



Research Paper

Russia Turkey Conflict

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I. Introduction

Russia and Turkey have been involved in many proxy wars in the region and have had a historical hostility against each other. There have been areas like Syria Libya UAE and Egypt where both the countries have taken opposite positions and have entered into a contract at various stances .

Though many a times in the while there were cordial relations between them as well but both countries still stand on opposite ends when it comes to foreign policy, especially in tense issues such as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Syrian Civil War, Libyan Civil War, the Kosovo conflict and have opposing views on the Armenian genocide. Relations were tense following the Russian fighter jet shootdown in November 2015, becoming normalised again in 2016.

The Russia–Turkey Proxy Conflict is a strategic struggle between Turkey and initially the Syrian government which turned into a military crisis between Turkey and Russia after the November 2015 shoot-down of a Russian Air Force Su-24 by the Turkish Air Force after an alleged airspace violation. Increased Russian military aggression and hostile Turkish territorial responses have all contributed to increasing escalation. Aerial confrontations between the two countries have grown more common. Turkey accuses Russian Forces of violating Turkish sovereign airspace and war crimes against Syrian Turkmens. The Russian military has accused Turkey of maintaining illegal economic ties with ISIL and condemned Turkish military interventions in Syria and Libya.

Research hypothesis

Syria is not the first place where Russia and Turkey have had contradictory positions . The conflict ,time and continues to disturb the regional peace . Despite long term negotiations and peace deals , there is a recurring nature to this rivalry .

Though on different ends in this conflict , both the countries are smart enough to not let these proxy conflicts affect the strategic ties between the two . The one who is suffering in this context is no other than the Syrian People who have to face the death of violence .

According to the research Hypothesis ,

‘The proxy war between Russia and Turkey have had a detrimental and unintended consequences on the Syrian situation whereas the major parties still continue to maintain strategic ties’

Main body

The wars in Syria and Libya should by now be considered two manifestations of one larger conflict. After Turkey suffered losses at the hands of the Russian-backed Syrian army, the UN-recognised government in Tripoli routs Khalifa Haftar’s forces from the capital with Turkish support. When Assad appears as secure as ever, Russia increases recruitment of Syrian mercenaries to fight in Libya. What do these patterns mean? A set of coalitions have solidified, and the fortunes of war in both Libya and Syria are beginning to appear to be deeply connected by the larger rivalry between Russia and Turkey. Most importantly, this rivalry, and how it is pursued regionally, may be indicative of how geopolitical competition in the Middle East will play out in a future with diminished American hegemony.

It is not bold to claim that the political futures of Syria and Libya will not be decided in Damascus or Tripoli, respectively. Although the conflicts in Syria and Libya differ in many respects, especially with regards to foreign intervention, they have come to share one common trait: a proxy competition between Turkey and Russia, each side further supported by a constellation of geopolitical fellow-travellers.

In Syria, Turkey supports a subset of rebel forces, while the Russians back the Assad government. In Libya, Turkey is a strong supporter of the UN-recognised government in Tripoli, while Russia is the most effective supporter of Khalifa Haftar.

Previously, the geographic distance and limited state (or non-state group) capacity between Syria and Libya rendered any kind of sustained connection between the two conflicts impossible, save the moral support and mutual identification stemming from the shared experiences of the Arab Spring. Geopolitical imperatives fragmented international ideological coalitions, making the international response initially far more aggressive in Libya than Syria. Now, a new set of coalitions have crystallised and remain coherent across the contextual boundaries that separate the Libyan and Syrian conflicts. Turkey transported Syrian mercenaries to support the internationally-recognised government in Tripoli against Haftar's offensive. Russian mercenaries have played a critical role in Haftar's same offensive on Tripoli, many of which undoubtedly served in Syria as well. This human flow represents the most potent demonstration of interconnectivity. It is not ideological conviction that drives flows of combatants from one place to the other, but rather a ruthless realpolitik logic that adjusts military commitments across borders to in response to shifting equilibria on the battlefield.

The conflict was earlier an escalation between the Syrian Arab army and Turkey but since the Russian government supported the Syrian Arab army and Syrian Arab Army air defenses shot down a Turkish Air Force RF-4E reconnaissance fighter 15 miles off of the coast of Latakia over the Mediterranean Sea within international airspace several dozen minutes after it had briefly veered into Syrian air space, prompting the Turkish Armed Forces to change its rules of engagement formally declaring hostility towards any aircraft approaching the Turkish-Syrian border. This led to many future shoot-downs conducted by the Turkish Air Force. Both pilots were killed and an autopsy revealed the pilots survived the initial crash once the wreckage was located and the bodies were recovered. Alleged secret documents were leaked by the Syrian opposition to Al Arabiya, claiming that the two pilots had survived the shoot down, which was done in coordination with the Russian naval facility in Tartus, and were captured but later executed with their bodies being returned to the crash site by Russian Special Operations teams.

In September 2018, Mr Putin and Mr Erdogan agreed to turn Idlib into a "de-escalation zone." The area was intended to act as buffer between the two sides, with clear lines of control, but fighting has continued in the zone.

President Putin said he hoped the deal "will serve as a good foundation for ending the fighting in the Idlib de-escalation zone and end the suffering of the civilian population".

Nature of conflict

A conflict is a manifestation of the fact that two parties have different objectives and interests. Russia and Turkey confrontation can be classified as a conflict as both the countries land of taking different stances in any regional issue that arises.

Russia and Turkey have been involved in a number of proxy conflict since a long time. The confrontation has never been as ugly as that of indulging into a physical or a general war in this case. The conflict can be classified as a case of a **regional conflict** as both the countries try to exert their dominance and power in the region but on the very same time do not engage into a general ward where they put in all the resources to either protect or distract one another . Russia was seen supplying ammunitions to the Syrian government which the Turks hijacked and kept with themselves . The politics of the conflict is regional but its economic and political impacts .

Also **Terrorism** that is pre-mediated politically motivated violence was at its peak . The first encounter was made by the Turks when they shot a Russian based Aircraft in Syrian Borders . After that , A series of such encounters have taken place .

Form or extent of conflict

Turkey and Russian conflict can be seen as an example of Inter-state conflict . Combustible in nature, these geopolitical flashpoints have sucked in a motley crew of state and non-state actors, resulting in humanitarian crises, destruction of urban infrastructure, and the forced reordering of localized political regimes.

Nowhere is this predicament more visible than in Idlib province, Northern Syria. Over the course of the Syrian Civil War, it has become hotly contested by multiple state and non-state players and is the last major holdout of myriad rebel factions opposing the Assad regime.

On October 26th, a Russian airstrike targeted the training camp of a Turkish-backed group based in Idlib, killing dozens. The Russian foreign ministry all but acknowledged its escalatory strike in a statement released later that day.

"The Russian side reiterated its unfailing solidarity with the Syrian people, support to its sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity," said Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov during a meeting with Syrian Ambassador to Russia Riyad Haddad. The group targeted, Faylaq al-Sham, has been instrumental in furthering Ankara's interests in the Syrian Civil War.

Parties involved

In the regional conflict the Russian Turkey proxy conflict involves many regional as well as non-regional actors who took multiple stances .

Israel

Israel was once a major ally of Turkey and had sold weapons for Turkey, as well as supporting Turkey for its role within the NATO and the country's quest to join the European Union, while having a troubled relationship with Russia.

The relationship between Russia and Israel radically improved. Both Vladimir Putin and Netanyahu supported Donald Trump in the 2016 United States presidential election, with Israel and Gulf Arab states lobbying Iranian military presence in Syria in exchange for removing sanctions over Russian military action in Ukraine. There were several short-lived deterioration in 2018 after Israeli military downing a Russian plane after putting it in the path of Syrian air defence systems during an Israeli Russia had quietly acknowledged Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017, although the country ruled out any option to move the embassy to Jerusalem.

Despite positive Russian-Israeli developments, relations between the two soured again in 2020. In the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, Israel backed Turkish ally Azerbaijan while Russia expressed its support for and supplied Armenia. Moreover, towards the end of 2020, Turkey and Israel began the process of rapprochement in their relations. As a result, Turkey has begun distancing itself from Hamas, while Russian allies Hezbollah and Syria, both staunch adversaries of Israel and Turkey, have recently worked to improve their ties with Hamas with the help of Iran.

United States

The United States and Turkey are parts of NATO, and thus, they once commonly opposed Russian expansionism. However, since the 2010s, relations between Turkey and the United States have increasingly deteriorated.

Since the Syrian civil war, Turkey and the United States openly opposed Bashar al-Assad regime, thus being hostile to Russia. However, the United States have supported Kurdish forces, notably People's Protection Units (YPG), while Turkey regards Kurdish forces, regardless of affiliation, as terrorist organisations. . Differences in approaching the Syrian conflict was the first sign of tensions.

In 2019, the United States' tensions with Turkey increased after the United States Congress recognised the Armenian Genocide, which was considered as a sensitive issue in the country's relations with Turkey, despite the fact that Armenia is an open ally of Russia, Turkey's rival. Erdogan had condemned the move. With Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 US Presidential election, the relations between Turkey and the United States are expected to become slimmer and tenser after Biden stated Erdogan as an "autocrat", though Biden himself also opposed Russia.

Turkey had also recently put fight against fellow NATO member Greece over the Mediterranean dispute.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia and Turkey used to support each other in the Syrian civil war where Turkish and Saudi governments denounced Russia-backed al-Assad regime, and have traditionally supported each other in many issues with regard to its confrontation toward Russia during the Cold War and the Chechen–Russian conflict. Since the rise of Mohammed bin Salman, relations between two countries have become tense. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's relations with Russia have started to be strengthened since 2015, with King Salman became the first Saudi head of state to visit Russia in 2017, heralding possible political change.

Saudi Arabia's relations with Turkey have become deteriorated due to Turkey's support for Muslim Brotherhood, which Saudi Arabia sees as a threat, but this had also started to expand beyond politics. In 2018, Crown Prince bin Salman openly named Turkey as a threat. On 2 October 2018, Saudi journalist and The Washington Post writer Jamal Khashoggi was killed in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul, in which Turkey blamed the Saudi government for orchestrating the killing.

In February 2020, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir accused Turkey of financing and sponsoring the "extremist militias" in Somalia, Libya and Syria, Saudi Arabia also moved to block all Turkish websites in Saudi Arabia. In response, Ankara announced it would block all Saudi and Emirati websites in the country.

Ukraine

Ukraine has mainly backed Turkey against Russia due to the Ukrainian crisis. On 20 August 2016 Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan told his Ukrainian counterpart Petro Poroshenko that Turkey would not recognize the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea; calling it "Crimea's occupation". On 9 January 2017 Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu stated "We support the territorial integrity of Ukraine

and Georgia. We do not recognize the annexation of the lands of Ukraine". When Turkey shot down Russian jet in 2015, Ukraine voiced support for Turkey.

Iran

Iran is a major Russia's ally in the Middle East, and thus aligned with the majority of Russian interests, though their relationship is far from perfect due to differences over Syria and Israel. This also put Iran, sometimes, in confrontation with Turkey, notably over the Syrian war where Iranian troops fought alongside Russian force against Turkish military and Iran's hostility toward Turkish intervention. Iran has also been accused of siding with Khalifa Haftar, another Russia's ally, against Turkey in Libya, though Iranian role is more complicated as Iran also reluctantly backed Turkish intervention to the country. A United Nations report nonetheless revealed that Iran had supplied Haftar's forces with anti-tank missiles

United Arab Emirates

Since the Arab Spring, relations between Turkey and the United Arab Emirates have become increasingly tense, meanwhile, relations between Russia and the United Arab Emirates have largely improved. In 2019, the relationship between Russia and the United Arab Emirates have been described as special and strong, and the United Arab Emirates, along with Israel, also helped Russia on manufacturing the world's first anti-COVID-19 vaccine in 2020.

The United Arab Emirates and Russia both backed Haftar's side in Libya against the Turkey-backed GNA government. The United Arab Emirates have also funded Kurdish forces, including many separatist groups, against Turkey. When Israel–United Arab Emirates peace agreement was signed in Washington D.C. in 2020, Russia quietly backed the attempt by Israel and the United Arab Emirates to normalise their bilateral relations whilst Turkey has threatened to cut off relations with Israel and the United Arab Emirates. In February 2019, the United Arab Emirates announced that it would slowly begin to recognise the Armenian Genocide. Emirate of Abu Dhabi had become the first emirate to recognise the genocide in April 2019.

Methods involved

Proxy war being itself and indirect war, both Turkey and Russia have taken multiple stances of hostility towards one another.

2015 jet shootdown incident

On 24 November 2015, within weeks of the start of the Russian military intervention in support of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, Turkish F-16 combat aircraft shot down a Russian Su-24 during an airspace dispute close to the Turkish-Syrian border. Russian President Vladimir Putin described the incident as "a stab in the back by the accomplices of terrorists" and further stated that "today's tragic events will have significant consequences including for relations between Russia and Turkey".

Economic Sanctions

In response, Russia imposed a number of economic sanctions on Turkey. These included the suspension of visa-free travel to Russia for Turkish citizens, limits on Turkish residents and companies doing business in Russia and restrictions on imports of Turkish products. Russian tour operators were discouraged from selling Turkish package holidays and asked to stop charter flights to Turkey while Russian football clubs were banned from signing Turkish players and discouraged from organising winter training camps in Turkey. The day after the jet was shot down, a Russian law-maker, Sergei Mironov, introduced a bill to the Russian parliament that would criminalise the denial of the Armenian Genocide, a political move that Turkey has strongly opposed when countries like France and Greece adopted similar laws.

Conflict resolutary mechanisms

The Transcend Method

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In this particular situation, with regard to Russia and Turkey, both of whom have their own interests, are into this conflict.

Keeping in mind the specific goals that both countries have, there can be an alternate way of looking at the conflict. Both Turkey and Russia can mediate in tackling the disturbances in Syria without bringing in the personal interests of supporting or not supporting the Assad Government.

Also , a path of development can be shown where all the major stakeholders not only take a collective responsibility of accommodating the refugees and not only this but also realise the Concept of deterrence . They should not demand consensus, commitment or co-operation from parties who are not ready. Equally do not 'deform 'the conflict by pushing agendas too far away from the parties 'immediate concerns.

Arbitration

Arbitration is the submission of a disputed matter to an impartial person (the arbitrator) for decision. The Process: Arbitration is typically an out-of-court method for resolving a dispute. The arbitrator controls the process, will listen to both sides and make a decision. In this Conflict , the position of the arbitrator can be taken by the UN or other International Organisations who will be willing to take a neutral stance .

Although Arbitration is a good means of conflict resolution , it might not be a good means here in this case if Syria gets involved in the picture . Let be only Turkey and Russia , arbitration can turn out to be a productive means .

Negotiation

Negotiation is a common way for people to resolve problems and deal with conflict. It happens when people wish to talk to each other to find a solution to the problem. ... It can also be a formal method of conflict resolution used to resolve interpersonal, intergroup and interstate conflicts. One of the examples is here .

The agreement was announced after six hours of talks between Mr Putin and Mr Erdogan in the Russian capital. The two sides said the deal included:

- A ceasefire on the whole line of contact
- A security corridor 6km (four miles) north and 6km south of Idlib's key M4 motorway, which connects the government-held cities of Aleppo and Latakia
- Joint Russian-Turkish patrols along the M4 from 15 March

II. Conclusion

This partially accounts for the remarkable cordiality demonstrated between Russia and Turkey. Despite occasional spats, as when Turkey shot down a Russian jet over Syria, relations between the two have proven resilient, particularly as Turkish ties with NATO countries are strained. The Turkish purchase of Russian S-400 missile systems, despite its long-standing NATO membership and American objections, indicates the depth of the strategic relationship forged between the two countries even when they support rival factions in third countries. The direct bilateral relationship between Turkey and Russia seems to follow a different logic than their regional competition because it takes place in an entirely different strategic context. Both Turkey and Russia are primarily considering their respective relations with the United States when dealing with each other, rather than foregrounding their regional interests.

On one side where both of them continue to grow strategically , Syrian condition continues to degrade and the violence continues to rise . It is affecting the country in not only political but personal means also .

This clearly justifies and proves the hypothesis right that both Russia and Turkey continue to realise each others' strategic importance and continue to minimise the losses at the Syrian Crisis . Whereas it is Syria , who actually faces the death of this rivalry . The people , institutions , economy , all suffers because of the Proxy conflict .

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