gas Imports. *The Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 17(97). Retrieved from <https://jamestown.org/program/turkey-makes-strides-in-diversifying-its-natural-gas-imports>

MEMO. (2020). *Official: Russia-Turkey Relations Based on Solid Foundations*. Retrieved 2020, from Middle East Monitor. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200717-official-russia-turkey-relations-based-on-solid-foundations>

ONI. (2015). *The Russian Navy A Historic Transition*. Washington: The Office Of Naval Intelligence. Retrieved 2020, from <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/historic.pdf>

WNA. (2020). *Nuclear Power in Turkey*. Retrieved 2020, from World Nuclear Association. <https://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-t-z/turkey.aspx>

