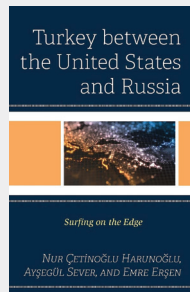

Turkey between the United States and Russia: Surfing on the Edge

By Nur Çetinoğlu Harunoğlu, Ayşegül Sever, and Emre Erşen
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Recent geopolitical developments in Syria, the Mediterranean, the Caucasus, and the Black Sea have placed Türkiye in a position where it has to walk a tightrope between its Western allies and flourishing relations with Russia. While the emergence of strategic disagreements between Türkiye and the U.S. led to Türkiye's purchase of S-400 air defense systems from Russia, Türkiye and Russia cooperate in Syria, and recently their economic ties have improved significantly. However, Türkiye did shut down the Bosphorus to all warships curtailing Russian operations during the war against Ukraine, Turkish defense companies openly sell drones to Ukraine that are then used against the Russian army, and Türkiye also remains committed to Ukrainian territorial integrity. This curious situation rekindled a debate about Türkiye's motives and the dynamics of Türkiye's diplomatic acrobatics between Russia and the West. When exactly did Türkiye's foreign policy maneuvering between the U.S. and Russia begin to crystallize? How can the recent debates regarding the emergence of a new 'axis shift' in Turkish foreign policy be evaluated? Do balancing tactics offer clues? Are we witnessing a tactical move that Ankara has resorted to simply to remind the U.S. of its strategic importance? Or is this a structural, therefore more durable, change in Türkiye's foreign policy?

These are indeed some of the questions Çetinoğlu Harunoğlu, Sever, and Erşen ad-



dress ably in their book *Turkey between the United States and Russia: Surfing on the Edge*. The book takes a striking detour of Türkiye's foreign policy maneuvers between the U.S. and Russia starting with the Cold War period. Inspired by Snyder's understanding of alliance politics during the Cold War,

in which the fear of abandonment and the fear of entrapment are the two constituent elements of the 'security dilemma' that may emerge within an alliance relationship (p. 4), Çetinoğlu Harunoğlu, Sever, and Erşen depict Türkiye's foreign policy moves during the Cold War as shaped by Türkiye's simultaneous fear of abandonment and the fear of being trapped in its relations with the U.S.. The authors examine in three chapters the triangular relations between Türkiye, the U.S., and Russia across two time periods during and after the Cold War.

In the first part, the authors deal with Türkiye's relations between the U.S. and Russia during the Cold War and reflect on the reasons why and how Turkish leaders wanted to balance between these two countries from a historical perspective. The authors state that Türkiye, then a geostrategic ally of the U.S., continued its anti-Soviet stance to benefit more from the help of the West, despite the decrease in the security threat from the Soviets after the early years of the Cold War. The fact that Türkiye believed that the bipolar world order would

continue and that it did not want to establish relations with the Soviets for political and ideological reasons also accounts for the limited relations between Türkiye and the Soviet Union.

Although gaining the support of the U.S. against the Soviets constituted the backbone of Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War, the book provides unambiguous evidence that the alterations to Cold War conditions encouraged and facilitated economic ties between Türkiye and the Soviets to strengthen. The book therefore duly notes Türkiye's attempts to strengthen its economic ties with Russia during the Cold War and how Türkiye oscillated between the fear of abandonment and the fear of being trapped as Ankara realized painfully that through the Cyprus crisis, the Johnson letter, the increasing influence of the Greek and Armenian lobbies in the U.S. at the expense of Türkiye, that it was expendable.

The authors deal with the events in light of the post-Cold War U.S.-Türkiye relations in the second part. While providing a comprehensive discussion of various themes of cooperation and conflict and emphasizing a series of turning points, they discuss how Türkiye's search for an ally against the U.S. has affected its relations with other major powers. They seek to drive home a significant continuity across two time periods. According to the authors, similar to the Cold War period, strategic concerns rather than common values, principles, and institutions shaped Turkish-American relations in the post-Cold War era. What has changed however is that, as evidenced by relations between President Trump and President Erdoğan, personal relations between the leaders of the two countries currently play a far greater role in shaping the course of Türkiye-U.S. relations than during the Cold War.

In the third part, the evolution of Türkiye-Russia relations after the collapse of the Soviet Union is discussed. Authors attribute Türkiye's new approach to Moscow, at times of a nose-dive in Ankara's relations with the West, to Türkiye's fear of being abandoned and trapped by the U.S. Authors do not however fail to note that the improvement in Türkiye and Russia relations is a cautious one. According to the authors, although Türkiye has treated Russia as an alternative partner, Turkish-Russian relations are an interests-based and benefits-oriented relationship rather than one standing tall on shared values, ideals, or vision.

What is clearly seen in the authors' view is that Türkiye, while desiring to improve its relations with Russia with different motivations, cannot fully leave the Western club even when relations with the West deteriorate. Nonetheless, Türkiye has realized the necessity of finding alternative sources of support and has tried to show the U.S. and the West that it has different alternatives in the international arena.

As the authors emphasized in the chapters, Türkiye's search for alternative partners is not a new phenomenon but a pattern that Türkiye has been using for many years and has an important place in its foreign policy. They rightly make the point that the change in Türkiye's relations with the U.S. and Russia defies such simplification as an 'axis shift.' As a final point, the authors, referring to the discourse transformations of the Turkish political leaders in recent times, emphasized the importance of a new geopolitical perspective challenging the western axis that Türkiye has adopted since its foundation.

Turkey between the United States and Russia distinguishes itself from other studies in the literature by simultaneously considering tri-

partite relations in a historical context. The book has a good flow of chapters; it is concise, well-organized, and uncluttered. It provides readers with one of the most up-to-date ac-

counts of Türkiye's balancing act in its relations with Russia and the U.S. and therefore is a must-read for anyone interested in Türkiye's foreign affairs.

EU-Turkey Relations: A New Direction for EU Foreign Policy?

By Elena Baracani

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Following the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1958, Türkiye's application in 1959 for partnership with the community paved the way for the European Union (EU) and Türkiye to embark on their relations. Türkiye-EU bilateral relations became official with the Ankara Agreement signed in 1963, which has been the beginning of a process that has survived to today. Different approaches were adopted between the EU and Türkiye during this process, lasting for approximately 60 years. Even though EU-Türkiye diplomatic relations improved during some periods, at certain times they came to the brick of a standstill. Elena Baracani's *EU-Turkey Relations: A New Direction for EU Foreign Policy?* provides an insight into the foreign policy of the EU between the years 2014-2019 concerning Türkiye, along with touching on bilateral relations in the light of global politics. Baracani investigates EU foreign policy in the axis of enlargement, the EU's basic values, migration, and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

The book consists of six chapters. In the first chapter, Baracani provides an outline of the



book, along with underlining the fact that she would deal with the political attitudes of the institutional actors and the current structure of the EU toward Türkiye in the period of 2014-2019. Baracani also sheds light on the role of EU institutions in foreign policy and the significance of EU institutions in the decision-making and implementation processes in bilateral relations with Türkiye.

Chapter 2 mostly emphasizes and examines EU-Türkiye relations under two separate subtitles. In the first one, Baracani expresses the sub-texts of the change in the institutional structure of the EU and discusses the issues that the EU had to cope with within the process. Discussing the priorities of the EU, Baracani points out the primary concerns that the EU had to cope with, the main issues consisting of the immigration problem and terrorism, which Europe had to face due to the natural consequence of the wars in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, Brexit as an ultimate triumph of Eurosceptic thinking that has become the dominant element in the European Parliament, the antidemocratic developments in Poland, the economic crises experienced