

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ROLE OF TURKEY WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Asst. Prof. Alişan BALTACI

Yuksekk İhtisas University, Vocational School of Health Services, Medical Services and Techniques Department, alisanbaltaci@yiu.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-3280-405X

Abstract

The process of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has caused many military, economic and political consequences. In current terms, that invasion has created effects that will create a "new normal" in the long term in the global sense. It can be argued that this new normal will be shaped around the emergence of the demands for NATO membership of previously neutral countries by changing their security-based expectations and the emerging needs for new energy transmission lines. In this research, inferences are made about Turkey's attitude towards new membership applications to NATO, its diplomatic position between the warring parties, and its capacity to be an alternative for new energy transmission lines.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, War, Economy, Politics

Jel Codes: F51, H56, N40, Q43, P16

INTRODUCTION

Russia considers Ukraine as a country that is dependent on Russia and a buffer between the West since its independence in 1991. Russia also defines this country's intention and the possibility of membership in NATO and the European Union as a critical security threat (Kaçmaz, 2020; Oktav, 2022).

However, it cannot be said that the only basis of the disagreements between the two countries is the possibility of Ukraine's shift to the western axis. In addition, ethnic-based problems arising from the Russian population that immigrated to Eastern Ukraine due to industrialization in the 19th century and the attempt to Russify the region during the Soviet Union period constitute a vital ground of disagreement (Kurt, 2020).

The historical foundations of the Russian occupation movement experienced today can be traced back to ancient times. However, it is critical to understand the recent past of the subject to understand the current situation. That evoked the pro-Western population to begin a protest, which also played an active and critical role in the Orange revolution in 2004 (Çelik, 2022). Ultimately, on this basis, Russia first defined the public demonstrations in Ukraine as a coup in 2014, citing the safety of the Crimean Russians as a reason, and annexed Crimea (Kurt, 2020). Between 2014 and 2022, the actions of pro-Russian separatists, especially in Donbas and Luhansk, were intervened by Ukrainian forces. However, Russia began massing soldiers on the eastern border of Ukraine under military exercises (Güneş, 2022). Then, on

February 21, 2022, Russia occupied the Donbas and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine and declared that they recognized their independence. Immediately after this, on February 24, 2022, it started the occupation of Ukraine on the grounds of “purging the country from Nazism and militarism” (Anadolu Agency, 2022c). The war also resonated in the international arena. As a result of the voting held in the session of the United Nations General Assembly on March 2, 2022, a decision was made to condemn Russia's exit from the territory of Ukraine (Ülger, 2022).

As a result of the recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine, fluctuations emerged between Russia and Europe in politics, security, and energy. It can be said that the sanctions carried out over energy between the parties are the footsteps of a new Cold War because Russia sees its energy resources as a tool to realize its political goals and uses it against Europe. As a result of the Ukraine War, Russia changed the direction of the energy transfer through this country and switched from different routes to a transmission mechanism. Another result of the current war is the fluctuations and problems in energy supply and demand. For this reason, the European Union is in an effort to access Caspian natural gas and to produce an alternative to Russian gas. Thus, it aims to guarantee a sustainable energy supply. In addition, the increase in access to Caspian gas will create a competitive environment against Russian gas. At this point, the importance of Turkey's geostrategic position emerges, as Turkey is the most important country that these alternative lines can cross.

Another claim is that Russia's attack aroused Ukrainian nationalism and motivated NATO. Also, it aroused unity and togetherness in the European Union due to security concerns (Ülger, 2022). In other words, the situation has become multi-stakeholder and international rather than a war between the two countries and has caused action-reaction issues.

Another consequence of the war between Russia and Ukraine is that it caused a series of unexpected political developments in the region. For example, Sweden and Finland applied to join NATO; Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine have applied for membership in the EU (Arman & Gürsoy, 2022). At this point, Turkey's declaration of nay vote against Finland and Sweden's demand for joining NATO was pretty unexpected. Turkey states that these two countries are supporting the terrorist organizations against Turkey.

New developments are experienced at every moment due to the dynamic nature of the war and global politics. In this study, the current situation regarding Turkey's political and economic role in the Russia-Ukraine war, which has been going on since February 2022 as of May 2022, is conceptually examined, and inferences are put forward.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Political Role of Turkey in the Russia-Ukraine War

It is possible to discuss Turkey's political role in the Russia-Ukraine War under three main topics. The first of these is the territorial integrity of Ukraine, the second is the mediation role between Russia and Ukraine, and the third is the situation for new countries that apply to become NATO members as a result of this process.

Turkey's attitude towards Ukraine's territorial integrity is quite clear. After the meeting with the Prime Minister of Ukraine Zelenskiy in the days when the tension between Russia and Ukraine started to increase, President Erdoğan expressed Turkey's view of the issue with his statement that Ukraine's territorial integrity should be respected (Deutsche Welle, 2021). Likewise, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs states on its corporate website that Turkey supports the preservation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and does not recognize the annexation of Crimea (T.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022a).

As a result of the balance policy it has followed from the beginning of the process, Turkey has become an ideal candidate country to assume the role of mediator for both Ukraine and Russia. As a result, Antalya was the first place chosen for the highest level meetings among the countries. Under these circumstances, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov came together on March 10, 2022, in Antalya, hosted by Turkey (BBC, 2022a). Then, on March 29, 2022, again hosted by Turkey, the two-day meetings of the Ukrainian and Russian delegations took place in Istanbul. At the end of the negotiations, David Arakhamia, one of the members of the Ukrainian delegation, stated that Turkey was one of the eight countries that Ukraine requested as a guarantor (Anadolu Agency, 2022b). In the current situation, Turkey still acts with the approach of establishing peace between the two countries, with respect to the territorial integrity of the countries, and applying a balanced policy in parallel with them. Russia demands recognition of the annexation of Crimea, disarming the army, giving up NATO membership, and adopting a new approach to the Donbas region from Ukraine (Çelik, 2022). On the other hand, Ukraine expects Russia to end the occupation unconditionally. Therefore, it does not seem easy for both countries to find a compromise ground that they can be satisfied with on this axis unless they make concessions.

The Russo-Ukrainian War has not only posed a problem for Ukraine's security. It has increased the concerns of some Baltic countries to suffer a similar fate and has led them to apply for NATO membership. NATO membership is a very long process of 7 steps, and 30 member states must approve the membership of the country applying for accession (Anadolu Agency, 2022a).



Figure 1. NATO membership application process, Source: Anadolu Agency, 2022a.

Turkey opposes the membership application of Finland and Sweden as NATO members, alleging that they support terrorist organizations. Turkey claims that Finland has 6 FETÖ and 6 PKK terrorists, and Sweden has 10 FETÖ and 11 PKK terrorists that they do not extradite even though Turkey demands. Turkey also asserts that Sweden had supplied T-4 anti-tank missiles, drones, and financial support to the PKK/PYD (Hürriyet, 2022a). That is the basic premise of Turkey's nay vote against these countries for NATO membership. Turkey has demonstrated its stance on this issue through the administration of all state levels, especially by President Erdogan. Politicians from various countries in Europe, in addition to the two countries' officials, have made statements that the process can be overcome through dialogue (Hürriyet, 2022b). However, Turkish officials have stated that unless a concrete step is taken toward Turkey's expectations, the membership processes of the two countries will not be approved (Hürriyet, 2022c). This situation can be handled within the framework of the Securitization Theory. The Securitization Theory positions any issue within the problem range of a country as an existential threat or a high-priority risk from the security framework. Declining it attributes an extraordinary status to the problem (Miş, 2011). In this context, Finland, Sweden, and Turkey interpret the situation through their own security problems and prioritize eliminating these problems above all else. At this stage, it would be appropriate to state that Turkey's rejection vote has become a solid diplomatic element.

Turkey's Economic Role in the Russia-Ukraine War

The Russia-Ukraine War undoubtedly had many different economic consequences. The most important of these are the restrictions and embargoes implemented by the European Union countries for energy products, which are Russia's most important export item. The most important economic role that Turkey can play in the economic consequences of the war, therefore, emerges in this title.

One of the critical elements of security between Europe and Russia is energy. Europe is nonsovereign in energy and imports more than half of the energy it uses at a daily cost of more than 1 billion Euros (Matsumotoa et al., 2018). Therefore, Europe acts with the expectation of ensuring the security of its fossil fuel supply, and Russia expects a sustainable energy export at the highest possible price. For this reason, Russia wants to make Europe more dependent on itself. While doing this, it sells energy at lower prices to countries with access to alternative energy sources and higher prices to those who do not; it tries to implement its policies by establishing and purchasing different energy transmission lines. Therefore, it can be interpreted as an energy monopoly attempt in the long run (Sabbaghian & Rasooli, 2021). This situation can be handled within the framework of the Complex Dependency Theory. According to the Complex Dependency Theory, the method that a state should implement in establishing security in interstate relations is to make other states dependent on it and avoid using military force while doing this (Usta, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that the discourse of realist theory on establishing security by military force is also criticized. From this perspective, Russia's primary purpose is to create its own hegemony by making other countries, especially Europe, dependent on it over the energy issue. It can be said that these efforts did not reach their goal as a result of the sanctions imposed on Russian energy products that emerged as a result of the Russia-Ukraine War.

The subject can also be evaluated within the Regional Energy Complex Theory framework on a theoretical basis. This theory states that the interactions created by the energy dependency relationship between at least two countries in a specific geographical area are considered a matter of securitization. In this context, it can be said that Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, and the European Union have formed a regional energy complex due to the energy transmission lines passing through Ukraine and Turkey (Arman & Gürsoy, 2022). As a result of the war, a fluctuation and deterioration occurred in this regional energy complex, and the need for the emergence of new regional energy complexes arose.

Accessing Caspian natural gas is one of the essential options for the European Union among the emerging quests for creating new energy complexes. Thus, it will be possible to have an alternative to Russian gas. In addition, the increase in Europe's access to Caspian gas will create a competitive environment against Russian gas. At this point, the importance of Turkey's geostrategic position emerges, as Turkey is the most important country that these alternative lines can cross. Thus, it can be evaluated that a new energy complex may emerge

between Turkey, the European Union, and the Caspian Region. That may be Turkey's most critical economic role in the war process. In this respect, the European Union also wants Turkey to play a critical role in a route that has access to the Caspian, Middle East, and other Southern and Eastern sources, where gas can be transported to the West (Kotenko, 2021). Therefore, it can be said that Turkey can play a strategic role in diversifying the gas supply of the European Union by creating new gas pipelines carrying gas from the Caspian and Middle East to Europe.

Furthermore, the Russia-Ukraine War is also important for Israel to sell its natural gas to Europe through Turkey and become an alternative energy supplier. For this reason, while the war was going on, the President of Israel visited Turkey (Oktav, 2022). Therefore, it can be said that Europe can evaluate not only the Caucasus but also the Mediterranean line as an energy supply alternative.

It is impossible to say that Turkey was caught unprepared in this regard. Turkey's intention to transform into a regional energy corridor is a well-known issue in the international arena. Based on that expectation, Turkey built the framework of the Middle Corridor initiative. Turkey has implemented many energy transmission lines in this ideal. General information about these transmission lines is shared in the table.

Table 1. Oil and natural gas transmission lines in Turkey, Source: Turkish Republic Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, 2022; BOTAŞ, 2022a.

Natural Gas Pipelines	Oil Pipelines
➤ Russia – Turkey Natural Gas Pipeline (West Line) (Commissioning: 1987)	➤ Batman-Dört Yol Crude Oil Pipeline (Commissioning: 1967)
➤ Blue Stream natural gas Pipeline (Russia-Turkey) (Commissioning: 2003)	➤ Iraq-Turkey Crude Oil Pipeline (Commissioning: 1977)
➤ Eastern Anatolia Natural Gas Main Transmission Line (Iran – Turkey) (Commissioning: 2001)	➤ Ceyhan-Kırıkkale Crude Oil Pipeline (Commissioning: 1986)
➤ Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Natural Gas Pipeline (BTE) (Commissioning: 2007; Capacity Increase: 2018)	➤ Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline (Commissioning: 2006)
➤ Turkey-Greece Natural Gas Interconnection (TAE) (Commissioning: 2007)	

Turkey's energy transmission lines and geostrategic location are shared in Figure 2. As it can be understood from the figure, Turkey is a stable country in the region, located between energy resources and energy-demanding countries.

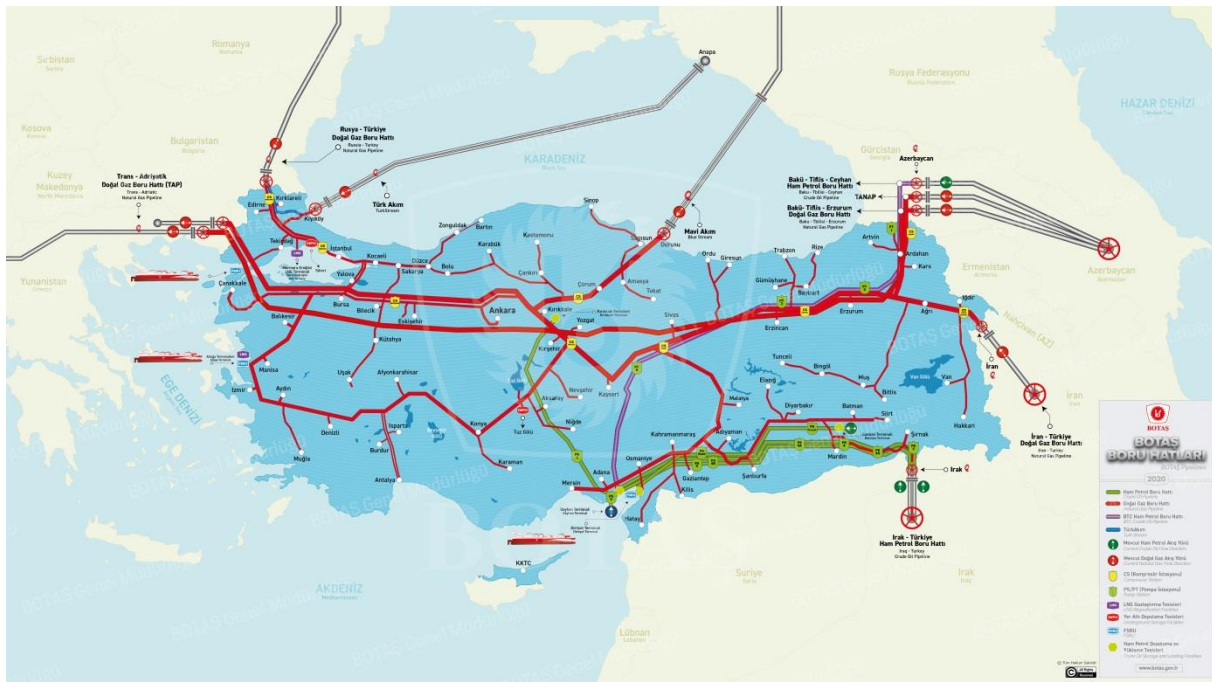


Figure 2. Turkey's geostrategic location and energy transmission lines, Source: BOTAS, 2022b.

As seen from the map, Turkey is at a critical point regarding the transfer of natural gas between the Caspian Sea and the Balkans. On the other hand, that geostrategic position provides a base for transferring Iraqi oil to the Mediterranean. Finally, it is also possible to transfer the Russian energy resources over Turkey from the Black Sea route. The Russia-Ukraine War has further increased Turkey's geostrategic importance within the framework of energy transmission lines. It is possible to say that this situation creates the possibility of Turkey becoming the center of a new regional energy complex that may emerge in the future.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

At the time of this research, the Russia-Ukraine War had just completed its fourth month. Nevertheless, this invasion, which everyone loudly claimed at the beginning would not last long and would result in the absolute victory of Russia, has survived to this day with the intervention of global actors and the unexpected resistance of Ukraine.

Since the beginning of the process, Turkey has made an intense diplomatic effort to ease the parties' tension and establish peace. That effort has been appreciated by both the conflicting parties and other countries.

Russia's interpretation of these attitudes of the countries in its immediate geography seeking cooperation and membership with the European Union and NATO as a risk, and the discourse that there is an existential threat in these matters with the securitization approach, has also caused uneasiness in other countries in the region. In this context, Sweden and Finland applied for membership in NATO. However, Turkey has declared that it will use its veto right regarding the membership of these countries, which have claimed neutrality, on the

grounds that they protect the organizations Turkey defines as terrorists. Therefore, it can be said that Russia is not the only source of security concerns in the events. Ultimately, one of the reasons for the existence of security-based international organizations is to minimize the security concerns of their members. The emergence of a membership structure contrary to this will bring objections among the organization's members.

Another critical problem brought about by the war arose over energy supply. The most important weapon used by Russia in responding to the sanctions of western countries has been energy exports. On March 23, 2022, Russian President Putin said, "We are planning to switch to Russian rubles in payments for natural gas sales to unfriendly countries" (Bloomberg, 2022a). However, as of May 2, 2022, it was stated in the statements made by the European Union officials that no payment was made in Rubles yet (Bloomberg, 2022b). As of May 21, 2022, the first sanction for natural gas exchange with this Ruble was made to Finland, but Finnish authorities stated that this situation would not affect their country (BBC, 2022b). However, it is possible to say that this threat from Russia caused sufficient concern.

On the other hand, it should be noted that Europe is nonsovereign in energy and is vulnerable to any fluctuations in energy supply. This war is important because it also showed the European authorities the risk of dependence on a single energy supplier. In this environment, the importance of alternative energy transmission lines also emerges. Turkey is located in "a region adjacent to approximately 60% of the world's proven oil and natural gas reserves" (T.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022b). Turkey is also the eastern neighbor of the European Union (Matsumotoa et al., 2018), which imports 1 billion Euros of energy daily. In other words, it is in an ideal geo-strategic location to be a power transmission line alternative to Europe. The Middle Corridor Initiative, based on the strategy of making Turkey a hub in terms of energy and logistics, can offer Europe an adequate, stable, and sustainable supply for energy demand.

It is evident that the Russia-Ukraine War is a regional crisis. In the feared scenario, the situation is also possible to become a global crisis. After all, all crises contain some opportunities within themselves. However, the prerequisite for accessing opportunities is to be prepared and to do the proper planning. As a result of this war, Turkey is faced with opportunities that can gain some gains to overcome its own security concerns, become a new energy transmission center for the European Union and increase its regional diplomatic influence.

On the other hand, due to the war, Turkey has problems accessing some products imported from these countries and is exposed to economic losses due to regional instability. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the event not only from the perspective of crisis-opportunity but also from the perspective of the need for a balance between opportunities and threats. In other words, it is crucial to take necessary precautions against threats.

Cite as: Baltacı, A. (2022). Rusya Ukrayna Savaşı Kapsamında Türkiye'nin Siyasi ve Ekonomik Rolü. M. G. Açıkgöz & Z. Alimgerey (Ed.), In Proceedings Book of International Congress on Social Sciences, China to Adriatic-XIV (p. 517-526). IKSAD Global Publishing. ISBN–978-625-8323-42-9. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.20079080.v1>.

REFERENCES

Please check the original paper for the references:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361250828 Rusya Ukrayna Savasi Kapsaminda Turkiye'nin Siyasi ve Ekonomik Rolu](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361250828_Rusya_Ukrayna_Savasi_Kapsaminda_Turkiye'nin_Siyasi_ve_Ekonomik_Rolu)