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RUSSIA–TURKEY RELATIONS

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Russia and Turkey: Between Partnership and Rivalry

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Abstract

What brings Russia and Turkey together and how sustainable is their partnership given the multiple points of friction between them? This essay argues that Moscow and Ankara have learned to keep competition within bounds and to maximize shared interests. Recent examples of competition, such as around the conflicts in Idlib, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, and eastern Ukraine, suggest that the partnership forged by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will endure such frictions.

Russia and Turkey are both partners and competitors: in the Middle East, the Southern Caucasus, as well as in the Balkans. Yet, despite the legacy of wars waged between the Ottoman and the Tsarist Empire, Cold War-era divisions and current disagreements, Moscow and Ankara have managed to identify overlapping interests and build positive ties while containing conflicts. The two strongmen in charge of Russian and Turkey, Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, engaged in outright confrontation after the downing of a Russian jet by a Turkish F-16 fighter aircraft in November 2015, only to restore ties and establish a condominium of sorts in Syria, together with Iran. Energy cooperation thrives, with the TurkStream natural gas pipeline complete and the Akkuyu nuclear power plant making headway. Russia and Turkey are furthermore developing defense ties. Russian-made S-400 surface-to-air missile systems have been delivered to Ankara, and are straining relations with the United States, Turkey's main international ally.

There are tensions, nonetheless. Starting from early 2020, the crises in Libya, Idlib in northwest Syria, Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine have served as reminders of the many issues dividing Turkey and Russia. In Idlib, the two militaries collided briefly. There is, therefore, no Russian–Turkish alliance in the making. Rather, Moscow and Ankara have been leveraging one another to improve their strategic position vis-à-vis the West. Russia benefits from Turkey's quarrels with the US and the rest of NATO. Turkey, for its part, uses Russia to balance against the US and, to a lesser extent, the EU. However, this cuts both ways. Erdoğan has no qualms about leaning on NATO in order to balance Russia on issues where interests diverge, for example with regard to security in the Black Sea region.

This essay looks at the drivers behind the Russian–Turkish relationship, including the issues where the two are at odds, and draws some conclusions about its future trajectory.

What Brings Russia and Turkey Together?

The rapprochement between Russia and Turkey has multiple causes: economic interdependence, convergent political cultures, and geopolitics.

Thanks to natural gas, Russia (a major exporter) and Turkey (a consumer) have seen their energy systems become increasingly intertwined. Traditionally, Turkey imports around half of its gas from Russia, a proportion which has been declining in recent years. After visas were abolished in 2011, Russians quickly became one of the largest groups of tourists visiting Turkey each year, surpassed only by German tourists. Tens of thousands of Russian Federation citizens own property along the Aegean and the Mediterranean coasts. Yet, in terms of turnover, Russia lags far behind the EU and the goal of reaching \$100 billion, touted by Erdoğan for years, remains a bridge too far. Turkey's policy of diversifying energy supplies—through the so-called Southern Gas Corridor linking it to the Caspian and deliveries of liquefied natural gas (LNG)—are eroding Gazprom's share of the Turkish energy market. The Russian authorities' recent decision to cancel charter flights to Turkey between April and June 2021, ostensibly because of COVID-19, will have a negative impact as well.

Shared political features also play a significant role in bringing Russia and Turkey together. Both countries share a political culture prioritizing the state's security and sovereignty over individual rights. In the 1990s, they started to accommodate one another over sensitive issues such as the Kurdish question and Chechnya. For instance, in early 1999, President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Evgeny Primakov overruled the Duma with regard to the request by Abdullah Öcalan for political asylum. The leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) had sought refuge in Moscow, following his expulsion from Syria after Turkey threatened military action for harboring him.

A year later, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit declared the second war in Chechnya was Russia's domestic business, after meeting then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin,

who had already been anointed as Yeltsin's successor. Putin's strongman rule, defence of national interests against western encroachment and top-down modernization of society have always appealed to Turkish elites and society, transcending the secular/religious divide. In the 2000s, factions in the Turkish military and bureaucracy, who were opposed to the EU-promoted liberal reforms and resentful of US foreign policy, embraced Eurasianism and argued for an alliance with Russia, Iran and other revisionist powers. Originally at odds with Erdoğan, in the mid-2010s, these factions shifted their loyalties to him.

Geopolitics is also at play. Confronted with a resurgent Russia, Ankara has preferred to engage rather than pick fights. During the 2008 war in Georgia, for instance, it kept its allies at a distance, eager not to antagonize Moscow. Policymakers in Ankara assessed that, in case of an escalation, Turkey would be left by the US to fend for itself. The Turkish government sought to reassure the Kremlin and keep western powers at arm's length.

Similarly, even if it condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Turkey opposed western sanctions. Since then, Ankara has been pursuing an intricate balancing act between the West and Moscow, seeing itself as a third pole rather than an extension of the transatlantic alliance. With Russian military deployments in Syria, the South Caucasus and especially Crimea, Turkey finds itself encircled and vulnerable. Though Ankara contributes to NATO's 'tailored forward presence' in the Black Sea and supports the pact's enlargement to the Western Balkans, as well as to Ukraine and Georgia, it does so largely under the radar.

A final factor is Turkey's strained relations with the US and the EU, particularly after the 2016 coup attempt against Erdoğan, coupled with Russia's intervention in Syria. Ties to the United States and Europe have deteriorated and are now largely transactional. As a consequence, Russia's appeal is on the rise. Erdoğan has been the main protagonist in this story. He blamed foreign powers for the Gezi protests (a failed 'coloured revolution' of sorts), resented the Obama administration's failure to enforce its 'red lines' after the Syrian regime used chemical weapons against civilians, and portrayed the Fethullah Gülen movement, linked to the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, as stooges of the United States and Israel.

The collapse of the Kurdish peace process in the summer of 2015 and the renewed fighting between the Turkish government and the PKK further poisoned relations with the United States. In 2014, the US aligned itself with Syrian Kurds fighting the self-proclaimed Islamic State. Turkey sees the former actor as a proxy of the PKK. Although Russia has its own links to the Syrian Kurds and, unlike the West, never listed either the PKK or its offshoots as a terrorist organization, it

signed off on Turkey's incursions into northern Syria in 2016 and 2018.

Russia has benefited handsomely too. Turkey has proved to be an essential interlocutor in the Middle East. In Syria, it acts as a bridge to various factions of the armed opposition and some of their backers across the region. The Russia–Turkey–Iran triangle co-sponsored the Astana talks on Syria helped Moscow and the Assad regime reconquer large swathes of territory across the embattled country.

Russian–Turkish Rivalry

Despite security cooperation, Russia and Turkey are not allies. Rather, they compete in the grey zone between war and peace, avoiding a head-on collision while trying to make gains at the other's expense.

A case in point is Idlib, the last remaining rebel-held enclave in northwest Syria. In September 2018, Putin and Erdoğan brokered a deal under the terms of which the Turks would demilitarize the area—meaning neutralization of radical militia—in exchange for a ceasefire. Home to some three million people, including internally displaced civilians, Idlib poses the threat of a massive refugee flow into neighbouring Turkey. The situation came to a head in late 2019 and in the early months of 2020. Russia's airforce gave full backing to a Syrian regime offensive aimed at recapturing the entire area. Fighting pushed Moscow and Ankara dangerously close to the brink, as Turkey ramped up its military presence and took on Assad's forces. On 27 February 2020, thirty-four Turkish soldiers were killed in an air strike that may have been carried out by Russian aircraft. However, Ankara lay the blame on the Assad regime and sought to engage Moscow.

Russia, meanwhile, stood on the sidelines as Turkish drones inflicted a heavy toll on Assad's forces. It also guaranteed the security of Turkish observation points that had remained behind front lines and were surrounded by regime forces. Yet another summit between Putin and Erdoğan (5 March 2020) produced a ceasefire, which essentially partitioned the Idlib area and led to the launching of joint patrols along the critically important M4 highway, linking Latakia and Aleppo. Turkey was spared a major influx of refugees, while Russia obtained Ankara's tacit agreement to transfer strategically located chunks of the enclave to the Assad regime. Still, the situation remains tense and could explode anew.

Russia and Turkey found themselves at odds in the conflict in Libya as well. While Erdoğan threw his weight behind the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, Russia has given tentative support to General Khalifa Haftar, based in the country's east. In late 2019, Ankara despatched heavy weaponry and drones, instructors and mercenaries (including at least

2,000 Syrian militiamen); it also deployed its navy off the coast of Libya and has been using intelligence-gathering capabilities to repel a rebel offensive against the capital. By May 2020, the pro-government forces had delivered a defeat to Haftar's Libyan National Army backed by Russian mercenaries from the Russian private military company Wagner. Russia doubled down on its support for the renegade general, who dug in within central Libya, including the city of Sirte that holds the key to the country's rich oil deposits. The stalemate paved the way to a ceasefire in August 2020 and the formation of a unity government under UN auspices. However, the situation is by no means stable and both Turkey and Russia remained entrenched.

Another flashpoint is Nagorno-Karabakh. The border conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia in April 2016 coincided with the "jet crisis" in Syria. At the time, Russia and Turkey avoided being dragged into the fighting; but when even more vicious fighting started in September 2020, Turkey unprecedentedly deployed Syrian mercenaries, military instructors, drones and, allegedly, its airforce. Its intervention boosted Baku's military advantage, which translated into major territorial gains.

The war wrong-footed Russia, as it exposed its waning influence in its own backyard, including the limited relevance of its defensive alliance with Yerevan. Turkey, on the other hand, scored points at Russia's expense. A ceasefire brokered by Putin on 9 November 2020 led to the insertion of a 2,000-strong Russian peacekeeping force. Turkey, meanwhile, set up its own military monitoring point, floating plans for permanent bases

in Azerbaijan. Erdoğan attended the victory parade in Baku, a testament to the reinforced Turkish–Azeri security relationship.

Turkey and Russia do not see eye to eye on Ukraine either. Ankara does not recognize the annexation of Crimea and has invested in economic and strategic ties with Kyiv. The Ukrainian military has acquired Turkish drones and would like to develop joint military-industrial projects. Erdoğan seeks to balance Russia in the Black Sea through deepening cooperation with Ukraine. At his meeting with Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky (12 April 2021), he called for the 'de-occupation of Crimea as well as the Donetsk and Lugansk regions'. The summit took place while Russia massed troops and heavy weaponry along the Ukrainian border. Turkey also doubled down on its support for the Tatar population, a kin ethnic group, displaced from Crimea after the Russian takeover in 2014. Though, thankfully, the April 2021 military build-up did not escalate into a military showdown, it put on display the close links developed between Ukraine and Turkey over the years.

Conclusion

Russia and Turkey are not allies, but neither are they adversaries. Theirs is a partnership of convenience developed under Putin and Erdoğan's stewardship. So long as either of the parties perceives the West as the main threat, which is more than certain in Russia's case, they will continue to work closely with each other and keep frictions and conflicts in check. In other words, the coupling will endure.

About the Author

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Russian–Turkish Relations between Rivalry and Cooperation

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Abstract

Russian–Turkish relations have exhibited many contradictory features since summer 2016. Despite the two states' geopolitical alignment in Syria and ongoing energy cooperation, Russia and Turkey continue to favor opposing outcomes in regional crises. This friction prevents the two regional rivals from forging a closer form of partnership.

After a seven-month-long crisis in relations following the downing of a Russian combat aircraft by a Turkish fighter jet in November 2015, Russia and Turkey entered a period of rapprochement from summer 2016 onwards. The Kremlin offered support to Turkish President Erdoğan and his government after the attempted coup of July 2016. Since then, Russian President Putin and Erdoğan have met dozens of times. At the same time, the two states' ministries of foreign affairs and defense have developed a working relationship, mainly due to both states' involvement in developments on the ground in Syria. Ankara has even purchased Russian-made S-400 air defense missile systems, which has led to Turkey being excluded from the US-led F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program. However, Russia and Turkey have continued to support opposing sides in the conflicts in Syria, Libya, Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey has exported drones to Azerbaijan and Ukraine despite Moscow's displeasure, while the Polish and Latvian governments have expressed their interest in buying Turkish drones as well. What explains this seemingly contradictory web of relations? How does this regional rivalry shape Russian–Turkish relations?

While many observers tend to explain bilateral relationships with reference to a single variable, Russian–Turkish relations are too complex to be captured by such an assessment. The relationship can only be understood when the interaction between geopolitical, domestic and ideational factors are accounted for. A closer look at Moscow's and Ankara's motivations in seeking closer ties with each other is required. For Russia, a security partnership with Turkey, a NATO member, has served its long-standing goal of weakening the transatlantic alliance. Moreover, in the 21st century Turkey has been Gazprom's second biggest customer after Germany, thereby contributing to Russia's natural gas export revenues immensely. Thirdly, security cooperation with Turkey in Syria was instrumental in enabling Russia to exercise control over anti-Assad rebel forces. In return, Russia has had to partially accommodate Turkey's efforts to assert a sphere of influence in northern Syria.

Conversely, for Turkey, Russia represents a major power that it can turn to whenever it goes through a crisis in its relations with the West. Geopolitical alignment with Russia has served to support the Turkish government's quest to establish strategic autonomy over the past decade. In the aftermath of the failed coup of July 2016, this foreign policy alignment was coupled with growing anti-U.S. attitudes in public opinion and the increasing influence of Eurasianist (pro-Russia and pro-China) figures in the governing coalition (Erşen 2019). Economically, Russia has played a major role in providing security for Turkey's energy supply, with Russian natural gas dominating energy imports during the past two decades. In addition, Russian tourists have contributed much needed foreign exchange revenue to the Turkish economy. More importantly, in Syria, Ankara has had no choice but to cooperate with Russia, in order to stabilize its border and wage military campaigns against ISIS and Kurdish YPG forces. The parallel deterioration in Russia's and Turkey's ties with the West and growing authoritarianism in Turkey seem to have strengthened the bilateral relationship further.

From the perspective of the aforementioned security and economic dynamics, Russia would seem to hold the upper hand in the Russian–Turkish rapprochement. At the same time, Turkey had demonstrated that it is not Russia's junior partner. Moscow has come to learn that Ankara will act against its plans, be this in Syria, Libya, or Nagorno-Karabakh. Despite this, Turkey remains a valuable partner for accomplishing Russia's long-term geopolitical goals.

Geopolitical Alignment in Syria

Since summer 2016, the Syrian conflict has created the conditions for a Russian–Turkish geopolitical alignment. With Russian consent, the Turkish Armed Forces conducted three military operations in northern and north-western Syria between 2016 and 2019. Through the Astana Process and trilateral summits, Russia, Turkey and Iran have developed a practice of policy coordination towards Syria. At the same time, however, Russian–

Turkish cooperation in Syria has been severely tested. In February 2020, thirty-six Turkish soldiers were killed in Idlib Province in an airstrike conducted by Assad's forces, most likely in close coordination with the Russian air force. In response, Turkey started a retaliatory campaign, 'Operation Spring Shield', that halted the regime offensive in Idlib. The campaign also demonstrated the superiority of Turkish drones over Russian-made air defense systems. Russian–Turkish cooperation in Syria will continue to experience similar stress tests in the foreseeable future as the two governments are set to continue to disagree on developments in Idlib Province, the future of Bashar al-Assad, and the status of Syrian Kurds (Köstem 2020). It is also unclear for how much longer Russia will tolerate Turkey's growing military, economic and political footprint in the areas under Turkish control.

Enduring Regional Rivalry: Georgia, Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh

The regional rivalry between Russia and Turkey goes back to the early 1990s, when the latter embarked on a campaign to increase its influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Over time, Russia consolidated itself as the regional hegemon in the post-Soviet space and Turkey's regional ambitions subsided. Yet, aspects of Russian–Turkish rivalry were also sustained, especially over Georgia, Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflicts in Syria and Libya have added a new dimension to this enduring rivalry.

In 2012, Turkey established a trilateral cooperation mechanism with Georgia and Azerbaijan, which targets closer cooperation in tourism, logistics, trade, customs and defense. Special forces from the three countries have conducted joint military exercises since 2015. After Russia's annexation of Crimea, Turkey has been more supportive of Georgia's bid for NATO membership. In the past few years, Ankara has also strengthened its defense cooperation with Tbilisi, leading to a military-financial cooperation agreement between the two states' defense ministries in December 2019.

The regional rivalry has taken on a sharper character over Ukraine. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 came as a shock to Turkish decision-makers, radically changing the balance of power in the Black Sea in favor of Russia (Aktürk 2014). Russia also exiled the top political elite of the Crimean Tatar population with which Turkey has deep cultural and ethnic ties. Turkey and Ukraine officially recognize each other as strategic partners, and Turkey has officially backed the Crimean Tatar political leaders, who now live in Kyiv. More importantly, Ankara and Kyiv have intensified defense cooperation. Ukraine started to purchase attack drones from the Turkish defense company Baykar in 2019. Baykar's Bayraktar TB-2 drone has been called 'the Pantsir

hunter', due to its success against Russian-made Pantsir air defense systems in Syria, Libya, and most recently in Nagorno-Karabakh (Kasapoğlu 2020). Turkish and Ukrainian defense officials have also announced plans to work on the joint production of drones, as well as to transfer drone technology. The two governments are also negotiating a free trade agreement, which they plan to sign soon.

Russian–Turkish regional rivalry intensified during the Second Karabakh War in the fall of 2020. While Russia chose to play a neutral negotiating role between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Turkey openly and decisively supported the latter. It is believed that Turkish military assistance played a crucial role in Azerbaijan's military advances during the conflict. Turkey's assistance included logistics and intelligence support, as well as guidance by Turkish officers. Nevertheless, it was Russia's political intervention that led to a settlement between Yerevan and Baku in November 2020. Moscow's diplomatic intervention effectively prevented Azerbaijani forces taking wholesale control of the disputed region, and ensured that the Lachin corridor that connects the capital of Armenian-controlled Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert, with Armenia would remain open. Despite Turkey's assertive role in Azerbaijan's victory, Moscow only symbolically accommodated Ankara's regional ambitions by agreeing to a joint monitoring center in Agdam. The Russian–Turkish monitoring center started its mission in January 2021. The Turkish military presence at the center is minuscule compared to Russia's. It includes a general and about forty other military personnel. Conversely, the Russian peacekeeping force consists of 2,000 peacekeepers. More recently, Russia has been accused of expanding the mandate of its troops in Nagorno-Karabakh to establish a military presence that goes beyond mere peacekeeping purposes. Russia has also prevented international media sources from visiting the region.

In the short term, both Russia and Turkey seem to have gained from the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War and the subsequent ceasefire agreement. In the long term, however, Turkey's role in Nagorno-Karabakh is rather uncertain, while Russia has consolidated its role in the Caucasus as the key security and regional order provider. It is important to note that, just like in Syria, Russia and Turkey were able to coordinate a ceasefire without intervention by the U.S. or the EU. This enables Moscow and Ankara to manage their tensions without directly targeting each other.

The Economic Dimension: Asymmetric Interdependence

Despite an enduring regional rivalry, Russia and Turkey have continued to expand their economic coop-

eration. This economic exchange is marked by a symmetric interdependence that favors Russia and leaves Turkey vulnerable to Russian economic coercion (Köstem 2018). In the 21st century, Russia has been among Turkey's top three trading partners, yet Turkey struggles to feature in Russia's top ten. In 2019, Russia was Turkey's top source of imports, while Turkey was Russia's 10th biggest import partner. The most important component of this economic cooperation is energy. In 2020, the TurkStream pipeline started providing natural gas to the Turkish market. The TurkStream pipeline is controversial. From the Turkish point of view, it enhances Turkey's goal of becoming an energy hub. For Russia, the pipeline's most important geopolitical upside is that it bypasses Ukraine in exporting natural gas to Turkey. Due to wider developments in global energy markets, the share of Russian natural gas in Turkey's exports fell from 52% in 2017 to 33% in 2019. Nonetheless, Russia remains the largest provider of natural gas to the Turkish domestic market. Beyond natural gas, the Russian Atomic Energy Agency (Rosatom) is building Turkey's first nuclear power plant in Akkuyu. Upon completion, the power plant is expected to provide 7–10% of Turkey's annual energy needs. In return for these energy imports and investments, Turkey typically exports car parts, machinery, textiles and agricultural products to Russia.

Russian economic sanctions on the Turkish economy during the November 2015 – June 2016 jet crisis taught the Turkish government a big lesson about its economic vulnerability vis-a-vis Russia. In each geopolitical crisis that arises between the two states, the Turkish government's memory of the impact of Russian sanctions is revived. Due to its structural advantage, Russia has the power to weaponize its

economic ties with Turkey through investments, trade and tourism. And, it has used it. Most recently, in April 2021 the Russian government banned flights from Turkey, officially due to the increasing number of Covid-19 cases in Turkey. Moscow later extended this flight ban until 21 June 2021. While Covid-19 was the official excuse, it would not be far-fetched to argue that the decision came after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to Istanbul in April 2021. During the visit, the Turkish and Ukrainian governments agreed to bolster defense cooperation and Erdoğan pledged support for Ukraine's territorial integrity.

The Rocky Road Ahead

Regional rivalry and economic cooperation will continue to shape Russian–Turkish relations in the years ahead. Beyond these regional and economic dynamics, however, Turkey's continued commitment to NATO should be considered an important factor impacting on future relations. Turkey's drone exports to Poland and Latvia will strengthen NATO's deterrence capacity vis-à-vis Russia in Eastern Europe. Moreover, Ankara is striving to convince the Biden administration that the Russian-made S-400 air defense missile systems on Turkish soil do not pose a threat to the transatlantic alliance. It is highly likely that the Turkish government will push for a middle ground on these defense issues with the U.S., whereby it seeks to gain U.S. support for its long-awaited F-16 modernization program, even if Turkey remains excluded from the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program. Taken together, these factors suggest that a stronger form of cooperation, such as a strategic partnership, is unlikely, because Russia and Turkey will continue to pursue divergent foreign policy goals and geopolitical ambitions.

About the Author

Seçkin Köstem is Assistant Professor of International Relations at Bilkent University, Ankara.

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OPINION POLL

Attitudes of the Russian Population towards Turkey

Table 1: Name Five Countries Which You Consider To Be Russia's Closest Friends, Allies?

	2006	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Belarus	47	38	50	49	35	34	46	51	55	50	46	49	62	58
China	24	19	18	16	18	16	20	40	43	34	39	40	42	40
Kazakhstan	33	39	38	32	33	28	31	37	41	39	34	32	38	35
Armenia	14	15	15	15	11	11	12	15	18	13	12	11	22	17
Azerbaijan	7	5	10	8	9	9	8	9	11	7	9	8	16	13
India	15	14	12	14	16	9	7	13	18	18	14	19	14	13
Syria	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	4	2	10	15	21	14	12
Venezuela	–	2	8	10	6	5	6	5	9	6	3	4	11	11
Germany	22	24	17	24	20	17	14	4	2	2	2	5	9	10
Kyrgyzstan	7	7	9	4	6	5	5	6	10	7	8	8	9	9
Cuba	–	8	11	10	13	8	9	10	14	10	11	11	9	9
Uzbekistan	6	6	9	5	7	5	5	6	8	9	9	11	9	9
Vietnam	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	4	5	10	7
Turkey	3	3	4	5	7	4	5	4	8	1	6	9	9	7
Bulgaria	10	9	9	8	9	7	10	8	4	4	4	7	8	6
Georgia	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	3	2	4	3	8	6
Serbia	4	3	5	5	4	4	3	5	8	6	5	6	6	6
Tajikistan	3	7	9	4	5	4	5	8	7	6	9	7	6	5
Israel	3	3	3	4	5	4	3	4	2	3	3	3	4	4
Iran	4	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	4	5	4	4
Italy	7	8	5	8	6	7	5	3	1	3	3	3	3	4
North Korea	3	2	1	2	4	1	1	3	3	3	3	4	6	4
Ukraine	10	11	3	20	21	13	16	1	1	2	2	1	3	4
Brazil	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	2	3	3	3
Greece	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	3	3	5	3
Egypt	1	2	2	2	5	2	2	2	4	3	2	4	5	3
Moldova	4	4	5	5	4	4	6	7	2	2	8	4	3	3
Mongolia	–	3	5	4	5	2	3	3	6	3	3	4	2	3
South Korea	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	1	2	2	3	3
Japan	6	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	2	5	4	7	6	3
Austria	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	4	2
Hungary	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
Poland	4	3	2	5	3	3	4	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
Turkmenistan	2	8	5	1	3	2	2	3	4	2	4	3	2	2
Finland	6	6	5	5	7	6	4	3	1	1	1	2	2	2
France	8	9	9	11	9	9	4	1	1	2	2	4	2	2
Czech Republic	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	1	3	2	2	2	2	2
None	13	10	13	11	11	17	15	13	11	14	12	10	4	6
It is difficult to say	15	18	14	12	15	18	14	16	14	11	14	10	7	7

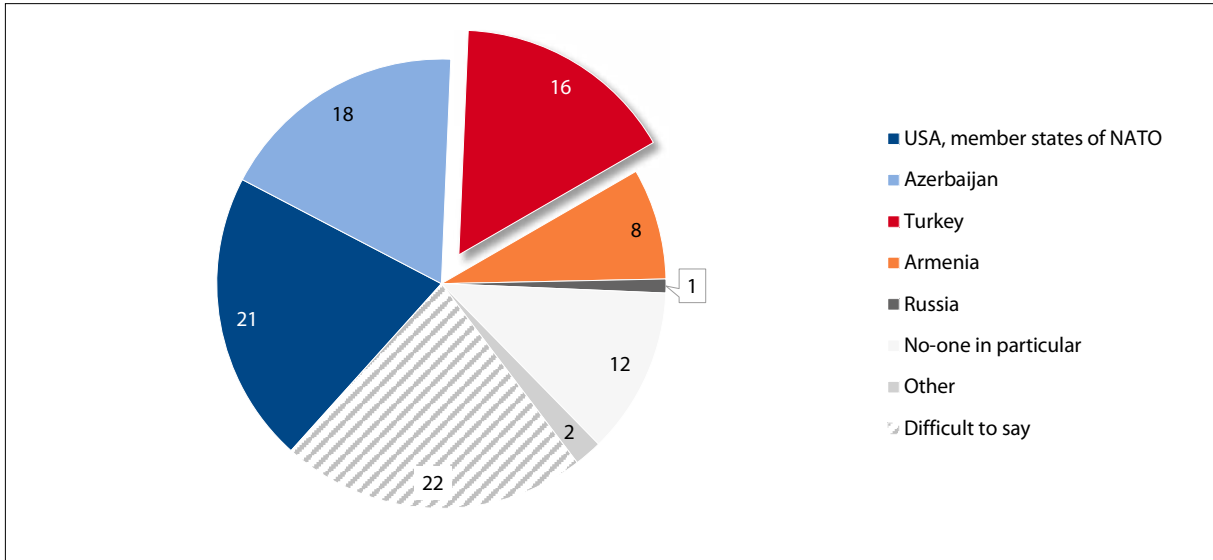
Source: representative annual opinion polls by Levada-Center, 2006–2020, published on 30 September 2020; respondents could choose several countries; <https://www.levada.ru/en/2020/09/30/attitudes-toward-countries-4/>

Table 2: Which Five Countries Would You Say Are Most Unfriendly, Hostile Towards Russia?

	2006	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
USA	37	35	45	26	33	35	38	69	73	72	69	78	67	60
Ukraine	27	23	41	13	20	15	11	30	37	48	50	49	40	35
Great Britain	5	3	8	6	8	7	9	18	21	18	15	38	38	29
Latvia	46	36	35	36	35	26	21	23	25	23	24	26	27	26
Lithuania	42	32	35	35	34	25	17	24	25	23	24	23	26	26
Poland	7	20	10	14	20	8	8	12	22	24	21	24	22	26
Georgia	44	46	62	57	50	41	33	19	11	10	9	8	11	16
Germany	2	2	3	1	4	3	3	18	19	19	24	17	18	15
Estonia	28	60	30	28	30	23	16	21	19	16	16	15	12	11
Afghanistan	12	11	7	14	15	8	10	5	4	2	3	3	4	7
Canada	1	<1	1	<1	1	1	1	7	8	6	3	8	9	7
Iraq	9	8	5	9	9	8	7	3	2	2	3	4	5	6
Iran	7	7	3	7	7	7	5	2	2	2	2	2	3	4
Syria	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	2	3	1	1	3	4	4	4	4
Japan	4	3	3	3	9	6	7	5	6	5	6	3	4	4
Israel	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	5	4	3
China	–	3	3	4	4	4	5	1	<1	1	2	1	3	3
Turkey	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	29	8	3	2	3
France	1	1	1	<1	1	1	2	5	7	4	8	8	8	3
Australia	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1	3	2	1	1	2	2
Bulgaria	1	1	<1	<1	2	<1	<1	<1	1	1	<1	1	2	2
Holland	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	1	2
Italy	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	1	<1	1	3	1	1	1	1	2
Pakistan	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	<1	1	1	2	2
Romania	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
Saudi Arabia	–	1	<1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2
North Korea	<1	1	1	1	1	1	4	2	1	1	2	2	2	2
Azerbaijan	4	4	2	3	5	2	4	2	1	2	1	1	1	2
Armenia	3	2	1	3	4	1	1	<1	1	1	<1	1	1	2
Belarus	2	5	2	3	8	3	2	<1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Vietnam	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	<1	<1	<1	1	2
Czech Republic	1	2	1	<1	1	1	<1	1	2	1	<1	1	1	2
Hungary	1	<1	<1	1	1	1	<1	1	<1	<1	1	1	1	2
None	4	2	3	4	14	7	7	3	3	5	3	2	3	7
It is difficult to say	19	17	15	17	1	21	24	17	14	10	11	10	7	7

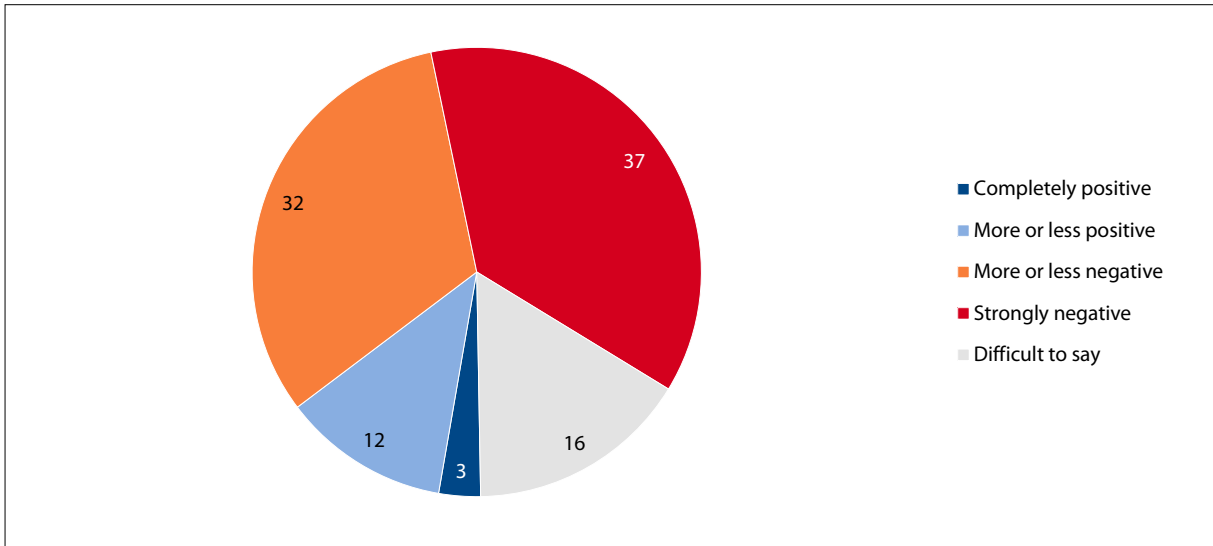
Source: representative annual opinion polls by Levada-Center, 2006–2020, published on 30 September 2020; respondents could choose several countries; <https://www.levada.ru/en/2020/09/30/attitudes-toward-countries-4/>

Figure 1: What Do You Think, Who Initiated the Renewed Military Conflict in Karabakh? (% of Respondents Who Had Heard about the Military Conflict (90%))



Source: representative opinion poll by Levada-Center, 19–26 November 2020, published on 30 November 2020; <https://www.levada.ru/2020/11/30/chto-dumayut-rossiyane-pro-konflikt-v-karabahe/>

Figure 2: What Is Your Opinion on the Deployment of Turkish Peacekeeping Forces in Karabakh?



Source: representative opinion poll by Levada-Center, 19–26 November 2020, published on 30 November 2020; <https://www.levada.ru/2020/11/30/chto-dumayut-rossiyane-pro-konflikt-v-karabahe/>

ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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