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To cite this article: Ziya Öniş & Şuhnaz Yılmaz (2015): Turkey and Russia in a shifting global order: cooperation, conflict and asymmetric interdependence in a turbulent region, Third World Quarterly, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2015.1086638

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1086638

Published online: 30 Nov 2015.
Turkey and Russia in a shifting global order: cooperation, conflict and asymmetric interdependence in a turbulent region

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ABSTRACT
The current global political economy is characterised by the intensifying economic interaction of BRICS and ‘near BRICS’ economies, with emerging powers increasing their influence in neighbouring regions. The growing partnership between Turkey and Russia constitutes a useful case study for examining this transformation, in which Western supremacy and US hegemony are under increasing challenge. Turkish–Russian relations shed light on broader themes in global political economy. First, significant economic interdependence may be generated among states with different political outlooks, in the form of loose regional integration schemes driven by bilateral relations between key states and supporting private actors or interests. Second, growing economic interdependence may coexist with continued political conflict and geopolitical rivalry, as indicated by the Syrian and Ukrainian crises. An important strategy that emerges is the tendency to compartmentalise economic issues and geopolitical rivalries in order to avoid negative spill-over effects. This facilitates the coexistence of extensive competition with deepening cooperation, as reflected in relations in the field of energy.

The Crimean crisis and developments in Ukraine have once again brought the shores of the Black Sea and debates about a resurgent Russia flexing its muscle into the limelight. In this extremely volatile political context this article examines an important issue in Eurasia, namely, Turkish–Russian relations from a political economy perspective, focusing on the growing role of emerging powers in a changing global order. The rise of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) as important global and regional actors has attracted significant attention. A more recent phenomenon in global political economy concerns the rise of ‘near BRICS’ or the ‘Next Eleven’ (a term coined by Goldman Sachs), an important subset of which are the MIST countries (also MIKTA members) Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea and Turkey. States in this category may not be as large and influential as the BRICS, but they are, nevertheless, establishing themselves as significant actors not only in their own immediate neighbourhood but also as active participants in global governance frameworks such as
the G20, or in new cross-regional groupings bringing together established and emerging power blocs like MIKTA. A significant literature has emerged in recent years to document the complex patterns of interdependence between the BRICS. The relationship between BRICS and the second-tier near BRICS has received less attention.

This article aims to address this particular gap in the literature by systematically studying the interaction between Russia and Turkey. The comparison highlights broader issues of cooperation and conflict in an increasingly post-hegemonic global economic and political order. The case of the near BRICS is also interesting in that these states face the tension between their commitment to their traditional alliances – Turkey is a long-standing member of the Western bloc and a candidate for European Union (EU) membership – and their desire to follow in the footsteps of BRICS in playing a more assertive role as independent powers, both at regional and global levels. What also renders the Turkish–Russian relationship striking is the two countries’ imperial legacies and their continuing perceptions of themselves as decisive regional and global actors, which perhaps go well beyond their actual capabilities. This element of mismatch between expectations and capacity clearly distinguishes both Turkey and Russia from many other emerging powers. At a time when both countries are facing relative distancing from the EU and the USA as a result of their more assertive foreign policy moves, their respective geopolitical visions of a greater international status and power augments their partnership, despite acute differences over issues such as Syria.

After years of conflict and antagonistic relations between Turkey and Russia during the Cold War, a significant partnership has developed, based on a series of bilateral agreements, as well as on a loose regional integration agreement in the form of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Project (BSEC), over the relatively short period of two decades. Moreover, this relationship has developed at a time when the USA and Europe have continued to serve as the primary reference point for Turkey, a country that has for decades maintained its commitment to Western institutions such as NATO and the EU, despite serious setbacks in its relations with Brussels. A central concern of the paper, in this context, is the relevance of the ‘strategic partnership’ notion. Our major contention is that, in spite of growing economic interdependence and diplomatic initiatives on the part of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Russian President Vladimir Putin in recent years, bilateral relations continue to be characterised by significant elements of conflict. While continued engagement between the countries is a positive development, we find the strategic partnership concept an overstatement of Turkish–Russian relations in the present stage of their evolution. A strategic partnership will be difficult to forge and consolidate as long as significant differences persist in the geopolitical orientations and political outlooks of the individual states. Thus, we argue that a strategy of ‘compartmentalisation’ enables the coexistence of political tensions with deepening economic ties, for which the current nature of Turkish–Russian relations serves as an illuminating case study. The study goes on to make the case that certain fissures may also emerge from an asymmetrical power relationship, increasing the bargaining options for the stronger partner.

**BRICS and near BRICS in an emerging global order: elements of cooperation and conflict**

Global political economy is experiencing a period of significant transformation as the hegemonic power of the USA is challenged by the rise of emerging powers. The unipolar
structure of the international system established immediately after the end of Cold War has been gradually receding, as a multipolar order has taken shape. The costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the devastating economic crisis in 2008 accelerated the shift in the balance of power away from the Western powers, with the BRICS, led by China, occupying an increasingly important role in the emerging global order. The growing diffusion of power in an increasingly post-hegemonic age means that emerging powers have increasing space in which to pursue more ambitious regional agendas and assertive foreign policies. What is also striking in this context is the rise of a generation of near BRICS, which may not be as influential as the BRICS, but which still aspire to establish themselves as active regional and global actors. Countries like Turkey, Mexico and Indonesia fall into the latter category. Within this context the present paper focuses on the interaction between Russia and Turkey, two key countries lying on the periphery of Europe, which have forged a dynamic economic partnership, notably during the course of the past decade, and a pattern of growing interdependence that marks a sharp contrast with the highly conflictual relationship between the two countries over the course of several centuries.

Russia, as a representative of BRICS, and Turkey, as a promising near-BRICS power, have emerged as influential actors in Eurasia as well as in the broader Middle East. Over the past decade, both Russia under Putin and Turkey under Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) have enjoyed relative political stability and economic prosperity, which has facilitated a degree of interdependence between the two countries, as compared to the 1990s, when Russia was experiencing difficulties in its transition to market capitalism and Turkey was confronted with a series of economic and political crises. Growing economic strength has not only contributed to intensifying bilateral links, but has also facilitated both countries’ quest to play more active roles in the international arena. They have also benefited from the current structure of the international system, which provides a more conducive environment for emerging (or re-emerging) powers such as Turkey and Russia to play a more assertive role in regional affairs.

A systematic analysis of Russian–Turkish relations in the evolving international order allows us to make the following generalisations. Growing trade and economic linkages may facilitate the rise of a significant partnership, driven by common economic interests, among states with diverging geopolitical outlooks and political regimes. Russia, together with China, represents the authoritarian version of the BRICS, whereas Turkey, in spite of its democratic deficits, increasing concerns about rising authoritarianism and the erosion of the autonomy of state institutions in the later phase of the AKP era, is closer to the democratic variant of BRICS represented by India, Brazil and South Africa. The differences in geopolitical outlook were reflected in the approach of the two states to the Arab uprisings and particularly to the Syrian crisis. While Turkey has tried to project itself as a champion of democracy in the Arab world, Turkey’s own democratic deficits and its over-engagement in Syrian affairs constitute serious limitations on its foreign policy towards the Middle East. In this context, and in opposition to Turkey, Russia, like China, has sided with the Assad regime in Syria, even in the face of atrocities.

What is important in the present context is that the major differences in the political orientations of the two states have not undermined their economic partnership forged on the basis of trade and investment linkages constructed over a period of two decades. At the same time, in the absence of common norms, it is extremely difficult to establish a genuine ‘political community’ among such states. This inference applies not only to the
bilateral relations established between such states, but also to regional blocs where these states constitute the principal driving force. BSEC is a striking example of this kind of loose regionalism. It falls short of a genuine political order based on a common identity, given that the member states, notably the leading states like Russia and Turkey, are unable to agree on common norms which would be necessary to establish a genuine political community. Another key issue concerns the often paradoxical coexistence of interdependence and dependence, especially when one of the states enjoys superior economic power over the other. In the case of the BRICS, this pattern seems to apply to China vis-à-vis the rest of the group. In the Russia–Turkey relationship, Russia is clearly the stronger partner, as a result of Turkey’s heavy dependence on Moscow for its energy resources. This pattern of asymmetric interdependence is important in terms of limiting the bargaining options of the weaker partner, which might also challenge the logic of ‘strategic partnership’ forged between the two states, raising some concerns about its long-term durability.

**Transformation of bilateral relations: elements of continuity and rupture**

The Russians and the Ottomans were arch-rivals for centuries. The tumultuous history of Ottoman–Russian relations was marked by 13 bloody wars, the most recent of which was the First World War. However, by the end of the war, when both monarchies had either been overthrown or defeated, an unprecedented transformation in both the internal and external dynamics of these powers initiated a new and much more positive chapter in bilateral relations. Following the First World War, at a time when both sides were isolated from the international system, the Bolshevik-led government under Vladimir Lenin, and the Turkish nationalists under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk developed cordial relations. The USSR was the first European state to formally recognise the nationalist government of Turkey with the Treaty of Moscow signed on 16 March 1921, ironically while the Ottoman Sultanate was still in nominal existence.

The interwar era was marked by economically cordial, yet politically cautious bilateral relations. In this period the promotion of Etatism was inspired by the socialist experiment of the USSR. The apparent success of the centralised Soviet economy, at a time when the Western world was hit by the Great Depression, made it an appealing model. The human cost and the shortcomings of the socialist system during the Stalinist era, however, were not revealed to the outside world. Turkey’s emphasis on the development of an industrial base and the implementation of five-year plans was based on the Soviet model. However, despite close collaboration with the USSR, Turkish leaders emphasised that their etatist policies were different from socialism. There was no class conflict and state control was still limited. The major part of the economy, notably agriculture and light industry, remained in private hands.

The first serious tensions in bilateral relations emerged in 1936 during the Montreux Convention negotiations, which enabled Turkey to regain its control over the Turkish Straits via remilitarisation. The tensions reached a climax in the aftermath of the Second World War, when on 19 March 1945 the USSR’s Foreign Minister Molotov informed Turkey that the USSR was declining to renew the 1925 Non-Aggression Pact. When the Turkish government inquired of the conditions for a new agreement, it was informed by Molotov that, in addition to bases in the Straits, the USSR claimed some territory in Eastern Anatolia. Moreover, at the Potsdam Conference (July 1945), Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin attempted to revise the Montreux Convention. In March 1947 the Cold War lines began to emerge with the
proclamation of the Truman Doctrine and the USSR and Turkey were in different camps during the Korean War. Finally, when Turkey joined NATO in 1952, the Turkish–American alliance, as well as the Turkish–Soviet rift became institutionalised.¹⁰

The geostrategic rivalries of the bipolar era defined contentious relations of the Cold War period. During this time relations between the two countries were virtually frozen and the rise of the USSR and the spread of communism were conceived as major security threats from the Turkish perspective. Turkey was firmly in the Western camp, as a member of NATO and as an early associate member and potential full member of the European Community. Nevertheless, there emerged periods of early rapprochement during the Cold War era. First, under the leadership of Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, there was a rapprochement with the Soviets during the mid-1970s after the Cyprus crisis. Then, in the 1980s under the leadership of Turgut Özal, the Natural Gas Agreement of 1984 triggered budding trade and investment ties.¹¹ In this period the improvement in economic relations was spearheaded by the Turkish private sector, which acted under the umbrella of a newly established Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK).¹²

While studies of bilateral relations mainly focus on the post-Cold War context, a very important prelude, which took place during the last decade of the Cold War, is often neglected. Developments in the second half of the 1980s, well before the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, constituted a genuine turning point in Turkish–Russian relations and created the basis of the strong economic partnership that has emerged over the course of the past three decades. From the Turkish perspective we observe the importance of strong state–business collaboration, with the private sector playing a leading role and the state, especially under Özal’s leadership, performing a major supporting role in the process. The Natural Gas Agreement of 1984 required the USSR to buy goods and services from Turkey in return for exports of natural gas. The Turkish private sector made a concerted effort to enter Soviet markets, capitalising on the benefits offered by the Natural Gas Agreement. The way the Agreement had been negotiated opened space for Turkish firms to operate in the tightly regulated and restrictive economic environment of the USSR. This case highlights the importance of state actors in creating the initial impulse for the rapprochement process, from which private actors clearly benefited.

Once the initial impulse was created, the organisational capacity of the Turkish private sector, operating under the umbrella of DEIK and the Turkish–Russian Business Council, a sub-unit of DEIK, proved to be crucial in Turkey’s ability to expand trade and investment linkages with the USSR. Indeed, a number of leading Turkish construction companies, such as ENKA, ALARKO and TEKFEN, started to establish their strong reputations in Russia, as well as in other Soviet Republics in the late 1980s. This, in turn, provided the foundations for the strengthening of economic relationships both with the Russian Federation and the wider post-Soviet space, a process that continued at an accelerated pace after the USSR collapsed in 1991. Turgut Özal, the architect of Turkey’s economic programme and of its integration process with the global economy, was a key figure in providing support for the strong initiatives of private corporations and associations. This strong support was significant at a time when key segments of the Turkish economic bureaucracy were reluctant to endorse a major expansion of economic relations with Russia and the late communist regime of the USSR. It is during this period that businessmen started accompanying Özal in state visits to the USSR. Özal symbolised the state support that helped to inspire confidence on the part of the Soviet state institutions that regulated trade and investment. This strategy enhanced the ability of
private firms and their collective associations such as DEIK to overcome the strong barriers in trade and investment in a state-dominated, Soviet-style economy.\textsuperscript{13}

The dissolution of the USSR and the subsequent systemic and regional transformation created new challenges, as well as opportunities, for the enhancement of cooperation. In the post-Cold War period we may identify two distinct phases in Turkish–Russian relations. The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s led to a new phase in the relationship; this first phase was characterised by significant cooperation in the economic realm. Especially in the context of the early 1990s a significant degree of complementarity existed between the economies of Turkey and the Russian Federation (as well as with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), by far the most important state emerging in the post-Soviet space. Turkey was dependent on Russian supplies of oil and natural gas, while Turkey, with significant experience of private sector growth under a mixed economic system, was well placed to supply consumer goods and construction services in return. During the 1990s trade between Turkey and Russia expanded significantly. An interesting feature of the 1990s involved the growth of informal or ‘suitcase’ trade.\textsuperscript{14}

The relationship was characterised by significant elements of conflict in the midst of growing economic and diplomatic cooperation, however. A major cause of the conflict originated in Turkey’s desire to play a leadership role with respect to the newly independent Turkic Republics in Central Asia. In the early 1990s, following a series of disappointments on the path to EU membership, Turkey adopted an increasingly proactive policy towards the Central Asian Republics, based on cultural, historical and linguistic ties. Relationships between Turkey and Azerbaijan and the Central Asian Republics expanded considerably during the course of the 1990s. US backing for Turkey’s desire to play an active regional leadership role provoked further discontent on the part of the Russian leadership. From the Russian perspective the post-Soviet space would continue to be within the Russian sphere of influence, even though the Soviet Union had ceased to exist in formal terms. Hence the Russian leadership, which was encountering significant difficulties on the domestic front and not yet in a position to display the more assertive foreign policy characteristic of the later Putin era, was nevertheless disturbed by any kind of active competition from contending emerging powers in a region conceived to be its natural periphery. Conflict between the two countries also stemmed from their mutual involvement in the perennial domestic ethnic or minority conflicts confronting the two states, in a somewhat symmetrical fashion. Turkey indirectly supported Chechen insurgents, which created a major source of resentment in Russia.\textsuperscript{15} Similarly Russia provided indirect support for the armed Kurdish movement, the PKK, creating an equally vocal source of resentment in the Turkish context.\textsuperscript{16} Conflicts also emerged over Turkey’s attempts to diversify energy routes. During the 1990s Turkey’s major initiative in this sphere was the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline project, which reflected its desire to establish itself as an energy corridor, connecting the former Soviet space to Western markets. This vision came into direct conflict with the Russian perspective. Moscow was aiming to monopolise energy routes and perceived Turkish attempts to diversify them as a natural threat to its dominance in energy supply. Since the BTC project was accomplished with significant backing from the USA, the intrusion of Western powers in a region within the Russian sphere of influence was an additional source of contention for Moscow.

By the late 1990s, however, in the second phase of relations a shift of behaviour in the strategies of the two states led to further rapprochement. Turkish policy towards
the Central Asian Republics was toned down compared with the degree of assertiveness and pro-activism displayed during the early 1990s. Although Turkey continued to foster economic, cultural and diplomatic links with the Central Asian Republics, this was accomplished in a more subdued fashion. Turkish policy makers have, from the late 1990s onwards, been aware of the limits of their powers and have avoided active confrontation with Russia, especially in regions which appeared to be within the direct sphere of Russian influence. Furthermore, there was a tacit agreement between the two states not to interfere in each other’s domestic political conflicts, which had obvious destabilising repercussions. Both Turkey and Russia adopted neutral positions with respect to the Kurdish and Chechen conflicts. As a result of these developments, the pendulum has swung quite dramatically in the direction of cooperation during the early part of the new century. This phase, which broadly corresponds to the post-2001 era, can be identified as a golden age of Turkish–Russian relations, a process clearly facilitated by several high-level state visits and formal bilateral agreements. Under the leadership of Erdoğan and Putin the relationship appears to have acquired a new momentum built on strong economic interdependence. Although the growing relationship cannot be exclusively attributed to the two leaders, the process has undoubtedly contributed towards strengthening and consolidating their already dominant positions in their domestic politics. The degree of cooperation has drastically improved during the course of the third phase. At the same time, we should be cautious about the term ‘strategic partnership’, considering that significant elements of contention continued to characterise the relationship, particularly in geopolitical terms.

Table 1. Two phases of Russian–Turkish relations in the post-Cold War era.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of the relationship</th>
<th>Immediate post-Cold War era to the late 1990s</th>
<th>Later phase of the post-Cold War era: late 1990s and beyond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key driving forces</td>
<td>State-driven cooperation with private sector backing; regional agreements such as BSEC provide a facilitating but secondary role</td>
<td>States continue to be the key actors; the role of private sector interests increases parallel to the growth and diversification of the two economies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional context for cooperation</td>
<td>BSEC provides a loose framework for cooperation; weakly institutionalised regionalism in the absence of common norms and political orientations of the member states</td>
<td>Dynamic region with weak institutionalism; nation-states and national business associations continue to be the dominant actors; the importance and increasing frequency of bilateral summits involving heads of states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of leadership</td>
<td>Özal is the crucial figure in pushing for cooperation on the Turkish side, as the architect of the BSEC Project. There is no direct counterpart on the Russian side.</td>
<td>Erdoğan and Putin play important roles in promoting bilateral relations; Gül and Davutoğlu are also key actors on the Turkish side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of political conflicts and attitudes towards separatism and domains of influence</td>
<td>Deep conflicts; Russia resents Turkey’s quest to play a leadership role with respect to Central Asian Republics; the two states interfere in each other’s minority conflicts, with Russia indirectly supporting the PKK and Turkey indirectly supporting Chechen insurgents</td>
<td>Degree of conflict significantly reduced by the pragmatic turn in Turkish foreign policy; Turkey largely refraining from an active regional role in areas considered to be in Russia’s sphere of influence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Facilitators of rapprochement: evidence of deepening cooperation and interdependence

One of the striking features of the past three decades of Turkish–Russian relations is the deepening of the multi-dimensional nature of economic interdependence. The growth of economic relations between Turkey and Russia has been profound. Significant relationships have evolved in the areas of trade, investment linkages and construction activities, as well as tourism and labour flows. This growth has taken place against a background of growing human and cultural interaction as well.\(^{18}\)

Bilateral economic relations have three main dimensions: trade, investment and tourism. The trade volume between Turkey and Russia increased from US$4.5 billion in 2000 to $33.4 billion in 2012 (Figure 1). The spectacular increase in trade relations, however, has lopsided characteristic because Turkey's trade deficit has significantly increased over the past decade. According to 2012 figures, Turkey's trade deficit with Russia increased to more than $20 billion dollars (Figure 2).

The second dimension of growing interdependence between Russia and Turkey is the investments channel. Turkey's construction firms have invested substantially in the Russian market over the past few decades. The total amount of construction projects carried out by Turkish firms between 1972 and 2012 increased to more than $39 billion worth, most of which were carried out over the past decade. For example, Turkish firms realised projects worth $3.4 billion in 2011.\(^{19}\) The increasing involvement of private actors in bilateral relations should be noted in this context. Although foreign direct investments occupy a relatively low share in bilateral economic relations, the recent trend indicates that Turkish firms have started to invest significantly in Russian markets. For example, Turkey’s leading durable consumption products companies, Beko and Vestel, have captured 10% of the durable consumption products sector in Russia.

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**Figure 1.** Turkey’s exports and imports with Russia. Source: TÜİK (Turkish Statistical Institute), 2015; and Office of the Commercial Counsellor, Moscow, 2015.
The increasing economic and human interaction also motivated seven Turkish banks to open new branches in Russia. One may argue that a crucial aspect of the emerging interdependence between parties is the institutionalisation of bilateral economic relations. In May 2010 the establishment of a high-level cooperation council in Russia–Turkey relations was a turning point in terms of economic ties, because the Joint Economic Commission constituted one of the three main pillars of this new institutional structure. As highlighted by Putin in the 2013 meeting of the High-Level Russian–Turkish Cooperation Council, the two countries are also focusing on developing industrial cooperation in the field of energy, metals and automotive industries, as well as in the financial and innovation sectors.

The third dimension of growing interdependence in Turkey–Russia relations is tourism. On April 2011 visa-free travel for 30 days between Russia and Turkey came into effect – an historic milestone enhancing societal level interaction – and it also implied mutual trust. Thanks to high demand from Russian visitors, Turkey extended the visa-free travel period to 60 days in May 2012. Turkey is a favourite destination for Russian tourists. For instance, in 2012, 3.6 million Russians visited Turkey and in 2013 the country received four million visitors from Russia. In Moscow there are some 27,000 Turkish residents and this figure increases to 30,000–40,000 when other parts of Russia are included. The scale of tourism, labour mobility and inter-marriages – amounting to the current figure of roughly 300,000 – captures the growing human interaction between Russia and Turkey in recent years. In 2012 there were 18,000 Russian brides of Turkish husbands in Antalya alone. These figures indicate that the relationship is broadening beyond the realm of economic interdependence and increasingly embodies important social and cultural components. The far-reaching nature of the relationship implies that it is likely to be more durable than one based solely on narrow self-interest or strategic inter-state calculations.

Figure 2. Turkish–Russian trade volume and trade deficit. Source: TÜİK 2015; and Office of the Commercial Counsellor, Moscow, 2015.
BRICS and near-BRICS relations within the regional institutional context: the case of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization

Within the context of BRICS and near BRICS relations what makes the Turkish–Russian relationship interesting is that it has been accomplished in the framework of a loose, weakly institutionalised regional integration framework. The BSEC Agreement was signed in 1992. Russia and Turkey have been the principal countries in an essentially ‘South–South regional integration project’, meaning that none of the countries involved, especially in its early formative stages, was a capital abundant country, capable of acting as an engine of growth for the region as a whole. As the initiator of the project, the BSEC was particularly important for Turkey. Turgut Özal, the then president, was a key actor in translating this idea into concrete implementation in 1992. On the economic front, as pointed out by Mustafa Aydın, ‘the most institutionalized home grown institution in the region’ has been the BSEC. Upon the enforcement of its Charter it became an official legal entity as a ‘regional economic organization’ on 1 May 1999. While promoting the goals of economic cooperation and regionalism, it has also been pursuing a project-based approach. BSEC aims to contribute to security and stability in the region through economic cooperation as a major priority.

The expectation was that the BSEC project would create a degree of economic and political stability and a certain uniformity in economic policies and regulatory standards, creating a magnet for foreign direct investment from other parts of the world, notably from the neighbouring EU. Indeed, the EU was an ‘insider’ to the BSEC from the very inception of the project, given that Greece as a full EU member and Turkey as a candidate country constituted founding BSEC members. Subsequently two other original members of the BSEC Agreement, Bulgaria and Romania, became full members of the EU in 2007, increasing the degree of interaction and interdependence between the two intersecting, but in institutional terms rather contrasting, forms of regional bloc formation. In many ways BSEC is similar to a leading South–South regional agreement in Latin America, Mercosur, where Brazil and Argentina have been the states in the driving seat. At the same time, however, one could make the argument that the degree of institutionalised integration and policy coordination has been deeper in Mercosur than in BSEC.

BSEC has remained a loose integration scheme for several interrelated reasons. First, none of the key states involved was willing to delegate national state authority to a supranational entity. In the Russian case it was obvious that delegating significant autonomy to BSEC would involve a diminution of Russian power. This would clearly be unacceptable to a global power like Russia, which sees itself as a regional hegemon, not only in the Black Sea space but also in the post-Soviet space. Second, a more institutionalised and rigid membership of the BSEC would involve significant delegation of authority to a supranational body. The very flexibility of the BSEC enabled it to coexist with its more formal, institutionalised counterpart, the EU, without causing serious friction or insurmountable legal problems. Third, a deeper element that constrained more formal and institutionalised interaction between states in the Black Sea region was the absence of common norms or a common identity. For example, there was no consensus on democratic values and human rights practices comparable to the consensus found in the EU. BSEC was characterised by the coexistence of a variety of political regimes ranging from different shades of authoritarianism to different levels of democratic consolidation. Fourth, the region lacks the financial resources for significant
intra-regional transfers, a conduit to greater delegation of autonomy and a more formal integration process.\textsuperscript{29}

The common perception of the BSEC over a period of two decades is as a project that has had limited success. There have been regular meetings of heads of state as part of an inter-governmental agreement. However, the degree of policy cooperation has been rather limited. The organisation has also been largely incapable of inducing political change and resolving major inter-state conflicts. Authoritarian regimes remain intact in a number of Black Sea states. Long-standing conflicts such as the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute have been impervious to any kind of conflict-resolution mechanism. Yet the region has been quite dynamic in economic terms, as indicated by the interdependence that has developed between BSEC member states over the past few decades. While Russia and Turkey have been the primary driving forces and principal beneficiaries of this process, other neighbouring states have also benefited. In this sense the BSEC might be seen as an example of a bottom-up integration process. Trade, investment and human flows can generate a significant economic dynamism and interdependence, contributing to stability and security, despite the absence of common political norms and a strong regional identity.

Compared to the EU the BSEC represents a different style of integration. The physical boundaries are more flexible, with lax visa regimes, but the entitlements for ‘insiders’ are lower, compared with the formal redistributive mechanisms available to the EU, from which insiders can derive significant benefits. In other words, the BSEC constitutes a case of flexible borders, with weak entitlements, where the benefits flow primarily from private economic exchanges. In contrast, the EU represents a case of tight borders, with significant redistributive benefits for insiders, from which outsiders are largely excluded. For our purposes, we can argue that the strong economic relationship that has developed between Turkey and Russia has largely evolved through a series of bilateral moves, summits and treaties. The BSEC has indirectly contributed to, but has not been at the centre of this process.

Areas of continued contention and limits of the strategic partnership

The phenomenal growth of economic interdependence between Russia and Turkey illustrates the extent of interpenetration between emerging powers, not confined simply to BRICS economies. The relationship, nevertheless, still falls well short of a ‘strategic partnership’. This argument may be justified on the following grounds.

A critical difference between the two countries is that of regime type and diverging geopolitical alliances and interests. In spite of pressure for political liberalisation from below, Russia under Putin remains a highly entrenched authoritarian state. Given the nature of its authoritarianism in the domestic sphere, it is a state much more willing and able to use ‘hard power’, both in a military and economic sense. Turkey, in spite of its continuing democratic deficits, constitutes a democracy, even if the latter’s form is judged to be hybrid or illiberal. Consequently, in the foreign policy domain, Turkey tries to project itself as a regional power, which favours political liberalisation and democratisation in neighbouring states. This difference between the two states has been illustrated in the context of the ongoing Arab revolutions and the deepening of the Syrian crisis. However, Turkey’s over-engagement in Syria and Erdoğan’s tightening domestic grip have also been raising concerns about the authenticity of these claims. In the Syrian context Turkey has been actively pushing for regime change to topple President Bashar
al-Assad, who has been waging a brutal war against the opponents of his regime. Russia, on the other hand, has been supporting the Assad regime and has been opposed to humanitarian intervention in Syria, on the grounds that this would violate the principle of state sovereignty. The emergence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also referred as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), has further complicated the situation for both Turkey and Russia. The divergences in Moscow’s and Ankara's approach towards Islamic groups and separatism have added a new dimension to the already existing tensions over bilateral relations. Russia has been quite critical of Turkey’s relatively lenient attitude towards ISIS. Criticisms have also been voiced from Moscow concerning Ankara’s handling of the Kurdish conflict, following the stalling of the peace process and the resurgence of armed conflict with the PKK.

The realities of the Arab Spring, rather reminiscent of the Cold War in this region, have increasingly compelled Turkey to cooperate with the USA and NATO, despite some divergent strategies, particularly regarding Syria. Russia, China and Iran have been in the opposing camp. Setbacks in Turkey’s cooperation with the USA over ISIL, its support for the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the region, its strong anti-Israel rhetoric and its flirtation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have raised concerns that the country is drifting away from its Western allies. Nevertheless, given Turkey’s long-standing diplomatic, economic and security ties to the West, and even though Turkey has been adopting a more independent line of foreign policy in recent years, especially in the face of growing disappointment with the EU membership process, it is not a viable option for Turkey to entirely dissociate itself from the West and to seek to develop its relations with its turbulent neighbours as a quasi-independent power. The Arab Spring process and the Syrian crisis, in particular, have clearly illustrated the structural limits of Turkey’s ability to act independently of the USA and the EU in the face of a major regional crisis.

Divergences between Turkey and Russia over regional crises have not been confined to their respective responses to the Arab Spring and Syria. Earlier examples can be identified in the case of the Georgian crisis. When Georgia sought to recapture its separatist pro-Moscow region of South Ossetia and Moscow responded with a military move in August 2008, Turkey opposed the Russian intervention and supported the unity of the Georgian state. These developments caused significant turmoil. Despite the US and EU condemnations of troop deployments and bombings deep inside Georgia proper, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, defended the Russian move, declaring that ‘Russia has returned to the world stage as a responsible state which can defend its citizens’. Moreover, Russia promptly recognised the two break-away pro-Russian provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. These actions indicated that a resurgent Russia would be displaying an increasingly assertive foreign policy. President Medvedev acknowledged in 2010 that the war stopped NATO expansion. With the rising tensions between the USA and Russia, Turkey was once again confronted with the challenging task of striking a delicate balance between its alliance with the USA and NATO, and its relations with Russia, on which Turkey is heavily energy-dependent. In response to these complex developments, Turkey pursued a multidimensional and soft power approach by promoting the formation of a ‘Caucasus Solidarity and Cooperation Platform’ in the wake of the Georgia–Russia war. Turkish leaders were engaged in numerous high-level diplomatic meetings concerning its formation. However, its nature as a primarily regional cooperation platform has meant that the USA has lacked enthusiasm for its implementation.
After the NATO and EU enlargements the Black Sea has become the Eastern frontier of Europe and its significance for NATO has further increased. Despite strong Russian objections, both Ukraine and Georgia have expressed an interest in becoming future NATO members. Hence, on the one hand, a resurgent Russia is trying to firm up its grip over the Black Sea region, while, on the other, the USA and NATO are also aiming to increase their influence in this turbulent, yet highly strategic area. While the USA wants to increase its presence and NATO’s naval power in the Black Sea region, Turkey believes that increasing NATO’s naval presence would raise tensions. As pointed out by an authoritative Turkish diplomat, ‘attempts to revise the Montreux Treaty are highly problematic and are unacceptable for the Turkish side.’

In the meantime, it is critical that Turkey avoid confrontation with Russia; Turkey’s strict adherence to the Montreux Convention during the Georgian crisis was viewed favourably by the Russians.

Turkish–Russian relations continue to face some challenges in relation to the major frozen conflicts of the Caucasus. For instance, in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Turkey and Russia have found themselves on opposing sides, with Turkish support going to Azerbaijan and Russian support directed to Armenia. Turkey’s facilitator role in various conflict situations is acquiring increasing importance in enhancing its status as a pivotal regional power. Yet this role is also limited by complex regional dynamics. Given Russia’s considerable influence over Armenia, at least a tacit approval from the Russian side is critical for a genuine breakthrough in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, which currently seems quite unlikely. In this respect the Russian strategy will be highly dependent on the overall context of US–Russian relations as well. One could safely argue that the deepening economic partnership between Turkey and Russia has so far failed to result in an equally strong geopolitical partnership, aimed at solving major ongoing conflicts in the region. Moreover, Turkey will be at a structural disadvantage in terms of resolving such conflicts in the Caucasus and its long-standing conflict with Armenia, if it acts alone and deals with Russia on a bilateral basis, rather than acting together with the EU, as a candidate country and a potential member.

Another major area of contention with Russia emerged when the strategic decision to share the USA’s advanced missile defence capabilities, also known as the ‘Missile Shield’, was made at the NATO Lisbon Summit meeting in November 2010. Russia was vehemently opposed to the development of any antiballistic missile system, regardless of its limited capability. Turkey had some initial concerns about the Missile Shield project; however, when these concerns were adequately addressed by the allies, a key component of the project – a radar site in Kürecik, Malatya in eastern Turkey – was activated in May 2012, despite Russian and Iranian objections. It is noteworthy that Russian frustrations with this issue were mainly directed towards the USA as the architect of the project, rather than with Turkey, which Russia perceived as a much less influential US partner.

Overall, however, it is striking that geopolitical rivalries and conflicts, while straining relations, have not seriously disturbed the depth of bilateral ties and the degree of economic interdependence established over the course of the past two decades. This shows the robustness of economic interdependence, especially through the support of powerful stakeholders, both within the state as well as outside it, in terms of private sector coalitions that benefit tremendously from such economic interaction. In the context of the Syrian crisis, for example, the underlying differences between the Erdoğan and Putin governments, while creating considerable political tension, did not lead to a fundamental shift in Turkish–Russian relations. The Syrian crisis demonstrates so far that the high level of bilateral relations established
enables the two parties to compartmentalise economic issues and geopolitical rivalries and to avoid the negative spill-over of certain disagreements into areas of bilateral cooperation. However, if the divergences over Syria deepen further, it would be much harder to curtail negative repercussions in the economic realm. Turkey also voiced its concerns over the need to maintain the territorial unity of Ukraine and preserve the rights and security of the Crimean Tatars. Nevertheless, Turkey was not very forceful in its criticism of Russia regarding the Crimea crisis and the subsequent political turbulence in Ukraine. Moreover, its lack of cooperation with the USA and the EU with respect to sanctions against Russia over Ukraine has been causing further tensions in Ankara’s already strained relations with its Western allies.

In retaliation for the Western sanctions, President Putin banned fruit and vegetable imports from the EU and all food imports from the USA. Ankara responded to the ban by extending an olive branch to Russia. The Turkish Finance Minister, Nihat Zeybekçi, approached the current crisis between Moscow and the EU and USA as an ‘opportunity’ for Ankara. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu also acknowledged that Turkey does not want to join in EU sanctions against Russia and he emphasised that Moscow is an important trading partner for Turkey. He also urged the other EU countries to be ‘realistic’ about whether they can do without Russian gas, noting that ‘every country must consider its own interests’.

Hence, to the dismay of the EU countries and the USA, Ankara has capitalised on Russia’s EU food ban, boosting its exports of fish and meat to Russia to record highs. For instance, according to the Russian ambassador to Ankara, Andrey Karlov, in comparison with the January–November period of 2013, Russian imports of Turkish meat products have increased tenfold, while imports of seafood products has doubled. The sanctions episode aptly illustrates the benefits of the strong bilateral economic ties in terms of circumventing Western pressure for the key domestic political actors. It also has important implications in terms of acting as a layer of protection for the existing political regimes in both countries against external pressures for change.

Another major challenge for Turkey in forging a ‘strategic partnership’ is the asymmetric nature of the economic interdependence built between Turkey and Russia over the years. At present Turkey is more dependent on Russia, given its strong reliance on imported oil and gas resources. Arguably the degree of Russia’s dependence on Turkey has diminished over time as a result of the growth and diversification of its own private sector, which was not the case in the early stages of the transition to a market economy. Certainly trade between the two countries constitutes a two-way process and Turkey generates considerable foreign exchange from the activities of its construction firms and large numbers of Russian tourists visiting Turkey. Nevertheless, this structural asymmetry in Turkey’s economic relations with Russia may naturally limit its bargaining capacity with Moscow and its options.

The global struggle over access to and control of energy resources has intensified. Russia, the USA, the EU and China are the main global actors with significant interests and influence in the Caspian region, while Turkey, Azerbaijan and Iran are emerging regional actors. The challenging task of transporting land-locked Caspian energy to international markets further complicates the delicate dynamics between energy producers, energy transit countries and energy consumers, turning ‘pipeline politics’ into an indispensable part of the great energy game. In this respect Turkey is increasingly significant as an energy transit country, with the aspiration of becoming an ‘energy hub’ critical for European energy security.
The East–West Energy Corridor, initiated through intensive collaboration between Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the USA, forms a critical part of these initiatives. The Energy Corridor aims primarily to transport Caucasian and Central Asian crude oil and natural gas to international markets via safe alternative routes. The major components of this sizeable energy outlet include the BTC crude oil pipeline, the Shah-Deniz natural gas pipeline (Baku–Tbilisi–Erzurum) and the Trans-Caspian Natural Gas Pipeline projects and their complementary infrastructure. The completion of the BTC pipeline has been particularly significant because it opens a non-Russian oil transit route in order to get landlocked Caspian oil to global energy markets.

Russia, as a decisive player in the field of energy politics, made considerable efforts to undermine the nascent Nabucco project by promoting its Gazprom-backed South Stream Pipeline project as an alternative.\(^{42}\) Currently both projects are shelved. Initially the South Stream project was announced in 2007 and aimed to transport Russian natural gas to European consumers through Bulgaria and Serbia to Hungary and Austria. The shortest initial route was envisioned to pass through the continental shelves of Russia, Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria. However, as a result of gas disputes with Ukraine, Russian authorities began considering a longer route running along Turkey’s exclusive economic zone, for which they needed the consent of the coastal state according to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.\(^{43}\) In the meantime, as the adverse effects of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine have indicated, over-reliance on a single supplier and transport route has become very risky for European energy security.

While Turkey is engaged in developing international pipeline projects, it is also facing pressing domestic energy needs. Ankara’s insufficient domestic energy supplies, coupled with its own over-reliance on Russian natural gas, call into question Turkey’s energy security. While there is competition with Russia in the context of the East–West energy corridor, Turkey is heavily dependent on Moscow for its own domestic energy needs. Consequently it tries not to alienate its formidable neighbour, by collaborating with it in other energy projects, such as the Blue Stream. This paradoxical situation necessitates a more comprehensive energy strategy for Turkey, involving closer collaboration with primary global and regional actors in seeking a more balanced relationship with Russia.

In this context, there is increasing energy collaboration between Turkey and Azerbaijan. As a new energy initiative, on 26 June 2012, Erdoğan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev signed an intergovernmental agreement to launch a Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP), with the first gas flow expected in 2018. The projected amount of annual gas transport is 16 billion cubic meters (bcm), with 6 bcm allocated for domestic consumption in Turkey and the remaining 10 bcm to be transferred to Europe. In 15 years TANAP’s gas flow capacity is expected to reach to 31 bcm, the equivalent of Nabucco’s envisioned full capacity. TANAP will initially have a more limited scope, but a higher feasibility.\(^{44}\) In mid-2013 it was decided that TANAP will connect to the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) for transferring Azeri gas to Europe. Because of this project’s limited scope, which would not entirely eliminate alternative projects, TANAP did not receive the fierce opposition that Nabucco triggered from Russia. Moreover, as a balancing act to appease Moscow, only two days after the signing of the memorandum of understanding for TANAP on 28 December 2011, Turkey and Russia signed an agreement for the utilisation of the Turkish exclusive economic zone in the Black Sea for the transit of Russian gas to Europe.
The global energy field is very dynamic and has recently witnessed drastic changes, emerging as a game-changer for key players, ranging from the implications of the shale gas revolution in the USA to the plummeting oil prices in the global markets. While the falling oil prices constitute a major challenge for Moscow, with deeply troubling repercussions for its economy, it is particularly good news for Turkey to alleviate its persistent current accounts deficit problems originating primarily from its energy imports. Turkish Minister of Economy Ali Babacan stated that ‘Each ten dollar drop in oil prices, would contribute to decreasing Turkey’s current accounts deficit by 4 billion 400 million dollars’.45

In a quite dramatic move during his visit to Ankara on 1 December 2014, President Putin announced the decision to shelve the $45 billion South Stream project. Gazprom Chief Executive Officer Alexey Miller also told reporters in Ankara that ‘the project is over’.46 This is a clear sign that Russia’s economic ties with Europe are being further hindered as the crisis in Ukraine persists. The route under the Black Sea would have provided Gazprom with a more direct path to supply Europe’s gas needs, a plan the EU recently started to object to because it would diminish Ukraine’s leverage against Moscow. In the meantime Putin has been struggling to prevent Russia from falling into recession amid rapidly dropping oil prices and lingering sanctions resulting from the annexation of Crimea and the developments in Ukraine. Instead of South Stream, Putin announced that Russia would redirect the project to Turkey through a different Black Sea pipeline, with the intention of creating a ‘hub’ for southeastern Europe at the Greco-Turkish border. While the project has already been dubbed ‘Turkish Stream’ by some commentators in the international press,47 it is certainly not the last word from either actor. For now Russia is continuing to supply gas to Turkey through the Blue Stream pipeline, increasing deliveries by three billion cubic meters a year and offering a 6% discount from 1 January 2015.48 In light of these developments Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Taner Yıldız, once again confirmed Ankara’s commitment to TANAP and TAP as essential elements in the ‘chain’ of the Southern Gas corridor, as well as to Turkish–Russian energy collaboration. He stated: ‘We are a partner of TANAP and wouldn’t undertake any projects that threatened it’ and argued that although they might seem to be competing projects in the short-run, ultimately in the medium and long term they will be complementary for the enhancement of European energy security.49

Another emerging area of cooperation between Turkey and Russia is in the field of nuclear energy. As a part of its new strategy of ensuring its energy security, the Turkish government plans to have three nuclear power plants by 2023. At a time when some countries are revisiting their nuclear energy scenarios in the aftermath of Fukushima, the Turkish government appears determined to display the political will to realise its nuclear energy plans. In July 2010 the Turkish Parliament approved a bill on an intergovernmental agreement between Russia and Turkey for the construction of Turkey’s first nuclear power plant in Akkuyu, a town in Mersin province. Accordingly, the Russian state-owned atomic power company, Rosatom will construct and operate the Akkuyu nuclear power plant.50 The first reactor is expected to start generating electricity in 2019. Turkey’s nuclear power strategy is justified on the grounds of enhanced energy security, lower cost, reductions in carbon emissions and accruing the benefits of technology transfer. While Russia presented a commercially attractive deal, some serious concerns still remain.51 Turkey is situated in an earthquake-prone zone. In addition to seismic risks, there are also risks of radiation leakages, radioactive waste and storage problems, environmental risks for marine life, the security challenge of protecting the nuclear power plant against terrorist attacks, the risk of accidents and a potential proliferation crisis.
All these constitute major challenges. There is also a serious need for an effective oversight mechanism capable of monitoring every stage of the process. As far as Turkish–Russian relations are concerned, this new deal will have a dual impact. On the one hand, it will deepen Turkish–Russian economic ties with some further $20 billion dollars of Russian investment in Turkey and will enable some technology transfer as well. On the other hand, it will make Turkey even more reliant on Moscow. The fact that the Russians will maintain ownership of the nuclear plant after construction is an important factor in highlighting the growing asymmetrical interdependence of Turkey and Russia.

In conclusion, there has been a paradigm shift in Turkish–Russian relations from conflict to competition and finally to a mix of competition and cooperation. This shift is reflected in an intricate web of relations that bind these historic rivals ever closer. Nevertheless, political and geostrategic issues of contention, as well as asymmetries of interdependence persist, particularly as a result of Turkey’s vulnerability arising from its high energy dependency.

**Conclusion**

The current global political economy is characterised by the intensifying economic interaction of BRICS and near BRICS economies, with emerging powers exercising greater influence in their neighbouring regions. The growing partnership between Turkey and Russia over the past two decades constitutes a useful case study for examining the interplay of BRICS and near BRICS in the emerging world, where Western supremacy and US hegemony are under increasing challenge. The Turkish–Russian relationship sheds light on some interesting generalisations concerning broader themes in global political economy.

First, significant economic interdependence may be generated among states with widely different political outlooks. Furthermore, this growing interdependence is driven by bilateral relations between key states and supporting private actors or interests, in the form of loose regional integration schemes. One of the interesting features of the Turkish–Russian economic partnership is that, although BSEC has contributed to the process, it has not been a central driving force. Indeed, one of the ironies is that the Black Sea region has emerged as a dynamic economic space in terms of trade, investment and human flows, in spite of the apparent weakness of the formal regional integration structure. Second, growing economic interdependence may coexist with continued political conflicts and geopolitical rivalries. The opposing positions of Turkey and Russia in the context of the Syrian and Ukrainian crises aptly illustrate, however, that, although such conflicts exist, and while they hamper political relations, they do not significantly undermine the seemingly robust economic relationship built thus far. One important strategy that has emerged in this period is the tendency to compartmentalise economic issues and geopolitical rivalries in order to avoid the negative spill-over of certain disagreements into areas of bilateral cooperation. This also enables the coexistence of extensive competition with deepening cooperation, as clearly reflected in relations in the field of energy. However, if the divergences deepen over security issues, particularly in Syria, they could also significantly hamper compartmentalisation. Third, the Turkish–Russian economic partnership also illustrates the limits to the emergence of a genuinely strong ‘strategic partnership’ among states with widely contrasting geopolitical perspectives, alliances and regime types, although this statement should be qualified by noting that the gap between Erdoğan’s Turkey and Putin’s Russia where democratic credentials are concerned may have been diminishing rather than widening in recent years with Turkey’s
increasingly authoritarian turn in the later phase of the AKP era. Finally, from the Turkish perspective, attention may be drawn to the limits of a predominantly bilateral relationship with Russia, given the problems of asymmetric interdependence. This suggests that continued engagement and the deepening of ties with Russia is very important and beneficial for Turkey, but should be conducted within a broader European framework, highlighting the continued relevance of the EU candidacy and the significance of a trilateral rather than bilateral bargaining strategy.

The fourth contribution with broader ramifications is that new alliances based on significant economic interdependence, while contributing towards stability and the creation of durable partnerships among states which otherwise differ significantly on key political issues, also contain some fundamental drawbacks. Given the nature of the asymmetric interdependence underlying such alliances, the bargaining leverage of the weaker partner is significantly restricted on a number of key issues or policy areas. Even more significantly such relationships may also help to bolster the resilience of highly authoritarian regimes (like Russia), while helping to push relatively more democratic, ‘hybrid regimes’ (like Turkey) in a more authoritarian direction, hence presenting a major challenge to the future of the liberal international order.

**Funding**

Financial assistance from the Turkish Scientific and Technological Research Institution (TÜBİTAK) under a special award scheme, TUBITAK-BIDEB, and KÜTEM Seed Fund is gratefully acknowledged.

**Acknowledgements**

Earlier versions of this paper have been presented at the ISA Flasco Conference at the University of Buenos Aires (July 2014) and at invited lectures at Princeton (October 2013), Cambridge (November 2014) and Stanford Universities (March 2015). We would also like to thank the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies at Stanford University for facilitating this research. We appreciate the able assistance of Duygu Sever, Erdem Demirtaş and Benal Nazlı Üstünes.

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**Notes**

1. On a changing global order where BRICS are becoming increasingly important actors, see Kupchan, *No One’s World*. For examples of the growing literature on BRICS, see Armijo, “The BRICS Countries”; Brütsch and Papa, “Deconstructing the BRICS”; Kahler, “Rising Powers and Global Governance”; and Macfarlane, “The R’ in BRICS.” Specifically on Russia and China and the emerging Russia–China axis as a coalition of authoritarian BRICS, see Larson and Shevchenko, “Status Seekers.”

2. On rising middle power activism led by MIST countries in the context of MIKTA, see Jongryn, *MIKTA*. MIKTA is a recently formed organization that includes five G20 countries, including Australia, that are not members of the first-generation BRICS. On the broader notion of emerging powers, see Schweller, “Emerging Powers.” For an insightful analysis highlighting cooperation between Brazil and Turkey, examples of BRICS and near BRICS, respectively, in the context of ‘second-generation middle powers,’ see Sandal, “Middle Powerhood as a Legitimation Strategy.” Sandal’s study underlines a type of cooperative relationship which is conducive to the strengthening of the liberal international order. The present study, in contrast, by pointing towards the authoritarian bias inherent in Russia and Turkey’s relationship, highlights the challenges to the future of the liberal international order. On near BRICS with reference to Turkey, see Öniş and Kutlay, “Rising Powers in a Changing Global Order.” On foreign policy activism in the near BRICS, with a focus on recent Turkish policy, see Öniş and Yılmaz, “Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism.”


4. Aras, *Turkey and the Russian Federation*; Aktürk, “Towards a Turkish–Russian Axis?”; Balcer, “The Future of Turkish–Russian Relations”; and Hill and Taşpınar, “Turkey and Russia.” Scholars who advance the strategic partnership thesis, as well as addressing some challenges associated with it, tend to concentrate on the bilateral links between the two countries from a predominantly security perspective. The present article adopts a broader political economy approach and examines the complex interdependence of Turkey and Russia in the context of the growing literature on the dynamics of rising powers in a changing global order.

5. For an insightful analysis of the triangular dynamics of US–Russia–China relations and interaction with regional powers in the newly emerging multipolar system, see Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules*.

6. On the nature of the political system and authoritarianism in Putin’s Russia, see Fish, *Democracy Derailed in Russia*; Sakwa, “Putin’s Leadership”; and Horvath, “Putin’s ‘Preventive Counter-revolution.” For an insightful analysis of political and economic changes in Russia and its role


8. The first country to officially recognize Turkey was the short-lived Republic of Armenia, with the Gümrü (Alexandropol) Agreement on December 2, 1920. Soysal, “Türkiye–Ermenistan Barış Andlaşması”; and Soysal, “Türkiye ve Sovyet Rusya Dostluk ve Barış Andlaşması.”


10. For a more detailed assessment of this period, see Yılmaz, “Turkey’s Quest for NATO Membership”; and Bilgin and Coş, “Stalin’s Demands.”

11. On September 18, 1984 the USSR and Turkey signed their first Natural Gas agreement. The widespread usage of natural gas in Turkey started in 1988, with the completion of the 842-km natural gas pipeline connecting Turkey and the USSR.

12. We have significantly benefited in this context from interviews with Nihat Gökyiğit, a leading businessman, who played an important role in laying the foundations of strong trade and investment relations with Russia and the former Soviet Republics from the second half of the 1980s onwards in his capacity as Chair of the Turkish–Russian Business Council; and from an interview with Çiğdem Tüzün, who was also a key figure in negotiations between the Turkish private sector and Russian state officials in her capacity as Director of DEIK from the late 1980s to 2006.

13. For a solid account of the deepening of economic relations between Turkey and Russia during the late 1980s and the role of private actors, notably DEIK, in the process, see Altun, *Diş Dünyanın Anahtarı DEIK*.


15. Primakov, *Турция*.

16. For some examples of such resentment in the Turkish media, see “Rusya’ya Sorumluluk Çağrısı”; “Rus Riyakarlığı”; “Rus Büyükelçi Dişişleri’ne çağırıldı”; “Türkiye’den Rusya’ya: İlişkiler Bitebilir”; and “Rusya bir kez daha uyarıldı.”

17. These included the February 12–15, 2009 visit by Turkish President Gül to Russia; the August 6, 2009 visit by President of the Russian Federation Putin to Turkey; the signing of the Cooperation Agreement on the ‘Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy,’ and ‘Agreement on the Early Notification of Nuclear Accidents and Exchange of Information on Nuclear Facilities’; Erdoğan’s January 12–13, 2010 visit to Russia and a joint statement on cooperation on nuclear power plants; President Medvedev’s May 11–12, 2010 visit to Turkey and signing of a cooperation agreement for the Akkuyu nuclear power plant; the memorandum of understanding on the security of Samsun–Ceyhan crude oil pipeline; memorandums on agricultural trade issues; the second meeting of the High Level Cooperation Council in Russia, March 15–17, 2010; President Gül’s September 8, 2010 visit to Russia; Prime Minister Erdoğan’s July 18, 2012 visit to Moscow; and the High Level Cooperation Council meeting in Istanbul, December 3, 2012. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Diş Politika Kronolojisi*.

18. On the nature of expanding interactions, see Kudryashova, *Активизация российско-турецких отношений*.

19. Özdal et al., *Türkiye–Rusya İlişkileri*.

20. Ibid.


22. Speech by Vladimir Putin, at the High Level Russian–Turkish Cooperation Council, Saint Petersburg, November 22, 2013.


24. “10 yılda 200 bin Rus Gelin.”
25. “Antalya’da 18 bin Rus Gelin”; and “Yabancılarla evlilikler artıyor.”
27. Aydın, “Regional Cooperation in the Black Sea.”
28. Personal interview with a high-level Turkish diplomat, October 24, 2008.
29. For an extensive assessment, see Vasiliev, ЧЕРНОМОРСКИЙ РЕГИОН ВО ВНЕШНЕПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ КОНЦЕПЦИЯХ ТУРЦИИ: РОССИЯ И ТУРЦИЯ НА ЧЕРНОМ МОРЕ.
30. Martin, “Turkey and the USA.”
31. Shchedrov, “Georgia Crisis.”
32. Dyomkin, “Russia Says.”
33. Personal Interview with a high-level Turkish Diplomat, October 24, 2008.
34. For a detailed analysis of the dynamics of the triangular Turkish–US–Russian relations within this context, see Özel and Yılmaz, Turkish American Relations.
35. Baev, Russia and Turkey.
36. Kibaroğlu, “Turkey’s Place in the Missile Shield.”
37. For Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu’s comments on this topic, see “Kırım’dan Çözüme Her Türülü Katkıyı Yapmaya Hazırız.”
38. Michaeloupoulos, “Greece accuses Turkey.”
39. “Turkey Refuses to Join Anti-Russia EU Sanctions.”
40. “Türkiye’den Rusya’ya Et İhracatında Rekor Artış.”
41. Tekin and Williams, Geo-politics of the Euro-Asia Energy Nexus; Tekin and Williams, “EU-Russian Relations”;
42. Bourgeot, “Russia–Turkey” , Baev and Overland, “Joint Declaration” . The Nabucco is a nascent pipeline project that aims to connect Turkey to Austria with the aim of diversifying the natural gas suppliers and delivery routes for Europe thus reducing European dependence on Russian energy.
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