

From Damascus to Kabul: Any Common Ground between Turkey and Russia?

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ABSTRACT *Over the past two decades Turkey and Russia have managed to normalize their bilateral relationship. Trade is flourishing, and human contacts are multiplying. Turkey and Russia also share a vast neighborhood, over which the Ottoman and the Romanov empires used to fight in the past. Now, the region from the Black Sea to the Hindu Kush features a number of active and potential conflicts. Could the happier relationship between Ankara and Moscow form the basis for their cooperation on regional issues or would the difference of interests turn them into rivals again?*

The regional order of Western Asia is being shocked and reshaped by upheavals in much of the Arab world; U.S. withdrawals from Iraq and, soon, from Afghanistan; the waning of the European Union's role as a result of the EU's internal crisis; China's and India's growing interest and presence in the area. However, the region has also witnessed the rise of a power, which has promised to serve as a model for its neighbors and even a mediator in their conflicts. Since 2000, Turkey has demonstrated impressive economic growth, which guaranteed it a place in the G-20 group, and a veritable explosion of its foreign trade. The tripling of per capita GDP within a decade

has turned Turkey into a model for the region's would-be modernizers, massively increasing Ankara's soft power. With its numerous and well-equipped armed forces now firmly under civilian control, Turkey's military might is considerable. No wonder that the Turkish government and the Anatolian middle class, who backs it, exude new self-confidence. The Turkish parliament dared to say no to the United States' request for using Turkish territory in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and six years later the Turkish government openly disagreed with the White House on the policy toward Iran. Counter-intuitively, both actions eventually earned even more appreciation in Washington of

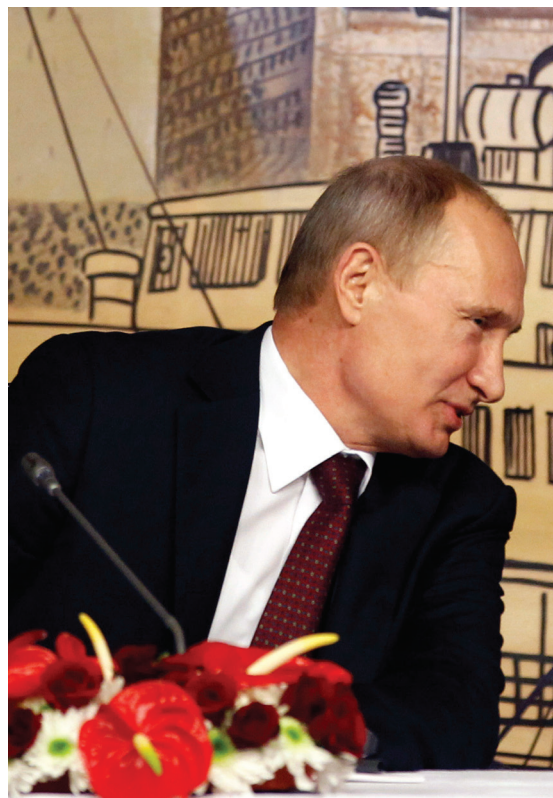
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Insight Turkey
Vol. 15 / No. 1 /
2013, pp. 37-49

Turkey and Russia, over the previous twenty years, appear to have buried their respective past hostility and have been able to cooperate pragmatically and productively on a bilateral basis

Ankara's regional role. The moderate Islamism of AKP, Turkey's ruling party since 2002, has encouraged those who believe that democracy in an Islamic setting is the future of the Muslim world. Rather than remain on the periphery of Europe and the West, Turkey's leaders redefined their country as a central power at the heart of Eurasia. In sum, Turkey has become more visible and more active on the international scene than at any moment in the last one hundred years.¹

Meanwhile, Russia, Turkey's historical rival for several centuries, has emerged from its immediate post-Soviet period as a different type of international actor. It has managed to keep itself in one piece after the dismantlement of the Soviet Union and the secession of the borderland republics. Oil and gas have provided a useful cushion when Russia's Soviet-era industry collapsed and also allowed the country's economy to grow and raise the population's standard of living. Crucially, Russia has largely preserved its strategic independence. It insists on calling itself a great power, but the meaning of the phrase has changed. Instead of controlling oth-



ers it now primarily means denying others control over Russia itself. Yet, even in its post-imperial mode, Moscow remains a major regional factor in the Black Sea/South Caucasus and the Caspian/Central Asia regions. It is also a player in parts of the Middle East, in Iran, and Afghanistan – thanks to Russia's permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council; its status as a major nuclear power and one of the pillars of global strategic stability; its membership in the UN's Middle Eastern Quartet; and its arms trade with countries in the region.

As the successors to two great historical empires, Turkey and Russia, over the previous twenty years, appear to



Russia's President Vladimir Putin talks with Turkey's Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan during their news conference in Istanbul.

REUTERS/Osman Orsal

have buried their respective past hostility and have been able to cooperate pragmatically and productively on a bilateral basis. Due to the growing importance of energy trade, Russia has become Turkey's second-largest trading partner. Russian holiday-makers flock each year to Turkey's Mediterranean beaches. Turkish construction firms have been building and renovating throughout Russia, including the State Duma. There are serious differences of course between the two countries' policies and approaches, but there is also an appre-

ciable degree of commonality and a measure of mutual respect. Now that both Russia and Turkey are intimately involved in international relations along the line from the Bosphorus to the Hindu Kush (and south and north thereof), it is important to discuss the prospects for their cooperation and conflict in the region. (The Balkans should be left aside, as an area where the EU has the leading role). The practical question for policymakers is how can the positives in the Turkish-Russian relationship be enhanced and the negatives minimized, for the sake of both countries' interests and those of regional security?

This article will first assess the new quality of Russo-Turkish relations in order to establish how strong and resilient the foundation is for broader regional cooperation between Moscow and Ankara. It will then proceed to analyze Turkey's and Russia's approaches to some of the regional issues, from Syria to Afghanistan and from the Caucasus to Cyprus. Finally, the article will conclude with recommendations to the Russian and Turkish policy communities as to the ways to enhance cooperation in pursuing their common interests more effectively and as to the means of narrowing and managing their differences.

New Quality of Russo-Turkish Relations

For two centuries, the Ottoman and Russian empires were engaged in a seemingly never-ending contest for regional primacy. From the days of

Peter the Great, rising Russia was generally on the offensive and the Ottomans, which by that very time had entered their long and steady decline, were basically defending their sphere of influence, only occasionally counter-attacking. The epic struggle also had a religious element, with Orthodox Russia positing itself as the defender of Christians against the Muslim Turks. Russia's goals were far-reaching and ultimately included wresting control over the Turkish Straits and over the Ottoman capital itself, which the Russians called Constantinople or Tsargrad and claimed as part of their historical patrimony. The simultaneous collapse of the two empires, as a result of World War I, and the subsequent internal changes in Russia and Turkey ushered in a more stable period in the bilateral relationship. However, these relations became more distant as the two countries became more inward looking. The outcome of World War II turned Soviet Russia into the mightiest power of the Old World. Stalin's attempts to extend the Soviet zone of influence to Turkey pushed Ankara into the American camp at the start of the Cold War. As a NATO member with the largest conventional force after America's, Turkey remained, for the duration of the 40-year confrontation, a frontline state on the Cold War's southern flank.

Things began to change with the dismantlement of the Soviet Union. Moscow's policy vector radically changed.² It allowed the borderland regions of the former empire, nominally constituted as federated repub-

lics, to form their own independent states. Having long dominated the Black Sea, Russia had now to be content with a relatively short portion of its shoreline. The Black Sea Fleet's historical base in Sebastopol eventually remained Russian, under a lease agreement with Ukraine, but the fleet itself turned into more of a floating museum of past glory than a major fighting force. Nevertheless, Russia did become involved in ethnic conflicts, which resulted from the collapse of the Soviet state, in Moldova, the North and South Caucasus, and Tajikistan, but its military forces could no longer be conceived as threatening by the neighbors of the former Soviet Union, including by Turkey. The bizarre warning by Air Marshal Evgeny Shaposhnikov, the last Soviet defense minister, who in September 1991 called on Turkey not to provoke World War III through its involvement in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh sounded anachronistic.

Certainly, there were fears at the time in Russia of a Turkish *revanche* in the former Soviet south. Four newly formed states in Central Asia and Azerbaijan were all Turkic speaking. The diplomatic and rhetorical activity of Presidents Turgut Ozal and Suleyman Demirel led some Russian observers to discuss the potential – and dangers – of Pan-Turkism. The sympathy that segments of Turkish society and some Turkish officials felt for the Chechen separatists, who fought Russia by various means, including terrorism, did not endear Russia's policymakers and its military and security communities to Turkey. Yet,

those concerns did not crystallize into a new trend. A decade after the end of the USSR, Turkey began its own fundamental internal change, successfully managing to re-invent itself once again. The Turks began to focus on the economy, building a “trading state,” in which it soon excelled.

Trade became the new principal currency of Russo-Turkish relations. By the early 2010s, trade turnover exceeded \$30 billion, which made Russia Turkey’s second biggest trading partner. Energy flows are responsible for much of that increase and for Turkey’s deficit in the bilateral trade. The *Blue Stream* gas pipeline from Russia to Turkey became the symbol of the new relationship and part of President Vladimir Putin’s strategy of creating direct energy links with Russia’s key partners in North-Central (Germany) and South-Southeastern (Italy) Europe. Besides *Gazprom* with its pipelines, *Rosatom* is actively promoting a \$20 billion-worth project of a nuclear power station in Turkey. Recently, *Sberbank*, Russia’s largest state-owned financial institution, has acquired *Denizbank*, Turkey’s ninth-largest bank.

In sum, Russo-Turkish economic relations have progressed a long way since the 1990s, when its champions were numerous entrepreneurial shuttle traders who carried Turkish wares to Russian wholesale markets and Turkish construction workers who built business centers and apartment blocks around Russia. This is not to underestimate the value of human contact, as. 3.5 million Russian tour-

ists come to Turkey’s Mediterranean resorts every year generally taking back home an image of a warm and friendly country. The Turkish decision to allow visa-free travel with Russia is certainly paying off. Importantly, close relations have been established over the past decade between the essentially pragmatic leaders of Russia and Turkey, Vladimir Putin and Tayyip Recep Erdogan. Looking towards the future, an expanded and more structured dialogue between the two countries’ leading intellectuals and experts is also on the way.

On Syria and the Arab Awakening more broadly, Moscow’s and Ankara’s views and policies appear to differ fundamentally

However, how resilient is the thickening web of Russo-Turkish relations? The last 20 years have not been exactly without challenges and adverse events are perfectly capable of causing the deterioration of the relationship between Moscow and Ankara. The continuing Azeri-Armenian conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, in which Russia and Turkey are strategic partners and allies of the warring parties; the long Chechen war and the short Russo-Georgian one; the conflict in and over Syria have all tested the depth and strength of the Russo-Turkish reconciliation. So far, despite the occasional tensions, the new relationship has largely withstood those tests.



A Turkish Navy coast guard boat escorts the Russian Navy destroyer Smetlivy in the Bosphorus in Istanbul.

REUTERS/
Murad Sezer

At least on the Russian side, there is a tendency to respect Turkey's interests and hear its views out, even when they are not in sink Russia's.

The key to understanding this phenomenon lies in the post-Cold War, post-imperial nature of Moscow's foreign policy. Unlike the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation does not aspire to control or dominate others, however it strongly rejects the presence of the U.S. power too close to its borders. From the mid-1990s, it has committed itself to the concept of a multipolar world and an independent-minded and assertive Turkey fully fits within this policy. To create a more stable international environment in the multipolar setting, Russia reaches out to partners who are strong and sufficiently independent as well as economically attractive, such as Germany and France in Europe, or China

and India in Asia. It also seeks historical reconciliation with newly important neighbors, such as Poland. Clearly, Turkey finds itself in the group of Moscow's priority partners and relations with it are no longer subsumed within Russia's relations with the West. There are no illusions about Ankara in Moscow, but no deep-seated phobias either. The Turkish perspective on the long-unfriendly imperial/Soviet Russia may be somewhat different, but Moscow appears ready to start dealing with Turkey not merely as a trading nation, but also as a geopolitical partner in the shared neighborhood of Western Asia.

Regional Security Issues in Russo-Turkish Relations

There is no shortage of issues to be dealt with jointly in the region, but

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there are clear differences in approaches, creating obstacles to co-operation. On **Syria and the Arab Awakening** more broadly, Moscow's and Ankara's views and policies appear to differ fundamentally. Since the beginning of the anti-Assad uprising in 2011, Russia has been portrayed in the Western, Arab, and Turkish media as an ally of Damascus. By contrast, Ankara, which had opened up to Syria in the mid-2000s and in 2011 unsuccessfully sought to persuade President Bashar al-Assad to accede to the opposition's demands. However, Turkey soon gave up hope and then turned into a leading international opponent of the Syrian regime. In Turkey, as in much of the rest of the world, Russia's behavior has been often explained by an interest to keep its “last remaining ally in the Middle East;” protect the arms deals with Damascus and the naval facility at Tar-

tus; fear of an Arab Spring coming to Moscow; and simply by a penchant to act as a spoiler to damage U.S. and its allies' interests anywhere in the world if possible. Such a set of interests and positions would of course preclude cooperation between Ankara and Moscow.

In a deeper analysis, Russia's stance on Syria is based, above all, on its leaders' largely traditional view of the global order. From the Russian perspective, a regime change from the outside is destabilizing; involvement in other people's civil wars should be avoided as counter-productive; and international military intervention is a measure of last resort, requiring an approval by the United Nations Security Council (i.e., Russia itself) which should sanction the use of force, set parameters for such use, and monitor and control the military operation. The experience with the NATO-led intervention in Libya in 2011, which Russia had initially decided not to oppose but then saw it going well beyond its humanitarian mandate into a regime change, weighs heavily in Russian considerations of how to proceed on Syria. While Turkey would take a view of humanitarian intervention much closer to that of the United States and Europe than to Russia's, a better understanding of Russia's motivations would help in looking for opportunities for cooperation.

Moscow's other concern is with the nature of the Arab Awakening itself, which Russian officials and most experts view as essentially a series of popular uprisings leading to further

Islamization of the Arab world's politics. They also see the process as extremely chaotic and favoring extremist groups, including those tied to Al Qaeda, over the moderates. While Moscow has withdrawn from geopolitical competition in the Middle East since the time of the first Gulf War in 1990, it is keenly aware of the impact of turbulence in Muslim countries, from the Arab world to Afghanistan, on its near neighbors in Central Asia and the South Caucasus, or its own Muslim-populated regions, from the North Caucasus to the Volga. When the Russians look at Syria at the beginning of 2013, they are focused not so much on the survival of the Assad regime, which they consider essentially doomed, as on the "Day After," which appears to them as a huge bloodbath and utter chaos. It is in this context that Russian and Turkish interests may meet.

For Turkey, as well as for the Gulf monarchies, Europe and the United States, unseating Assad is a first priority. Once he is deposed, however, there may be more of an interest to work toward a negotiated peace between the Syrian antagonists, who will have replaced the Allawite regime and formed a new government by that time. In turn, the Allawites will have become the opposition. The goal would be to prevent the worst in Syria and to safely contain the conflict within the borders of this already conflict-ravaged country. When President Putin and Prime Minister Erdogan talked about "new approaches" toward Syria following their meeting in December 2012,³

both could be looking towards the future, to the time when the realities on the ground would make international peacemaking efforts in Syria both necessary and productive.

Elsewhere in the Arab world, Russians, who have limited influence, would in principle welcome if other countries followed Turkey's political model, which has successfully married Islam and democracy to produce economic prosperity and social stability. However, Russia appears to be skeptical as to the likelihood of this taking place in the near term, in particular in the region's most important countries, including Egypt. In fact, Russians remain doubtful, especially with regard to the countries where they have been at odds with the West, such as Libya and Syria. However, they are pragmatic enough to appreciate the opportunities on the ground when those emerge. No matter how much Moscow opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq and how much it later sneered at U.S.-led attempts to bring democracy to Baghdad, it now seeks to expand its energy and arms links with Iraq.

While supporting state sovereignty, Russia does not look kindly on separatism. Abkhazia and South Ossetia are two exceptions, due to the very special circumstances of the summer of 2008. In Moscow's view, the partitioning of the existing countries in the region along ethnic or confessional lines is likely to complicate and destabilize the situation rather than lead to lasting solutions. The support of minorities, such as Christians,

which Moscow has elevated to an element of its foreign policy in the Middle East, does not include supporting secession. This fully applies to Iraq, Iran, and Syria – whether the issue is Shia vs. Sunni; Azeris vs. Persians; or Arabs/Turks vs. Kurds. While accepting the autonomous status of Iraqi Kurdistan, Moscow has no interest in supporting Kurdish independence, be it in Iraq or elsewhere, and especially by means of armed struggle. In the 1990s, it refused to give political asylum to the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan.

Iran, of course, is another historical empire like Turkey and Russia, only much older. Moscow's policy toward Iran over the past two decades has been fairly consistent. Russia sees Iran as a regional power and, although it does not really enjoy dealing with Tehran's theocracy, its basic approach is regime-neutral. Russia appreciates the fact that Iran's revolutionary fervor is not directed northward, it is grateful to the Iranians for their understanding of Moscow's problems in the North Caucasus during the Chechen war, and for their support of the Russian bid to join the Islamic Conference Organization as an observer. A decade and a half ago, Russia and Iran successfully managed to mediate an end to Tajikistan's civil war – the only post-Soviet conflict that has been fully resolved, so far. In addition, Russia has been selling arms to Iran and built a nuclear power station at Bushehr.

That said, Moscow is opposed to Iran becoming a nuclear weapons state and

is concerned about its missile program. On both counts, the Russians have been considerably less alarmist than the Americans, and particularly the Israelis, but they share the same end goal with them, generally for similar reasons. The Russians, however, differ from the Americans in their strategies in dealing with Iran. They are cautious with sanctions, which they see as empowering Iran's ideological hard-liners and undermining its pragmatists, and are completely opposed to military strikes against Iran. They believe that a solution would need to involve respect for Iran's sovereignty, recognition of its interests, and peaceful nuclear activ-

Turkey can materially assist efforts to stabilize “post-American” Afghanistan in cooperation with other regional actors

ity under international supervision. Many elements of that approach were present in Ankara's policies toward Iran as recently as 2009.

Turkey's approach toward Iran has ranged from helping reach an accommodation between Tehran and the international community on the nuclear issue to hosting U.S. interceptors to defend against Iranian missiles. This produced hopes and, later, fears. Of course, Russians realize that the Turkish-Iranian relationship goes back several centuries and is highly com-

Russia and Turkey agree on the importance of the Minsk process, which also involves the United States and the Europeans, to resolve the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh through negotiations

plex. In the broader regional context, Turkey and Iran offer the Arab world two very different political models. Their practical policies compete in a number of places such as Iraq and Gaza and openly clash in Syria. Russia, by contrast, has neither resources nor interest to involve itself fully in the complex web of Middle Eastern politics. Moscow will largely watch Turkish-Iranian rivalry/rapprochement from the sidelines. At the same time, it will support moves to reach a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear issue and efforts to include Iran in regional security arrangements. This could be an area of cooperation between Russia and Turkey if Ankara elects to go down that path.

On **Afghanistan**, Russia, like others in the neighborhood, is bracing itself for the consequences of the imminent withdrawal of U.S./NATO combat forces from that country. Moscow's main concern is that the end of Western military involvement in Afghanistan could lead to the resumption of a full-scale domestic conflict and the emergence of a radical Islamist regime, which would destabilize the sit-

uation in its geopolitical "soft underbelly" of Central Asia. The growing flow of drugs from Afghanistan across Central Asia to Russia is already a major security concern. Russia does not have the power or the will to become involved politically or militarily in Afghanistan and its contribution to economic projects there is likely to be very modest. Moscow, however, is already active in a number of regional forums, discussing Afghanistan, from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to the Collective Security Treaty Organization to the so-called "Quad" consisting of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Russia. The idea is to prevent Afghanistan from either exploding or imploding in the wake of the Western withdrawal.

Turkey as a successful Muslim country, which never sought to dominate Afghanistan, has unique clout among Afghans. Besides its soft power, it has economic interests in Afghanistan. Turkey can materially assist efforts to stabilize "post-American" Afghanistan in cooperation with other regional actors: China, Pakistan, India, Iran, and the Central Asian states. The Moscow connection will not be the principal one for Ankara in Afghanistan, but forming a broad regional coalition in support of post-war rehabilitation of that country is an interest that Turkey and Russia obviously share.

In **Central Asia**, Russia's Turkic-speaking former imperial backyard, Moscow and Ankara appear more as competitors. President Putin proclaimed the goal of forming a

Eurasian Economic Union by 2015, to which Kazakhstan and possibly Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan may accede. However, Washington is openly opposing this policy of Eurasian economic integration.⁴ The countries of Central Asia themselves, which also include Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, pursue “multi-vector” international strategies, in which the relations with the former hegemon are balanced by ties with the United States, China, Europe, India, and of course the Muslim world, where they culturally belong. To local reformists, Turkey offers an attractive economic, societal, and political model. To local nationalists, it is a kindred country. To local military forces, it provides an alternative to Soviet/Russian patterns of military training and equipment.

In Central Asia, Turkey has already joined international competition for regional influence. Unless Russia manages to modernize economically and massively increase its soft power, it will see its residual influence decrease even further. Whatever Russia does, however, it is China that is likely to be the principal economic magnet for the region – especially if developments there run more or less along the same pattern as in the first two decades after independence. The third decade, which has just started, however, promises important tests. The founding presidents of Central Asia’s two most important countries, Uzbekistan’s Islam Karimov, 74, and Kazakhstan’s Nursultan Nazarbayev, 72, are nearing the end of their long tenure. Succession in either case may prove to be tricky, with radical

Islamists positioning themselves to exploit any instability to their advantage. Rather than jockeying for influence in the region, the main outside players, including Russia and Turkey, would be wise to cooperate to bar the radicals from implementing their project of a “caliphate” in Central Asia.

The **South Caucasus** used to be one of the main battlefields in the long struggle between the Ottoman and the Romanov empires. In the protracted conflicts in the region, resulting from the break-up of the Soviet Union, Moscow and Ankara have taken rather opposite positions. Russia is formally allied to Armenia, guarantees its borders, and keeps a military base there, while Turkey has a quasi-alliance relationship with Azerbaijan. Following the 2008 war, Russia still has no diplomatic relations with Georgia, with which Turkey maintains close economic ties. Meanwhile, Russia has recognized the independence of Georgia’s breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and turned them into de facto protectorates. Ankara has not followed Moscow’s suit on those recognitions, but has a clear interest in Abkhazia, where it has emerged as Russia’s one credible competitor for influence. For the Abkhaz, who have won independence from Georgia and would now want to lessen their dependence on Russia, the Turkey connection is absolutely key for achieving state sovereignty.

Despite this competition, both Russia and Turkey agree on the impor-

tance of the Minsk process, which also involves the United States and the Europeans, to resolve the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh through negotiations. Moscow maintains reasonably good relations with Baku and Ankara has recently made moves – even if they were eventually scuttled – toward historical reconciliation with Armenia. Turkey's plan for building stability in the Caucasus, presented in the wake of the Russo-Georgian war, was appreciated in Moscow as a useful initiative. In the eventuality when the three countries of the region – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – have consolidated their independence, yet have found it impossible, so far, to resolve conflicts which involve them all, Russia and Turkey have both an interest and a role in providing security for the South Caucasus. Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia stand out as two main areas of possible Russo-Turkish interaction.

The **North Caucasus** is, of course, part of the Russian Federation. In the 1990s and the early 2000s, Moscow was incensed over the indications of Turkish support for the Chechen separatist rebels. The Chechen war is long over, but the string of small ethnic republics between the Black Sea and the Caspian remains Russia's zone of instability. Much of the problem is clearly of domestic origin, but Moscow is keenly interested in cooperating with Ankara, to the extent possible, in stemming outside support for and participation in Islamist radicals' activities in the North Caucasus. One obvious area of bilat-

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eral security cooperation is assuring the security of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, which is directly adjacent to the restless North Caucasus.

Finally, Russia has a certain interest and a role in **Cyprus**. The interest is linked to Cyprus's position as a safe haven for many Russian private businesses, seeking to escape domestic jurisdiction so that they can function more freely. In view of the importance of these interests, the Russian government in 2011-2012 extended sizeable financial assistance to the Republic of Cyprus. In return, the government in Nicosia has become Moscow's best advocate in the councils of the European Union. Russia's role vis-à-vis Cyprus is further defined by its membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which is dealing with the protracted conflict that has divided the island. In any new attempt at resolving the Cyprus conflict, Russia will be able to weigh in through the UNSC and its special relations with the Greek Cypriot authorities.

Conclusion

The brief overview suggests that despite the very different starting positions and diverging interests on a number of issues, Moscow and Ankara have built a generally solid base of mutual respect that has allowed the bilateral relationship to leave historical enmity behind. This is no mean achievement and is one of the pillars of security and stability in Europe. Over the last 20 years, Russia and Turkey have advanced from confrontation to something that may be close to a real security community. The use of force by either party is no longer considered as an instrument of policy in bilateral relations.

Now is the time to take another step. Turkey and Russia have a sufficient amount of common ground that warrants closer cooperation on regional issues. The field for such cooperation is broad – from the Middle East to Afghanistan and from the Caucasus to Cyprus. Both Turkey and Russia will benefit from more security in those regions and will suffer from instability generated by the regions' numerous conflicts. In a number of cases, Moscow's and Ankara's approaches are compatible; in others, both would benefit from narrowing their differences.

To be up to the task of security-building, the two country's top leaderships need to expand the purview of their bilateral council to address possible joint steps to help bring peace and strengthen stability in countries of the region and resolve decades-old conflicts. To operationalize such cooperation, the bilateral council could create a working group on regional security issues. To give required depth and breadth to the working group's efforts, it needs to be assisted by an independent advisory body composed of the two countries' leading experts, businesspeople, academics, and practitioners. More policy coordination between the two regional players would benefit the two countries and help the people of the region. ■

Endnotes

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4. Cf. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's remarks at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Dublin, December 5, 2012.

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