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Doç Dr. Ahmet İŞLER

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CHAPTER 1

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND COMMAND IN THE ERA OF MULTI- DOMAIN OPERATIONS: LOGISTICS COORDINATION ENHANCED BY TECHNOLOGY IN MILITARY OPERATIONS

Erdal KILIÇ¹

1. THE EVOLUTION of the OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT and MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS

In the contemporary military landscape, swiftly advancing technology like satellite surveillance, cyber warfare capabilities, and artificial intelligence are radically transforming command systems (Raska, 2021). These innovations have engendered considerable conflict between centralized control and decentralized decision-making. The intricacy of information management and the escalating requirements of military logistics coordination necessitate the reconciliation of these two methodologies (Paul, 2018; Alberts & Hayes, 2006). This section will present insights from the literature on how command systems might attain military logistics coordination in the era of multi-domain operations through information management and technology integration. The interplay of information management difficulties, technology-driven command systems, and logistical resilience will be analyzed.

1.1. Command and Control of Land Operations in the Contemporary and Future Operational Environment

The 2010s had pivotal events that necessitated a reevaluation of the future needs and deployment of Western ground forces (Nilsson, 2023). The 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine and ensuing conflict with NATO, coupled with China's growing assertiveness in the eastern Pacific, have compelled the US and NATO forces to reevaluate the potential for conflict with near-peer adversaries on a scale not anticipated since the Cold War (Mattis, 2018; NATO Brussels Summit Communiqué, 2021).

Their adversaries, possessing equal strength (regional powers with advanced technology such as Russia, China, North Korea, or Iran), are not only numerically formidable; they are also dedicating substantial effort and resources to the development of advanced technologies aimed at achieving layered standoff capabilities through anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) systems (Kelly et al., 2016). The advancement of armed technologies targeting satellites and the capacity for substantial hostile activities in cyberspace introduces new complexities to the potential dynamics of future great power conflicts.

The solution to these issues is encapsulated in the concept of multi-domain operations (MDO) introduced by the US Army. It encompasses five domains: land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace (McConville, 2021). MDO, with its extensive history of fostering synergy through capability integration, is advancing this idea to unprecedented levels, incorporating novel dimensions of combat and anticipating enhanced cooperation among services, allies, and partners (Watling & Roper, 2019).

The MDO idea seeks to establish unparalleled synchronization across five domains, continuously presenting shifting problems to adversaries, and converging effects to maximize damage to the other side's will and cohesion (Brown & Perkins, 2017). The concept of MDO pertains to a multifaceted issue requiring an equally intricate solution. The primary issue for modern commanders is the complexity of gathering, analyzing, and transforming knowledge into actionable strategies (Nilsson, 2023; Paul, 2018). While the availability of information has consistently posed a substantial challenge for military decision-makers, it has often been characterized by scarcity. Data regarding conflicting intents, forces, movements, and the status of one's own forces has generally been restricted and challenging to acquire.

Nonetheless, the proliferation of technologies that enhance intelligence collection and digital communication for information technology, big data, cloud computing, and military applications has significantly augmented the volume of information accessible to military decision-makers (Lindsay, 2020). Consequently, it has been proposed that the information

dilemma is progressively shifting; what was once an issue of access and availability has now transformed into a challenge of prioritization, analysis, and interpretation amidst various data streams, with "information blindness" supplanting the "fog of war" (Augier et al., 2014).

1.2. Transitioning from Information Abundance to Information Management

The primary issue for modern commanders is the complexity of gathering, analyzing, and transforming knowledge into actionable steps (Nilsson, 2023; Paul, 2018). While the availability of information has consistently posed a critical challenge for military decision-makers, it has traditionally been characterized by scarcity. Data regarding adversarial goals, forces, movements, and the status of one's own forces has generally been restricted and challenging to acquire. Nonetheless, the proliferation of technologies that enhance intelligence collection and digital communication for information technology, big data, cloud computing, and military applications has significantly augmented the volume of information accessible to military decision-makers (Lindsay, 2020). Command systems are in risk of being inundated as the volume of accessible information significantly surpasses their processing capabilities (King, 2019). Consequently, it has been proposed that the information dilemma is progressively reversing; what was once an issue of access and availability has now transformed into a challenge of prioritization, analysis, and interpretation amidst various data streams, with "information blindness" supplanting the "fog of war" (Augier et al., 2014).

The issue of information management has shown distinctly in the structuring of command systems, necessitating a substantial augmentation in the quantity of specialized individuals within contemporary headquarters (Lindsay, 2020). The evolving nature of military operations in recent decades has heightened the necessity for this skill. Coalition operations in Afghanistan and Iraq primarily involved counterinsurgency actions in extremely sensitive and media-scrutinized contexts (Smith, 2008). Casualties among friends or civilians can be exceedingly detrimental, not only regarding human life but also concerning the strategic prerequisites for these missions, which may jeopardize local support and political and social endorsement for such actions. The primary challenge in achieving operational situational awareness is to discern which information is significant and impactful amid the influx of data from various sources, thereby fostering a comprehensive understanding of the implications of actions at tactical, operational, and strategic levels (Paul, 2018).

This has created new avenues for decision-making complexity, perception management, and deception in the modern information landscape, applicable by both adversarial and allied entities (Lucarelli et al., 2021). The rapid and voluminous flow of information has heightened the probability of being targeted through the distribution of deceptive information and narratives that undermine the opposing side's situational awareness, fostering reliance on information management systems. The challenge is not in the lack of available information, but in the capacity to discern essential information from a vast array of data that obscures clarity, which is vital for decision-making (Paul, 2018). Consequently, information management has become reliant on technology, depleting time and resources, and any deficiency in this skill has emerged as a vulnerability (Paul, 2018). The ability to coordinate is fundamental to all military operations (Nilsson, 2023). Nonetheless, preserving this capability is becoming progressively crucial in highly coordinated and interconnected operations. Currently, it is feasible to exert control from remote areas, including other continents. Direct communication can be established with theater commanders in Iraq or Afghanistan from the Pentagon command center in Pennsylvania.

As the command structure grows increasingly centralized, its reliance on effective communication for issuing commands to subordinate units intensifies. Despite substantial advancements in communication capabilities during the past two decades and their adaptation

for continuous operations, considerable constraints will arise when confronting an adversary of comparable power (Nilsson, 2023). In this situation, communication is likely to become controversial, unlike in conflicts against low-tech adversaries. The capabilities of electronic warfare, cyber warfare, and the prospective deployment of electromagnetic pulse weapons suggest that troops will routinely execute their missions without direct supervision from the higher command center, rather than this being an exception. Command and control (C2) nodes may serve as possible targets for assault, while international communications are susceptible to attacks on critical infrastructure, including underwater cables and satellite communication systems (Priebe et al., 2020). The availability of information and situational awareness influence the locus of decision-making power and, consequently, the extent of command centralization. Recent breakthroughs in information technology and digitalization have profoundly altered the methods by which information is acquired, processed, and disseminated inside military organizations (Lindsay, 2020).

This accessibility should facilitate flexible command by providing a common situational awareness across several command levels, enabling centralized coordination towards a cohesive operational objective and tactical initiative. Integrated communication systems must facilitate horizontal coordination across the company, enabling units to autonomously coordinate and implement appropriate actions. To cultivate integrated situational awareness that aligns with decentralized decision-making, information must be conveyed to the command levels accountable for decision-making. This task is difficult to achieve and often strengthens centralized decision-making via advanced digital applications, centralized access to weapon systems and intelligence, and a tendency for meticulous command and micro-management (Lucarelli et al., 2021).

The advent of technologies facilitating real-time satellite communication, satellite tracking, drones, and long-range satellite communication has empowered senior commanders to meticulously oversee and guide their subordinates. When these abilities are exhibited, they have also been demonstrated to be utilized in this manner (Sowers, 2011). troops equipped with Blue Force Tracker are far more likely to receive direct commands from higher command levels than other troops.

1.3. Autonomous Systems and Logistics Coordination

The escalating deployment of artificial intelligence and autonomous technologies by military entities may have profound ramifications for the execution of future command exercises. Autonomous robotic systems, including networked missile systems, self-driving vehicles, and drone swarms, remain a far possibility, hindered not just by technological constraints but also by ethical dilemmas, which render them independent of direct human oversight. Nonetheless, the outlook on future human-machine interaction, which transcends the enhancement of human abilities, prompts further inquiries regarding the operational use of the commander (Bunker, 2020).

This is fundamentally a human-centered concept, formulated and implemented as a solution for the social complexities of coordinating large groups of individuals towards a common goal. In contrast, machines function according to algorithmic logic. Assuming individuals uphold accountability for the functioning of robotic systems, these systems can be considered integral components of machinery. The capability to develop systems that offer enhanced autonomy and quicker response times than humans, while performing less clearly defined tasks similar to mission command, aligns with the commander's objective (Bunker, 2020). Due to the limitations of these technologies, they will remain pertinent only in simple and logical circumstances in the near future. As of yet, states have avoided utilizing artificial intelligence

systems with autonomous kinetic capabilities for purposes other than performing narrowly defined tasks, such as the Phalanx close-in weapon system.

Military logistics, essential for complex operations, is closely linked to information management and command integration (Raska, 2021; McConville, 2021). Logistical elements, such as supply chain management, material transportation, communication, and personnel administration, depend on real-time information transmission. The MDO concept requires the simultaneous integration of logistical support systems to achieve synchronization across five domains (Watling & Roper, 2019).

Centralized control of the logistics chain facilitates real-time visibility through enhanced satellite surveillance and GPS tracking. Nonetheless, the drawback of centralized control is its potential to diminish responsiveness to swift alterations on the battlefield (Lindsay, 2020). In contrast, decentralized logistics decision-making allows tactical units to fulfill their supply needs more rapidly, however it may complicate overall coordination.

The MDO idea necessitates a high degree of coordination, underscoring the requirement for logistics systems to be increasingly centralized (Nilsson, 2023). This condition presents considerable hazards in the event of communication system failures. Cyber warfare, electronic warfare, and electromagnetic weapons can specifically target central logistical command centers (Priebe et al., 2020). Consequently, the robustness of the logistics system must be underpinned by decentralized decision-making skills. Lower-level units must be capable of fulfilling their logistical requirements independently for a limited duration, without directives from the upper command center. This necessitates the training and preparedness of support line personnel through instruction and education (Paul, 2018).

The full potential of MDO depends on its capacity for technological dominance and control over the fractured battlefield (Watling & Roper, 2019). Nonetheless, this informational dominance and control capability may be inaccessible to smaller allies and partners on the front lines when against an adversary of comparable strength. These forces should anticipate being outmatched in manpower and technology, and will likely contend with a highly disputed information environment where both vertical and horizontal coordination will be challenging (Watling & Roper, 2019). These conditions will establish a foundation for the extensive implementation of decentralized command, enabling military leaders to autonomously execute duties without directives from superior levels over an extended period. Emphasizing the growing MDO and associated ideas, along with the intrinsic motivations for synchronization, poses a threat to tactical initiative and decision-making capacity, particularly in smaller military forces (Watling & Roper, 2019).

2. THE FUTURE of COMMAND SYSTEMS: FLEXIBILITY and RESILIENCE

In the context of expected management of ground forces in an operational environment requiring heightened coordination and decision-making reliant on effective information management, a contradiction emerges between the necessity for centralized control and decentralized decision-making (Nilsson, 2023). The intricacy of directing contemporary ground forces engenders a conflict between the necessity for centralized control in high-intensity warfare and dispersed decision-making. The suggested alternative is a versatile directive. From this viewpoint, military organization may oscillate between centralized and decentralized command to address situational requirements (Hill & Niemi, 2017). Central command is suitable in scenarios where higher command levels possess enhanced situational knowledge and are therefore equipped to orchestrate effects across many domains. Conversely, it is

expected that the commander will decentralize in ambiguous situations where superior echelons lack adequate overarching insight (Hill & Niemi, 2017).

Although flexible command theory seems to be an appealing theoretical alternative, it is often portrayed as a fallback option to be employed when anticipated information superiority is lacking (Nilsson, 2023). This perspective posits an overabundance of confidence alongside a dubious notion of "normality" about assurance. Moreover, flexible command necessitates allocating an equivalent duration at the helm of both centralized and decentralized decision-making authority (Finkel, 2011). Given the MDO's overarching focus on integration and coordination, this is impractical in execution. The forces will allocate greater effort to executing the "normal" scenario, which will be time-consuming due to its complexity.

The MDO's architecture seeks to establish unparalleled synchronization within the five domains, while simultaneously prioritizing operational resilience in the event of communication system failures (Priebe et al., 2020). The central command system's reliance on communication means that any disruption can significantly impair operational effectiveness. To alleviate this danger, the command structure must be configured to enable units to progress towards operational objectives for prolonged durations without direct oversight. This must also involve logistics systems; it should incorporate decentralized logistics decision-making capabilities and be facilitated through training (Paul, 2018).

The anticipated nature of the MDO entails significantly heightened requirements for coordination, synchronization, information processing, and situational awareness. The compatibility of these needs with the decentralized leadership vision suggested by mission command remains ambiguous (Hill & Niemi, 2017). A methodological viewpoint on mission command does not preclude centralized decision-making when the operational context necessitates extensive collaboration to attain the intended outcomes, as required. The synchronization required to actualize the promise of MDO indicates that high-level cooperation will probably be the exception rather than the norm. An extraordinary enthusiasm for successful convergence prioritizes centralization and constrains the scope for decentralized authority (Balboni et al., 2020). Moreover, although this logically supports a greater concentration of decision-making authority at elevated command levels, the MDO concept still foresees an augmented necessity for horizontal coordination, emphasizing the integration of forces and capabilities supplied by services and agencies beyond combined arms, as well as by other allies and partners (Balboni et al., 2020).

The acknowledgment and examination of "under the threshold" rivalry pose critical inquiries regarding the command and control of armed forces overall. The potential ramifications of miscalculation and inadvertent escalation in an uncertain context are presumably significantly greater today than they were 10-20 years ago, approaching those experienced during the Cold War. Nevertheless, particularly during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, robust security protocols were established to mitigate the potential of inadvertent escalation between the two dominant power blocs. The present global strategic landscape is significantly more opaque and uncertain, encompassing several state and non-state players, with an escalating fluidity between methods of aggression and retribution. In this context, the duties and functions of ground forces in the gray zone will necessitate meticulously formulated rules of engagement, so further justifying the need for enhanced central control.

3. THE MAGNITUDE of NEW THREATS in TURKIYE'S GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Numerous pivotal occurrences in the 2010s prompted a reassessment of the future needs and deployment of Western ground forces, including Turkiye and regional allies (Nilsson, 2023). The 2014 Russian incursion in Crimea and the persistent hostilities in eastern Ukraine constitute a significant source of instability along Turkiye's eastern border. The simultaneous PKK/YPG danger in Syria and Iraq, along with the Greece and Cyprus situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, necessitates the preparation of Turkish ground troops for operations against a distinct category of adversary (Mattis, 2018; Brussels Summit Communiqué, 2021).

In this environment, Western ground forces, especially the Turkish land forces, must prepare for imminent actions under new command. In this novel environment, which will pose challenges of a different scale than military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, US and NATO forces have been compelled to reconsider the prospect of engaging near-peer adversaries such as Russia and China (Mattis, 2018; Brussels Summit Communiqué, 2021). These near-peer adversaries possess substantial numerical strength and are dedicating considerable effort and resources to attain layered stand-off capabilities through anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) systems, as well as to advance electronic warfare systems, unmanned aerial and ground systems, and automated combat capabilities (Kelly et al., 2016-2017).

The advancement of anti-satellite technology and the capacity to execute extensive hostile operations in cyberspace have introduced further complexities to an already intricate scenario. Reconfiguring Western forces to achieve parity with advanced regional powers such as Russia, China, North Korea, or Iran poses numerous obstacles. Future high-intensity land operations are anticipated to necessitate extensive coordination of troops across land, air, and maritime domains to achieve convergent effects (McConville, 2021; The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028, 2018). Simultaneously, space and cyberspace anticipate the amalgamation of operations and defense within the electromagnetic spectrum and informational domain. Moreover, it has only recently been recognized in Western military thought that various adversarial contests in global politics are occurring below the threshold of war, with Russia and China, in particular, progressively honing their strategies and tactics to advance their interests through methods that will not provoke a military response from the West (Nilsson, 2023). The concept of operating in the gray zone is not novel; however, it is only recently that Western militaries have begun to earnestly address the doctrinal implications of the increasingly indistinct boundary between war and peace, as well as the requirements imposed on military forces within this operational framework. The U.S. Army's answer to these problems is framed as multi-domain operations (MDO), which integrates the five designated domains: land, sea, air, space, and cyber (McConville, 2021; The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028, 2018).

3.1. The Concept of Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) and its Significance for Turkiye

The endeavor to establish synergy through the integration of capabilities has a longstanding history and is, in essence, the objective of joint operations (Nilsson, 2023). MDO elevates this idea by incorporating additional dimensions of warfare and anticipating enhanced cooperation among services, allies, and partners (McConville, 2021; The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028, 2018). The approach seeks to establish unparalleled coordination among actions across five domains, continually presenting enemies with evolving problems, and consolidating the resultant impacts to maximize harm to the enemy's resolve and unity (Brown & Perkins, 2017). The concept of MDO can be defined as tackling a complex problem with an exceedingly intricate answer.

The integration of land, sea, air, space, and cyber domains, derived from NATO doctrine, is rendered an urgent necessity by Türkiye's regional position. The Turkish ground forces are increasingly recognizing the significance of UAVs, electronic warfare systems, and real-time command-and-control coordination, as seen by the Euphrates Shield operation in Syria and the current Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict.

Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) is a military doctrine formulated by the United States Army to address the intricacies of the contemporary operational landscape (McConville, 2021). MDO transcends conventional joint operations by incorporating five domains: land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace (TRADOC, 2018). The idea seeks to establish unparalleled synchronization within these five domains, continuously presenting evolving challenges to adversaries, and consolidating impacts to maximize damage to the resolve and coherence of the opposition (Brown & Perkins, 2017).

MDO provides a flexible and responsive methodology instead of a fixed operational framework. This concept encompasses diverse actions within each area, including special operations, intelligence operations, and information operations (TRADOC, 2018). The potential of MDO extends beyond physical effects, aiming to influence cognitive and psychological dimensions as well. MDO's power to achieve its full potential depends on its technological superiority and control over the fractured battlefield. Nonetheless, this informational dominance and control capability may be inaccessible to smaller friends and partners on the front lines when confronting a comparably formidable adversary (Watling & Roper, 2019). The predicament encountered by a NATO partner such as Türkiye exemplifies how these dynamics manifest in reality.

The technological disparity: Türkiye and comparable smaller allies possess significantly fewer capabilities than the United States regarding information management systems, real-time satellite surveillance, autonomous systems, and artificial intelligence-enhanced decision support systems (Raska, 2021). The technology disparity diminishes the anticipated synchronization benefits of the CAO and results in constraints on autonomous operating capacity.

Command and Control Dependence: Türkiye relies on the NATO command structure and information-sharing systems for its regional operations. Nonetheless, the integration of C4I systems to NATO standards markedly enhances the intricacy of the command structure and the information processing capabilities of a small nation's military (Nilsson, 2023). This reliance can impose constraints when national command executes autonomous judgments.

Logistics Coordination Challenges: The CAO model demands extensive coordination throughout the five domains, including the simultaneous integration of logistics systems (Watling & Roper, 2019). Türkiye's logistics infrastructure is deficient in information technology, transportation capabilities, and warehouse facilities, which are essential for enabling this intricate integration. In instances of communication system failures, logistics systems are incapacitated without central coordination, jeopardizing military support on the battlefield (Priebe et al., 2020). The MDO's design seeks to establish unparalleled synchronization among the five areas, necessitating a substantial level of centralized management. Excessive dependence on central control may result in operational failures during communication breakdowns (Priebe et al., 2020). To address this conflict, Türkiye must capitalize on the synchronization benefits of the WTO while maintaining its decentralized decision-making capacities (Nilsson, 2023).

This requires the adoption of a flexible command approach. Flexible command allows the military This necessitates the implementation of a flexible command strategy. The adaptable command enables the military organization to switch between centralized and decentralized

authority to address situational requirements (Hill & Niemi, 2017). In Turkiye's operations against low-tech adversaries, decentralized command may be more appropriate, yet centralized command is essential for CAO synchronization when confronting a larger and technologically superior opponent.

4. CONCLUSION

As individuals perceive land activities as increasingly complex, the methods implemented to manage them exacerbate the complexity. In a period marked by intense power competition, Western armed forces, particularly ground units, must develop tactics to enhance resource efficiency through convergence, synchronization, and the incorporation of developing technologies (Nilsson, 2023; McConville, 2021). However, solutions to this complexity sometimes present an exaggerated view of the practicality of controlling the operational environment and reducing uncertainty. The convergence driver across domains provides several incentives for the centralization of command systems; nevertheless, it also emphasizes horizontal collaboration and networking inside military organizations (Nilsson, 2023).

Turkiye must adhere to the CAO concept (Canan-Sokullu & Dikmelik, 2020) due to its geographical position, regional security challenges, and its involvement in NATO. In this endeavor, Turkiye must bridge its technological divide while maintaining regional autonomy. The Turkish Armed Forces must enhance their command systems, augment their information management capabilities, strengthen their logistics, and bolster their defenses against cyber threats to utilize ÇAO effectively (Watling & Roper, 2019).

The EU represents both an essential requirement and a challenge for Turkiye. The objective is to execute operations in accordance with NATO standards and efficiently combat regional adversaries. The problems include technological disparities, constrained logistical resources, and the intricacies of the command system. To address these issues, Turkiye has employed the CAO concept by implementing flexible command techniques, regulating information dissemination, and ensuring robust logistics.

Contemporary military logistics coordination must achieve a balance between effective information management, proficient technical integration, and the capacity to address communication challenges. An excessive dependence on information technology may result in centralized applications inside command systems. Decentralized decision-making and logistical autonomy are crucial for sustaining operational resilience in intricate environments (Paul, 2018; Lindsay, 2020). Future ground operations will require land troops that are very agile and adaptive. These forces must cooperate well while retaining the capacity to operate independently in the event of communication failure. This entails investing in both the robustness of central communication systems and the efficacy of decentralized logistics support systems. Technology can facilitate the attainment of these objectives; yet, in an uncertain and complex world, success will hinge on human factors such as the adaptability of instruction, education, and practice.

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CHAPTER 2

TÜRKİYE'S IRAN POLICY AFTER 2000: A STRATEGIC BALANCE BETWEEN COMPETITION AND COOPERATION

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Introduction

Türkiye's relations with Iran have undergone a multidimensional and dynamic evolution in the post-2000 period. In particular, while attempting to balance its aspirations for regional leadership with its relations with the West, Türkiye has continuously reassessed its approach toward Iran. As one of the most influential actors in the Middle East, Iran occupies a significant place in Türkiye's foreign policy agenda. However, relations between the two countries have been characterized by both cooperation and competition in economic as well as security domains.

This chapter aims to examine the strategic orientations underlying Türkiye's approach toward Iran and to analyze the balance between cooperation and competition that shapes bilateral relations. Since the early 2000s, Türkiye's foreign policy has increasingly adopted a more autonomous trajectory compared to previous decades. At the same time, a number of factors—such as Iran's nuclear program, regional security dynamics, energy policies, and regional conflicts—have significantly influenced the trajectory of Turkish-Iranian relations. Within this context, Türkiye's strategic objectives carry critical importance not only for its national security but also for regional stability.

Türkiye- Iran Relations

Türkiye and Iran, as two major powers of the Middle East, are connected through deep historical, cultural, and religious ties. Nevertheless, the foreign policies of these two states have often reflected diverging national interests and regional security strategies. In the post-2000 period, relations between Türkiye and Iran have been shaped by regional dynamics and global power struggles, resulting in a relationship that oscillates between cooperation and rivalry.

Historically, the two countries have engaged in various forms of military, economic, and cultural interaction. However, as states founded upon distinct ideological and religious foundations, they have maintained a cautious and pragmatic relationship. Throughout the twentieth century, both countries sought to emerge as influential regional powers and attempted to shape the balance of power in the Middle East. Yet the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran, combined with Türkiye's strong ties with Western institutions and Iran's Shiite Islamist ideological framework, periodically generated tensions in bilateral relations.

In the early 2000s, both countries adopted a pragmatic approach aimed at expanding their regional influence. During this period, steps were taken to strengthen economic cooperation and security collaboration. However, the intensification of regional conflicts in the Middle East after the 2000s made the strategic interests of both countries more visible and, at times, more divergent.

During the early years of the 2000s, Türkiye and Iran frequently adopted similar positions regarding regional issues. Both countries emphasized the importance of preserving stability in the Middle East, and within this framework bilateral economic cooperation expanded considerably. In particular, trade relations, energy cooperation, and infrastructure projects between Türkiye and Iran developed significantly. Türkiye became one of Iran's major trading partners, while Iran emerged as an important source of energy imports for Türkiye.

Nevertheless, the deepening of regional conflicts has made Turkish-Iranian relations increasingly complex. Developments in Syria and Iraq, in particular, have shaped the foreign policy priorities of both countries and occasionally generated tensions due to conflicting strategic interests.

Economic and Commercial Dimension

As two significant economic and strategic actors in the Middle East, Türkiye and Iran have experienced a noticeable increase in their economic relations in the post-2000 period. Both countries have developed various strategies aimed at enhancing economic cooperation and expanding bilateral trade, which has gradually deepened their mutual interdependence. Since the early 2000s, a considerable increase in trade volume has been observed particularly in the fields of energy, construction, agriculture, and industry.

Economic relations

Economic relations between Türkiye and Iran have gained substantial momentum since the early 2000s. The growing need for regional economic cooperation in both countries has encouraged efforts to expand trade volumes. During the early 2000s, Iran's role in meeting Türkiye's energy needs increased significantly. Iran became an important supplier of energy

for Türkiye, particularly in the fields of natural gas and oil, leading to the establishment of long-term agreements between the two countries. By strengthening its energy relations with Iran, Türkiye sought to diversify its energy supply sources. In 2010, Türkiye and Iran set an ambitious target of increasing their trade volume to 25 billion dollars (Cagaptay, 2015).

However, Western sanctions imposed on Iran have occasionally created difficulties for these relations. Iran's increasing international isolation due to its nuclear program forced Türkiye to reconsider its economic strategy toward Iran. While attempting to maintain diplomatic balance in response to Western sanctions, Türkiye also sought to develop alternative energy cooperation mechanisms with Iran. One notable example of Türkiye's balancing strategy was its diplomatic initiative regarding the nuclear swap agreement with Iran in 2010. Such diplomatic initiatives can be interpreted as strategic attempts by Türkiye to reinforce its regional leadership aspirations while maintaining closer economic relations with Iran (Kaya & Karagül, 2019).

Trade between the two countries has not been limited to the energy sector. Strong cooperation has also emerged in sectors such as automotive production, construction, and textiles. In 2012, Türkiye partially filled the economic gap created by sanctions imposed on Iran and facilitated Iran's trade with third countries. Nevertheless, particularly after 2016, the reintroduction of U.S. sanctions on Iran reshaped the economic environment and forced Türkiye to reassess its economic objectives with regard to Iran (Gunter, 2017).

Economic relations between the two countries constitute a crucial component of Türkiye's broader balancing strategy. By strengthening its trade relations with Iran, Türkiye has aimed to consolidate its regional economic interests. Iran has remained a key source of natural gas and oil for Türkiye. However, Western sanctions have periodically complicated economic cooperation. Despite these constraints, Türkiye has attempted to maintain economic engagement with Iran while simultaneously preserving its economic ties with Western countries (Uysal, 2016).

Geopolitical Competition and Cooperation

In regional politics, competition between Türkiye and Iran has become particularly evident in major conflict zones such as Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. The Syrian civil war has emerged as a key arena of geopolitical rivalry between the two countries. While Iran has been one of the strongest

supporters of the Assad regime, Türkiye initially supported opposition groups seeking to overthrow the regime. This divergence not only influenced bilateral relations but also directly affected the regional balance of power.

Through its support for Syrian opposition groups, Türkiye sought to limit Iran's regional influence. Over time, however, both countries participated in the Astana Process as part of diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. This demonstrates that even in environments characterized by intense competition, pragmatic cooperation between the two states can emerge (Aras & Evin, 2017).

Iran's support for Shiite militias in Iraq and Türkiye's strategic relations with Sunni Arab actors have further intensified the competitive dynamics between the two countries. Türkiye has consistently emphasized Iraq's territorial integrity and opposed the Kurdish independence referendum in northern Iraq. Iran, on the other hand, has attempted to expand its influence through Iraq's Shiite political and social networks. These dynamics have reinforced both cooperation and rivalry between the two countries (Aras & Evin, 2017).

The regional power struggle between Türkiye and Iran extends beyond military competition and includes ideological, religious, and cultural dimensions. Türkiye's relations with Sunni Arab states and Iran's influence within the Shiite world have shaped the broader framework of this regional rivalry. Nevertheless, despite challenging each other's regional leadership ambitions, both states have occasionally adopted pragmatic approaches that enable cooperation (Cagaptay, 2015).

Iran's Nuclear Program and Türkiye's Diplomatic Position

Türkiye's approach to Iran's nuclear program has been shaped by its efforts to preserve both regional stability and its own national security without disrupting the broader international balance. Türkiye has generally refrained from supporting strict Western sanctions against Iran and has consistently advocated diplomatic solutions.

In 2010, Türkiye and Brazil jointly engaged in negotiations with Iran concerning a nuclear fuel swap agreement. This initiative represented a significant diplomatic move that aimed to strengthen Türkiye's regional diplomatic influence. Türkiye's independent stance regarding the

Iranian nuclear issue occasionally generated tensions with Western powers but simultaneously reflected Ankara's ambition to play a more active role in regional diplomacy (Kaya & Karagül, 2019).

At the same time, Türkiye maintained a cautious position regarding Iran's nuclear ambitions and attempted to manage its relations with Western allies throughout the process. This balancing strategy illustrates Türkiye's broader foreign policy approach, which seeks to combine cooperation with Western actors while preserving constructive relations with regional powers (Gunter, 2017).

Türkiye has supported international diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing nuclear proliferation in the region while advocating dialogue rather than confrontation. Although Türkiye has cooperated with Western actors on nuclear non-proliferation initiatives, it has generally adopted a more moderate stance toward sanctions and emphasized diplomatic engagement as the most viable solution (Baker, 2017). During this period, Türkiye maintained its relations with the West while simultaneously strengthening its economic and trade ties with Iran. Particularly in the early 2010s, the nuclear swap agreement signed between Türkiye and Iran caused tension in relations with the West. However, Türkiye defended this step as part of its search for a diplomatic solution and strived for a solution that would ensure regional stability. Türkiye's moderate stance, in contrast to the West's tough position against Iran's nuclear program, has been seen as an example of Ankara's independent foreign policy strategy (Hakkı, 2015).

Türkiye's Regional Power Strategy and Balancing Policy with Iran

Türkiye and Iran, as two of the most influential and powerful states in the Middle East, have historically maintained a complex network of relations. In the post-2000 period, significant regional conflicts and shifting global dynamics in the Middle East have further deepened and transformed Turkish–Iranian relations.

Türkiye's Independent Foreign Policy in the Middle East

In the early 2000s, Türkiye began to pursue a more independent trajectory in its foreign policy. While maintaining its relations with Western allies, Türkiye sought to protect its strategic

interests in the Middle East by adopting a more autonomous and multidimensional diplomatic approach. Within this framework, Iran emerged as a significant actor in Türkiye's regional policy calculations. In order to strengthen its claims to regional leadership, Türkiye attempted to maintain a balance between cooperation with Western countries and engagement with regional powers such as Iran, Syria, and Iraq (Öniş & Kutlay, 2017).

Historically, Türkiye's foreign policy had been largely shaped by its relations with Western institutions and by regional security dynamics. However, beginning in the early 2000s—particularly with the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP)—Türkiye's foreign policy orientation underwent a significant transformation. Whereas Türkiye's foreign policy during the 1990s was predominantly Western-oriented, the post-2000 period witnessed the emergence of a more multidimensional and regionally engaged foreign policy, particularly toward the Middle East (Kirişci, 2013).

The concept of an independent foreign policy primarily refers to Türkiye's adoption of a more multilateral and diversified diplomatic approach. During this period, Türkiye placed greater emphasis on both regional security challenges and economic cooperation, seeking to strengthen its international standing by maintaining relations with both Western powers and regional actors (Çelik, 2015). The evolution of Türkiye's independent foreign policy has been closely connected to developments in the Middle East.

In the post-2000 period, Türkiye's Middle East policy has been largely shaped by the intensification of regional conflicts and the growing involvement of global powers in the region. In response, Türkiye pursued an active foreign policy aimed at promoting regional stability while simultaneously safeguarding its political and economic interests (Kalaycıoğlu, 2011).

AK Party's Middle East Policy

Following the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power, Türkiye's Middle East policy underwent a significant transformation. Under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the AKP government introduced the “zero problems with neighbors” policy, which aimed to reduce regional tensions and expand areas of cooperation with neighboring countries (Dalay, 2015).

Within this framework, Türkiye sought to strengthen bilateral relations with regional states, expand economic and commercial ties, and contribute to the establishment of regional stability. However, the sustainability of this policy was significantly challenged by the developments that followed the Arab Spring.

The Arab Spring and Its Aftermath

The Arab Spring, which began in 2011, marked a major turning point in Middle Eastern politics. During this period, Türkiye initially expressed strong support for the popular movements demanding political reform and democratization in the region. Türkiye aimed to contribute to democratic transformation processes across the Middle East.

However, the outbreak of civil war in Syria and the intensification of regional power struggles forced Türkiye to reconsider aspects of its Middle East policy. As the Syrian crisis escalated, Türkiye adopted a more critical stance toward the Assad regime and began to cooperate with opposition groups seeking political change (Altunışık, 2015).

The instability generated by the Arab Spring further highlighted Türkiye's independent foreign policy approach in the region. During this period, Türkiye not only pursued its own national security interests but also sought to strengthen its relations with Sunni-majority states. At the same time, these developments placed Türkiye in strategic competition with other regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The Syrian Crisis and Türkiye's Strategic Moves

The Syrian civil war has been one of the most significant developments shaping Türkiye's Middle East policy. Initially adopting a strong stance against the Assad regime, Türkiye sought to prevent the emergence of security threats along its southern border, particularly those associated with Kurdish armed groups operating in northern Syria.

At the same time, Türkiye assumed a major humanitarian role by providing assistance to millions of Syrian refugees. These efforts reflected Türkiye's attempt to position itself as a responsible regional actor.

The Syrian crisis demonstrated both the opportunities and the limitations of Türkiye's independent foreign policy strategy. During this period, Türkiye was compelled to engage in diplomatic cooperation with actors such as Russia and Iran, despite existing geopolitical rivalries. At the same time, these developments contributed to rising tensions in Türkiye's relations with Western partners. Consequently, Türkiye pursued a pragmatic foreign policy approach aimed at balancing its relations with both Western powers and regional actors (Günay, 2019).

Since the early 2000s, Türkiye has increasingly emerged as a significant regional actor with growing influence in global politics. Its economic capacity, military capabilities, and strategic geographical position have enabled Türkiye to become an important player in Middle Eastern politics (Aydın, 2017). However, Türkiye's expanding regional role has also led to competition with other regional powers, including Iran.

Regional Conflicts and Türkiye-Iran Relations

Relations between Türkiye and Iran have continued to evolve through the prism of regional conflicts. In the Syrian civil war, the two countries initially supported opposing sides, yet later engaged in diplomatic cooperation through mechanisms such as the Astana Process. This development illustrates the pragmatic cooperation that can emerge despite conflicting regional ambitions.

Similarly, the Kurdish issue in Iraq has tested the limits of cooperation between Türkiye and Iran. Both countries opposed the Kurdish independence referendum in northern Iraq, which led to closer coordination on certain security matters (Aras & Evin, 2017).

The Syrian Civil War and Türkiye-Iran Relations

The Syrian civil war represents one of the most critical turning points in Turkish–Iranian relations. When the conflict began in 2011, Türkiye adopted a strong stance against the Assad regime and supported opposition movements seeking regime change. Iran, by contrast, viewed

Syria as a strategic ally and provided extensive political, military, and logistical support to ensure the survival of the Assad government (Zarif, 2013).

While Türkiye carried out military operations in northern Syria to prevent the consolidation of Kurdish armed groups along its border, Iran supported pro-government forces, including Shiite militias and Hezbollah. These developments intensified the regional power rivalry between the two countries and created significant tensions in their bilateral relations.

Nevertheless, in 2017 Türkiye, Iran, and Russia launched the Astana Process to seek a political solution to the Syrian conflict. This diplomatic initiative demonstrated that despite deep geopolitical disagreements, the two countries could still cooperate in pursuit of regional stability (Köse, 2017).

The Power Struggle in Iraq and Türkiye-Iran Relations

Iraq has also been a major arena influencing Turkish–Iranian relations. Political instability in Iraq has deeply affected the strategic calculations of both countries regarding regional security and influence.

Türkiye has sought to strengthen its relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq while simultaneously conducting military operations against the PKK. Iran, on the other hand, has expanded its influence primarily through Shiite political actors and militias operating within Iraq.

Although the two countries have approached the Iraqi issue from different perspectives, they have occasionally cooperated in addressing common security threats. For example, both Türkiye and Iran have supported efforts to combat ISIS and maintain Iraq’s territorial integrity. Nevertheless, competition for political influence in Iraq continues to shape the dynamics of Turkish–Iranian relations (Cunningham & El-Khatib, 2015).

Türkiye's Soft Power Strategy

Soft power refers to a country's ability to influence other states through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or military force. The concept was introduced by **Joseph Nye** in the 1990s and describes a state's capacity to shape the preferences of other actors through cultural appeal, diplomacy, and ideological influence.

Since the early 2000s, Türkiye has attempted to strengthen its strategic position in the Middle East not only through military and economic capabilities but also through the effective use of soft power instruments. Cultural diplomacy, media influence, education initiatives, and humanitarian assistance have become important tools in Türkiye's regional engagement.

Turkish television series, cinema productions, and educational cooperation programs have contributed to strengthening people-to-people relations between Türkiye and societies across the Middle East. The popularity of Turkish television series in many countries, including Iran, has created a significant cultural connection and has helped expand Türkiye's cultural visibility in the region (Cagaptay, 2015). Educational exchange programs and academic cooperation have also contributed to increasing interaction between the two societies.

Türkiye's Approach to the Concept of Soft Power

Beginning in the early 2000s, a major transformation occurred in Türkiye's foreign policy approach. Rather than maintaining a strictly Western-oriented foreign policy, Türkiye adopted a multidimensional diplomatic strategy that incorporated economic, cultural, and humanitarian instruments. Within this framework, soft power became a central component of Türkiye's efforts to expand its regional influence.

Soft power derives from several sources, including cultural attraction, diplomacy, education policies, media influence, humanitarian assistance, and international cooperation. Türkiye has attempted to strengthen its soft power in the Middle East by drawing upon its historical legacy, cultural proximity to regional societies, shared religious and cultural traditions, and expanding media presence (Nye, 2004).

Türkiye's Soft Power Tools

Cultural diplomacy has become an important soft power instrument in Türkiye's Middle East policy since the early 2000s. By emphasizing its historical heritage and cultural ties with the region, Türkiye has attempted to establish a positive image among Middle Eastern societies.

The Turkish television and film industry has played a particularly significant role in this regard. Turkish television series have reached large audiences across the Middle East and have contributed to enhancing Türkiye's cultural appeal. In many cases, these productions have helped promote what has sometimes been described as the "Turkish model," portraying Türkiye as a successful example of economic development and political transformation in a predominantly Muslim society (Arslan, 2017).

Educational cooperation has also become an important dimension of Türkiye's soft power strategy. Turkish universities, scholarship programs, and student exchange initiatives have allowed many students from Middle Eastern countries to study in Türkiye, thereby strengthening long-term cultural and intellectual connections.

Public diplomacy has also been an important component of Türkiye's regional engagement. Türkiye has sought to develop direct relationships not only with governments but also with regional societies. High-level diplomatic visits, cultural initiatives, and public outreach activities have all contributed to Türkiye's efforts to enhance its regional influence (Özkan, 2014).

Media institutions have further reinforced Türkiye's soft power strategy. International broadcasting networks such as TRT World and TRT Arabi have served as platforms through which Türkiye communicates its perspectives on regional and global developments. These media channels aim to strengthen Türkiye's international image and present its policy perspectives to a broader audience (Altunışık, 2018).

Another important component of Türkiye's soft power strategy has been humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. Since the early 2000s, Türkiye has provided humanitarian aid and development assistance to numerous countries in the Middle East. These initiatives have enhanced Türkiye's positive image among regional populations and strengthened its position as an important humanitarian actor.

Türkiye's response to the Syrian refugee crisis represents one of the most visible examples of this approach. By hosting millions of Syrian refugees and providing humanitarian assistance, Türkiye has demonstrated its commitment to addressing regional humanitarian challenges. These efforts have contributed to strengthening Türkiye's image and reinforcing its regional leadership claims.

Economic engagement has also played a role in supporting Türkiye's soft power. Increased trade relations, investment projects, and regional economic partnerships have strengthened Türkiye's economic ties with Middle Eastern countries. These economic initiatives have further contributed to the expansion of Türkiye's influence in the region (Uysal, 2015).

However, Türkiye's soft power strategy has also faced several challenges. Regional conflicts, ideological differences, ethnic tensions, and security threats have limited the effectiveness of Türkiye's cultural and diplomatic outreach. Developments following the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war have forced Türkiye to reconsider aspects of its regional strategy.

For instance, Türkiye's strong support for certain political movements during the Arab Spring—particularly its opposition to the Assad regime in Syria—created tensions with some regional actors. In addition, Türkiye's growing regional ambitions have sometimes been perceived by other states as a challenge to existing regional power structures (Kirişçi, 2014).

Future Assessments

In the coming years, Turkish–Iranian relations will continue to be shaped by geopolitical developments in the Middle East. Regional instability will influence the security interests of both countries and may further intensify their competition for regional influence.

Relations with the West and the Balancing Policy Towards Iran

While maintaining relations with Western allies, Türkiye has also sought to strengthen its strategic engagement with Iran. Sanctions imposed on Iran have complicated Türkiye's relations with Western countries and increased the difficulty of maintaining a balanced foreign policy.

In particular, Western concerns regarding Iran's nuclear program have had a direct impact on Türkiye's diplomatic position. Türkiye has attempted to preserve cooperation with Western allies while simultaneously maintaining constructive relations with Iran. However, this balancing strategy has occasionally produced tensions in Türkiye's relations with the United States and the European Union (Kaya & Karagül, 2019).

Negotiation Process with the European Union

One of Türkiye's most significant foreign policy objectives in the early 2000s was membership in the European Union. Türkiye was granted candidate status at the Helsinki Summit in 1999 and began formal accession negotiations in 2005. This process initially strengthened Türkiye's relations with Western institutions.

However, political and economic crises within the European Union, combined with evolving domestic and foreign policy developments in Türkiye, slowed the accession process. Over time, the relationship between Türkiye and the EU became increasingly complex (Çolak, 2016).

Relations with the United States and Security Policies

Türkiye's relations with the United States have also been characterized by periods of both cooperation and tension in the post-2000 era. Following the September 11 attacks in 2001, Türkiye supported U.S. counterterrorism initiatives and played an important role in regional security efforts.

However, tensions emerged during the 2003 Iraq War when Türkiye refused to allow U.S. forces to launch military operations from Turkish territory. This decision marked one of the first major disagreements between the two allies in the post-Cold War period.

In the following years, Türkiye and the United States resumed cooperation in areas such as energy security, counterterrorism, and regional stability. Nevertheless, disagreements over issues such as the Syrian conflict and Iran's nuclear program have periodically strained bilateral relations (Günay, 2014).

Future Relationships

The future of Turkish–Iranian relations will largely depend on developments related to regional stability, energy security, and nuclear negotiations. If Iran’s economic integration with the international system increases, this could create new opportunities for economic cooperation between Türkiye and Iran.

However, ongoing geopolitical competition in Syria and Iraq may continue to complicate bilateral relations. Developments in these countries will likely shape the strategic calculations of both states in the coming years.

Relations with other regional actors, particularly Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, will also influence the trajectory of Turkish–Iranian relations.

Energy security will remain a critical component of the bilateral relationship. Iran will likely continue to serve as an important energy supplier for Türkiye, while Türkiye may remain a crucial transit and trade partner facilitating Iran’s access to international energy markets.

Geopolitical Implications

Türkiye will continue to shape its relations with Iran in response to both regional and global developments. Iran’s expanding influence in the Middle East will require Türkiye to adopt careful and strategic diplomatic approaches.

As Türkiye seeks to maintain its regional leadership aspirations, managing balanced relations with Iran will remain an essential component of its broader foreign policy strategy (Öniş & Kutlay, 2017).

Conclusion

Relations between Türkiye and Iran have evolved within a complex framework of cooperation and competition in the post-2000 period. Both countries have made strategic foreign policy decisions shaped by regional and global developments.

Türkiye's approach toward Iran has primarily been guided by several strategic objectives: maintaining regional stability, expanding economic cooperation, addressing shared security threats, and balancing its relations with Western powers. However, achieving this balance has often proven challenging due to the competing interests of the two countries.

Iran's nuclear program has represented one of the most significant turning points in bilateral relations. While Türkiye has adopted a diplomatic approach toward Iran and occasionally opposed strict Western sanctions, it has simultaneously remained concerned about the potential security implications of Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Regional developments—particularly in Syria and Iraq—have also shaped Turkish–Iranian relations. The Syrian civil war has demonstrated how the two countries can simultaneously compete and cooperate depending on evolving regional circumstances. Platforms such as the Astana Process illustrate the possibility of pragmatic collaboration even amid strategic rivalry.

Ultimately, Türkiye's policy toward Iran extends beyond bilateral relations and plays a broader role in shaping the geopolitical balance of the Middle East. Türkiye's pragmatic approach toward Iran reflects a complex strategy that seeks to manage economic cooperation, regional security concerns, and international diplomatic pressures simultaneously.

In an environment characterized by shifting energy dynamics and increasing regional competition, Türkiye's ability to maintain a balanced and flexible policy toward Iran will remain a critical factor shaping its future Middle East strategy.

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CHAPTER 3

ORIGINS OF THE KOREAN WAR AND THE QUESTION OF SOVIET INVOLVEMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

After World War II, British writer George Orwell coined the term “Cold War” in his essay “You and the Atomic Bomb,” published in the British newspaper Tribune on October 19, 1945. While discussing his predictions of a polarized world, he argued that a social structure would prevail “in a state which was at once unconquerable and in a permanent state of ‘cold war’ with its neighbors” (Orwell, 1945). Not long after Orwell’s use of the term “cold war,” former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill gave his now-famous Iron Curtain Speech at Westminster College on March 5, 1946. In the speech, Churchill argued that “an iron curtain has descended across the Continent” and that most of the cities in Central and Eastern Europe were under an “increasing measure of control from Moscow” (*Churchill’s ‘Iron Curtain’ Speech*, *Sinews of Peace*, 1946). By 1947, U.S. President Harry S. Truman began to comprehend the level of the threat the Soviet Union posed to U.S. hegemony through a series of events, such as the Soviets’ perceived resistance to American demands in Iran, Turkey, and Greece, as well as their rejection of the Baruch Plan, which aimed to regulate atomic energy. In return, the U.S. adopted containment, a geopolitical strategy to stop the expansion of an enemy, with the announcement of the Truman Doctrine (Gaddis, 2005; Leffler, 2007). In his address to Congress on March 12, 1947, Truman argued that the United States had an obligation to support free peoples in their struggle against subjugation by internal armed factions or foreign powers (Address of the President to Congress, 1947).

While these developments were unfolding in the West, Mao Zedong's Communist forces in China defeated Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China, leading to the founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. This event changed the previous balance of power in Asia and made the continent a potential base for Communist states. On June 25, 1950, after receiving the green light from both Stalin and Mao, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung launched an offensive against South Korea, marking the start of the Korean War, or the 6.25 War (6.25 전쟁), as Koreans call it.

Based on declassified Soviet archival documents, this paper argues that Stalin was not eager to involve the Soviet Union in a war on the Korean Peninsula; therefore, he was rather passive in his approach, whereas it was Kim Il Sung who propagated the idea of a pre-emptive strike to the very end. The main reason for Stalin’s change of mind regarding his support for Kim Il Sung's quest was a series of miscalculations by policymakers in the United States. The

paper relies heavily on the digital archive of the Wilson Center's Cold War History Project and on the bulk of Soviet declassified documents translated by Kathryn Weathersby.¹

2. DIVISION OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA AND THE SOVIET UNION IN NORTH KOREA

On the night of August 9, 1945, just after Japan was hit for the second time with an atomic bomb, Soviet armies began their invasion of the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. After two days of fighting, the soldiers of the 25th Army crossed the Chinese-Korean border (Lankov, 2002, p. 1). Just as Soviet armies began crossing the Yalu River, American planners at the State Department were rushing to plan the Japanese surrender. The task of dividing Korea was given to the young colonels Dean Rusk—who later served as U.S. Secretary of State—and Charles H. Bonesteel, who later became commander of U.S. forces in Korea. Given just thirty minutes, Rusk and Bonesteel chose the 38th parallel to ensure Seoul fell within the American zone, while privately acknowledging that the line was further north than American forces could realistically hold if the Soviets pushed back (Cumings, 1981, pp. 120–121). To the surprise of many, Stalin agreed to the U.S. proposal and ordered his troops to halt their movement when they reached the 38th parallel. To this day, historians have not found hard evidence explaining the rationale behind this decision. One may find some hints of Stalin's reasoning in his radio speech on September 2, 1945. He noted that Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War had left a deep wound in the memory of his people. Yet they had long waited and believed that Japan would one day be defeated and that humiliation avenged — and now, he declared, that day had finally come (Jager, 2013, p. 19).

It was mainly the units of the 25th Army of the 1st Far Eastern Front that engaged in close combat in Northern Korea. The 25th Army was commanded by Colonel-General I. M. Chistiakov, and Major-General N. G. Lebedev served as its political commissar, but neither became active in North Korean politics. N. G. Lebedev, a professional political officer, and Colonel-General Terentii Fomich Shtykov, a member of the Military Council, were deeply involved in the decision-making process. Historian Andrei Lankov argues that between 1945 and 1948, Shtykov was “the real supreme ruler of North Korea” (Lankov, 2002, p. 2). Shtykov later became the first Soviet ambassador to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. As noted by Charles K. Armstrong, Shtykov was “instrumental in formulating Soviet policy toward

¹ Kathryn Weathersby translated these documents for a joint project of the Center for Korean Research of Columbia University and the Cold War International History Project, Wilson Center. They are published under the title “New Russian Documents on the Korean War.” Hereafter NRDKW.

Korea, had direct access to Stalin, and exercised close supervision of political events in Northern Korea” (Armstrong, 2004, p. 53). When the 25th Army entered the Korean Peninsula, they knew almost nothing about the region. They had no translators with them and suddenly had to make decisions about this unknown land. On August 25, Chistiakov made the most important political decision for North Korea's future, choosing Pyongyang as the headquarters of the 25th Army rather than Hamhung (Lankov, 2002, p. 5).

When Soviet troops arrived in Pyongyang, they found people’s committees already controlling the government, just as they had in other major cities in the North. The South P'yongan Committee for Preparation for Independence was headed by Cho Man-sik, a prominent nationalist who had earned his reputation by refusing to adopt a Japanese name during the colonial occupation. (Lankov, 2002, p. 11). Soviet officers initially tried to win over Cho, but it proved difficult. Cho, described as a “person of right-wing allegiances with a strong dislike for Communists,” wanted to make a deal on his own terms with the Soviets (Lankov, 2002, p. 14). It was around the autumn of 1945 that Korean communists began returning to Korea, and among them was Kim Il Sung, who arrived in Pyongyang in late September 1945 along with his former guerrilla fighters.

2. KIM IL SUNG AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Kim was born Kim Song-ju to a peasant couple on April 15, 1912, in Pyongyang. He was the second-oldest of four sons and followed his family to Manchuria, where he attended elementary school, which enabled him to speak fluent Chinese (Tertitskiy, 2025, p. 60). His father died early when he was at the age of fourteen. In high school, he joined a local Marxist group, which was discovered by the police and led him to be imprisoned for several months in 1929. In the spring of 1930, after his release from jail, he began to follow various bands of guerrillas and left his widowed mother and brothers behind (Lankov, 2002, p. 52; Suh, 1988, p. 3).

Kim became a prominent member of the Chinese majority United Army led by Wei Zhengmin. By the early 1940s, when the Japanese expeditionary campaign under General Nazoe intensified, he was the only leader who was not killed or captured by the Japanese (Suh, 1988, p. 27). By any standard, Kim was a successful guerrilla in Manchuria. His most famous raid was the Poch'onbo Raid (보천보 습격), in which he attacked the town on June 4, 1937, and destroyed local offices with his 200 guerrillas (Suh, 1988, p. 34). Soon after the death of

Wei Zhengmin, Kim Il Sung entered the Soviet Union to evade the pursuing Japanese forces on March 8, 1941 (Suh, 1988, p. 47). The Soviet Union seems to have welcomed Chinese and Korean guerrillas who came from Manchuria, and it also provided training for them in case of a war against Japan. Kim Il Sung was trained at Okeanskaya Field School and became a prominent member among Soviet Koreans in the Soviet Army (Suh, 1988, pp. 48–49). Kim Il Sung was assigned to the 88th Brigade in Khabarovsk as a captain to infiltrate Japanese-controlled areas and gather information (Haruki, 1992, pp. 136–141).

After World War II, Kim Il Sung arrived in Korea. His arrival in Northern Korea was timely. Yu Song-Ch'ol, one of Kim's comrades who came to Korea along with him, suggests that they had no idea how the Soviets would use them. He recalled, “Even at this time, none of us was thinking that Kim Il Sung would become the new leader of North Korea” (Seiler, 1994, p. 112). Upon Kim’s arrival in Pyongyang, General Chistiakov showed a visible interest in him and personally greeted him. Due to the lack of documentary evidence, the extent of backroom talk between Kim and Chistiakov is unknown, but one thing is certain: he was introduced to the citizens of Pyongyang as a leader at the mid-October rally to honor the Soviet Army (Jager, 2013, p. 25). After this moment, Kim became the unrivaled leader of North Korea in the eyes of Soviet officials. In the years between 1945 and 1948, the North Korean government was almost completely controlled by Soviet advisers, who, for example, drafted the 1946 Land Reform Law, and Stalin himself edited the draft of the 1948 North Korean Constitution (Lankov, 2015, p. 6). When it became clear to the Soviet Union and the United States that a unification of the peninsula through trusteeship, the idea put forward by FDR at the Cairo Conference, was no longer an option due to a series of disagreements, both sides proceeded with their own plans. On August 15, 1948, the Republic of Korea (ROK)² was formally established, with Syngman Rhee as its first president. On September 9, 1948, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)³ was proclaimed with Kim Il-Sung as premier.

3. KIM IL SUNG’S DIPLOMACY FOR UNIFICATION

At the end of 1948, after the establishment of the DPRK, the Soviets withdrew all of their troops. This event enabled Kim Il Sung to be freer in the governance and foreign policy of DPRK. He introduced his plan for “completion of the national territory (국토완정 國土完

² Hereafter ROK.

³ Hereafter DPRK.

整)” while Syngman Rhee introduced the idea of “Advance North, Unify Nation (북진통일론 (北進統一論)” (Haruki, 2018, p. 3; 남, 2012; 박, 2024). In the ROK, there was an ongoing guerrilla war between Rhee's forces and local rebels.⁴ In the DPRK, however, there was a general perception among the leading elite that the ROK would launch an attack against the DPRK “if the communists did not strike first” (Armstrong, 2013, p. 15). Therefore, as Bruce Cumings argues, the origins of the Korean War were primarily a civil war that later became an international conflict (Cumings, 1981, p. xxi).

In early 1949, Kim Il Sung decided to promote the idea of unification by force to Stalin. Kim informed Soviet ambassador Shtykov about his desire to visit Moscow and sign a “Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance.” Shtykov informed him that he could visit Moscow, but the time was not right to sign such a treaty “with the country divided into two” (Zhihua, 2012, p. 42). Kim had to agree not to sign a treaty, but he eventually went to Moscow in early March 1949. There, he met Stalin for the first time and found an opportunity to promote his ideas. They met on March 5, 1949. Apart from Kim and Stalin, the meeting attendees included Ambassador Shtykov, Pak Hon-Yong, the Foreign Minister of the DPRK, and four economic planners from Korea (Millett, 2005, p. 177). In the meeting, Kim Il Sung first asked for “economic and cultural aid” from Stalin. Kim then provided details of the support and asked for 40 to 50 million American dollars. Stalin answered, “Fine.” During the meeting, Stalin asked various detailed questions to estimate what kind of country the DPRK was. Then, he asked about American troops and the ROK's troops:

“Stalin asks how many American troops are in South Korea. Kim answers that there are up to 20,000 men. Shtykov--approximately 15-20 thousand men. Stalin asks if there is a national Korean army in the south. Kim answers that there is, the number is around 60,000 men. Stalin asks if this number includes only regular army or also police. Kim answers that it includes only regular army. Stalin (joking) asks, and you are afraid of them? Kim--No, we are not afraid, but we would like to have naval units. Stalin asks which army is stronger--north or south. Pak Heon Hyeong answers that the northern army is stronger” (*Notes of the Conversation between Comrade I.V. Stalin and a*

⁴ The two prominent rebellions are Cheju-do and Yosu. For a detailed analysis see: (Cumings, 1981, pp. 237–291).

Governmental Delegation from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Headed by Kim Il Sung, 1949).

According to the account of Kim Il Sung and Stalin's first meeting, they discussed only issues related to the DPRK's economy, cultural/military exchanges, the situation on the Korean Peninsula, and Soviet-Korean cooperation. Two days after this meeting, Kim Il Sung met again with Stalin and others, this time advancing his primary objective for the visit: the military unification of Korea. Kim said, "We believe that the situation makes it necessary and possible to liberate the whole country through military means." Stalin strongly disagreed and warned Kim of a possible American intervention. Stalin suggested that Kim could only attack the ROK if the latter attacked first. He argued, "then your move will be understood and supported by everyone" (Bajanov, n.d., p. 54). To Kim's disappointment, Stalin left no room for discussion of an attack aimed at unifying the Peninsula. Thus, Kim returned home without fulfilling his main aim.

From 1948 to 1950, there were various clashes and even small battles between the forces of the DPRK and the ROK, but none were followed by an all-out attack. Historian Bruce Cumings argues that "the logic for both sides was to see who would be stupid enough to move first" (Cumings, 2005, p. 251). Both sides were asking their "big brothers" for help, but neither the United States nor the Soviet Union was willing to provide meaningful support. Even after returning from Moscow, Kim Il Sung was pressuring Shtykov for a strike against the ROK. He proposed to take a piece of the ROK's territory from Ongjin to Kaesong. He argued that his troops could occupy the whole of Korea within two weeks, at most two months (Shen & Danhui, 2011, p. 17). Ambassador Shtykov supported Kim's plan in a telegram to Stalin on September 15, 1949. He argued that Koreans were eager to achieve the cause of unification, but it was not possible through peaceful means. The North's army was stronger than the South's, and it could achieve victory without American interference, just as the Chinese (Shen & Danhui, 2011, p. 18; *Telegram, Shtykov to Stalin, 1949*). After discussing the situation on the Korean Peninsula, the Soviet Politburo instructed Shtykov to communicate its decision to Kim Il Sung:

"Since at present North Korea does not have the necessary superiority of military forces in comparison with South Korea, it is impossible to acknowledge that a military attack on the south is now completely prepared for and therefore, from the military point of view, impermissible..." (Politburo Decision to Confirm the Following Directive to the Soviet Ambassador in Korea, 1949).

As can be easily deduced from the above paragraph, Stalin and the Soviet Union did not want to participate in any engagement with the DPRK that involved a pre-emptive strike against the ROK. While the situation remained more or less static on the Soviet side for most of 1949, Stalin began to reconsider his position in late 1949 and early 1950.

4. STALIN'S CHANGE OF MIND

To understand the change in Stalin's view, one should look at the events that occurred in the southern part of the Peninsula. The United States decided to withdraw its troops and leave only five hundred military advisors in the ROK. The planned withdrawal was completed by the end of June 1949 (Kim, 2009, p. 181). Also, the Truman administration had to significantly cut aid to Korea since the House of Representatives did not authorize it (Reid & Glennon, 1976, p. 1040). The last blow from the American side to the ROK was Secretary of State Dean Acheson's speech at the National Press Club on January 12, 1950. In his speech, he outlined the main tenets of the United States' foreign policy. In the speech, Acheson mentioned the "defense perimeter" of the United States:

“What is the situation in regard to the military security of the Pacific area, and what is our... I can assure you that there is not intention of any sort of abandoning or weakening the defenses of Japan... The defensive perimeter runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to the Ryukyus. We hold important defense positions in the Ryukyu Islands, and those we will continue to hold” (Acheson, 1950).

Secretary of State Dean Acheson failed to mention Korea in his speech. This likely affected Stalin's position toward Korea, as immediately after this speech, he began responding differently to Kim Il Sung's ongoing requests for the unification of the Korean Peninsula by force. Kim Il Sung again raised the issue of unification on January 17, 1950, during a luncheon at the DPRK's Foreign Ministry. He told Shtykov:

“The people of the southern portion of Korea trust me and rely on our armed might. Partisans will not decide the question. The people of the south know that we have a good army. Lately I do not sleep at night, thinking about how to resolve the question of the unification of the whole country. If the matter of the liberation of the people of the southern portion of Korea and the unification of the country is drawn out, then I can lose the trust of the people of Korea.” (Hershberg, 1995, p. 8).

Kim also conveyed that he hoped to visit Stalin immediately to obtain his permission for an all-out attack against the ROK. On January 30, Stalin responded to Shtykov's message:

"I received your report. I understand the dissatisfaction of Comrade Kim Il Sung, but he must understand that an effort as important as the one he wishes to undertake in South Korea needs careful preparations. The matter must be organized so that it will not be such a great risk. If he wants to discuss this matter with me, then I will always be ready to receive him and discuss it with him. Transmit all this to Kim Il-Sung and tell him that I am ready to help him on this matter" (Telegram from Stalin to Shtykov, 1950).

Stalin's change in attitude came just after Acheson's "perimeter" speech. After ensuring that the United States would not intervene in the Korean conflict, Stalin revised his position and adopted Kim Il Sung's idea. On January 31, Shtykov informed Stalin that Kim had received his report "with great satisfaction." On March 9, 1950, the DPRK government informed the Soviets that it wanted to "strengthen the People's Army" and requested "military technical equipment in the amount of 120–150 million rubles." On March 18, 1950, Stalin himself replied to this request:

As concerns the equipment and materials you request, and also the specialists in lead industry, the Soviet Government has resolved to fully satisfy your request. Second. I have also received your proposal of 9 March about the delivery to you of arms, ammunition and technical equipment for the people's army of Korea. The Soviet government has decided also to satisfy fully this request of yours (Stalin to Kim Il Sung via Shtykov, 1950).

Kim Il Sung and Pak Hon Yong met with Stalin in Moscow on March 30, 1950, to discuss the situation at hand. At their meeting, Stalin explained his rationale by suggesting that "the international environment has sufficiently changed to permit a more active stance on the unification of Korea." Stalin also assured Kim that if necessary, Chinese troops "can be utilized without any harm to the other needs of China." He also mentioned the Chinese-Soviet Treaty of Alliance and argued, "Americans will be even more hesitant to challenge the Communists in Asia," and added, "The prevailing mood is not to interfere. Such a mood is reinforced by the fact that the USSR now has the atomic bomb" (Weathersby, 2002, p. 9). Stalin then asked Kim to make sure that Mao also endorsed him. Kim guaranteed the endorsement. Stalin asserted that the USSR would not directly participate in the war because it "had serious challenges elsewhere to cope with, especially in the West." He again emphasized the need to consult Mao's opinion

because he “had a good understanding of Oriental matters” (Weathersby, 2002, p. 11). With the USSR ruling out any intervention, regardless of how the situation might deteriorate, Stalin transferred the burden of decision-making to Mao. From his perspective, Kim's success would mean an expansion of Communism. In the event of U.S. intervention, China would have to send its troops to support the DPRK, which would end any possibility of a Sino-American rapprochement. Stalin essentially had nothing to lose and stood to gain either way. This is a fundamental reason why he supported Kim's plan.

Returning from Moscow in April 1950, Kim Il Sung stopped to secretly meet Mao Zedong. Despite Stalin's urging to bring Mao on board, Kim did little more than inform him of his intention to reunify the country by military means. Mao reluctantly gave his support (Goncharov et al., 1993, pp. 146–147). After this meeting, Kim returned to the DPRK and began preparations for his attack. On June 16, Shtykov reported the details of the offensive. The attack was planned to begin before dawn on June 25. The Korean People’s Army (KPA) would first begin action on the Ongjin Peninsula, then aim for Seoul, and finally liberate the entire peninsula (Weathersby, 2002, p. 14). On June 21, 1950, Shtykov transmitted Kim’s urgent message to Stalin. Kim’s intelligence sources had reported that “Southerners have learned the details of the forthcoming advance.” Thus, Kim urged a modification to the plan and suggested “an overall attack on 25 June along the whole front line.” Stalin replied the same day and agreed with Kim’s plan (Weathersby, 2002, p. 15). On June 25, 1950, KPA soldiers began their offensive around 3 a.m. Korean time, marking the start of the Korean War.

5. CONCLUSION

Immediately after World War II, the Korean Peninsula was divided in half by the two great powers of the time: the U.S. and the USSR. Initially, the USSR did not have a concrete plan for the Korean Peninsula and therefore cooperated with the U.S. in seeking a peaceful solution to the unification of Korea. The idea of trusteeship did not work out due to the conflicting interests of the two powers. Thus, both contributed to the foundation of two separate regimes on the Korean Peninsula. After 1948, the USSR withdrew all its troops from the northern part of the Peninsula, allowing Kim Il Sung to pursue a fairly independent domestic and foreign policy. During most of 1949, Kim propagated his idea of forced unification to Stalin. Stalin initially refused this idea and suggested that he wait longer.

In late 1949 and early 1950, the U.S. made various mistakes in its foreign policy toward the Korean Peninsula. After finding sufficient evidence that the U.S. would not intervene in a

potential conflict, Stalin changed his position on forced unification. Just after Acheson's Perimeter Speech, Stalin accepted Kim's plan and began supporting it. After Mao also gave a green light to Kim's plan, preparations intensified. Eventually, the war erupted under Stalin's close observation. This paper, using primary sources, demonstrates that unification by force was Kim Il Sung's idea all along, with Stalin later endorsing it. It also shows that American miscalculations in foreign policy paved the way for a military confrontation in Korea.

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CHAPTER 4

TÜRKİYE'S IRAN POLICY: A STRATEGIC BALANCE BETWEEN COMPETITION AND COOPERATION

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1. Introduction

Turkey and Iran are two of the most important actors in the Middle East, and although historically close, they have developed relations that have sometimes involved conflict and sometimes cooperation. The fundamental elements in these relations have been shaped by multifaceted dynamics including geopolitical factors, economic interests, security concerns, and regional policies. In Türkiye's relations with Iran, the effort to strike a balance between competition and cooperation is of strategic importance.

Turkey and Iran are two of the most important and strategic actors in the Middle East. While historical, cultural, and religious ties form the basis of their relations in the Middle East, they also compete at times due to regional interests, economic opportunities, and security concerns. Türkiye's relationship with Iran is multifaceted and guided by dynamics shaped by the mutual interests of both countries.

This book chapter aims to examine the strategic balance between competition and cooperation within the context of Türkiye's policy towards Iran. It analyzes Türkiye's strategies for balancing economic cooperation with Iran, as well as competition and cooperation in the face of security threats. The conflicting interests of the two countries in key areas such as the Syrian civil war, Iran's nuclear program, and energy security reveal how this strategic balance has been shaped.

This study analyzes Türkiye's relationship with Iran, starting from its historical foundations and continuing through current cooperation and mutual competition in security and economic areas. Turkey seeks to counterbalance Iran's influence in the region while maintaining cooperation with Iran in areas such as energy, counter-terrorism, and regional stability. On the other hand, Iran's growing influence in the region directly conflicts with Türkiye's strategic interests, intensifying competition between the two countries.

In conclusion, Turkey's strategic balance in its relations with Iran is a constantly evolving structure within the framework of regional security, economic relations, and global policies. While maintaining its relations with the West, Turkey is also developing strategic cooperation with Iran. However, to sustain this balance, Turkey needs to adapt quickly to the changing dynamics in the Middle East.

This book chapter assesses the impact of competition and cooperation in Türkiye's relations with Iran on national and regional security strategies, offering insights into how the strategic orientations of the two countries' foreign policies may take shape in the future.

2. The Historical Context of Türkiye-Iran Relations

Relations between Turkey and Iran date back to the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid State. During this period, relations between the two countries were shaped at times by alliances and at other times by wars. In the early 20th century, especially with the declaration of the Republic, Turkey began to pursue a more independent foreign policy, while Iran, under the Shah's regime, established close relations with the West (Kaya, 2020).

It can be said that a new era began between the two countries after Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979. During this period, while Turkey maintained its relations with the West, its relations with Iran fluctuated between cooperation and competition (Yılmaz, 2021).

The roots of relations between Turkey and Iran extend back to the Ottoman- Safavid period. During this period, relations between the two states were shaped not only by border agreements but also by sectarian and political rivalries. Ottoman- Safavid conflicts reached their peak with **the Battle of Chaldiran** , which is considered a turning point in Ottoman- Safavid relations (Matthee , 2012).

However, over time, conflicts between the two states were eased through diplomatic balance and border agreements. The **Treaty of Kasr -ı Şirin , signed in 1639** , largely solidified the borders between the two states and provided a long period of stability (Hale, 2013). This treaty formed the basis of the modern Turkey-Iran border.

With the advent of the Republic, Turkey has shifted its relations with Iran to a more pragmatic level. Particularly in the post-World War II period, the two countries developed cooperation in the fields of energy and trade. By the 1970s, Turkey's economic development goals and Iran's energy potential had become factors strengthening diplomatic relations between the two countries (Bilgin, 2010).

Historically, Turkish-Iranian relations are significant not only in political and security contexts but also in terms of cultural and social interactions. Ethnic groups living in border regions have supported relations between the two countries through trade and social ties. This

demonstrates that relations are sustainable not only at the interstate level but also at the societal level (Winrow , 2011).

3. Areas of Competition Between Türkiye and Iran

The areas of competition between Türkiye and Iran can be described as: geopolitical competition and struggle for influence, energy and economic competition, and nuclear armament and security competition.

3.1. Geopolitical Competition and the Struggle for Influence

One of the most prominent areas of competition between Turkey and Iran is the struggle for regional influence. Both countries defend their own interests in the Middle East and aim to become regional powers. The fact that Turkey and Iran supported opposing sides in the Syrian civil war is the most concrete example of this rivalry. While Turkey continued to support opposition groups rebelling against the Assad regime, Iran became the Assad regime's strongest ally (Sönmez, 2020).

While Iran generally builds its regional power along Shiite lines, Turkey seeks to increase its influence in a region with a predominantly Sunni Muslim population. In the Syrian civil war, both countries adopted opposing positions, supporting different sides. Turkey supported opposition groups, while Iran sided with the Assad regime. This situation has led to a more pronounced geopolitical rivalry between the two countries (Aydın, 2018).

Iran's efforts to increase its regional hegemony, particularly in countries with large Shiite populations such as Iraq and Lebanon, have posed a strategic threat to Turkey. Turkey views such developments as a situation where Iran's consolidation of regional power could threaten its Sunni-dominant structure (Karaosmanoğlu, 2021). In addition to the competition in Syria, both countries are also developing strategic relationships with each other in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions.

3.2. Energy and Economic Competition

Iran is one of Turkey's most important trading partners . Particularly in the energy sector, Turkey's imports of natural gas and oil from Iran strengthen the economic dimension of their relationship. Turkey has signed various agreements with Iran to further develop these relations. Similarly, Turkey has become a significant market for some Iranian products (Gürpınar, 2020).

Iran possesses one of the world's largest natural gas and oil reserves and is an important partner for Turkey in terms of energy supply security . However, Iran's nuclear program and tensions with the West have sometimes made it difficult for Turkey to benefit from these resources. While trying to reduce its dependence on Iranian energy resources, Turkey has sought alternative energy sources such as Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan (Yılmaz & Kaya, 2021).

Iran's rich energy resources are of great importance to Turkey. However, Iran's nuclear program and its relations with the West have at times prevented Türkiye from benefiting from these resources. While Turkey strives to reduce its dependence on Iran, it is also working on alternative energy sources and routes (Erdem, 2019).

Furthermore, the increase in trade between Iran and Turkey has also brought about economic competition between the two countries. Turkey, taking advantage of the economic pressures Iran faced due to international sanctions, offered alternative trade routes to Iran. However, the competition between the two countries, particularly in strategic areas such as oil and gas trade, is of great geopolitical importance (Kaya, 2020).

3.3. Nuclear Armaments and Security Competition

Iran's nuclear program has directly impacted Türkiye's national security strategies. Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons has been viewed as a threat that could alter the balance of power in the region. Turkey argues that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons could disrupt the military balance in the Middle East and lead to a further intensification of competition in the region (Çalışkan, 2021). In this context, Türkiye, along with the West, has sought to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

4. Areas of Cooperation Between Türkiye and Iran

Areas of cooperation between Türkiye and Iran can be categorized as: Economic and Commercial Cooperation, Security Cooperation and Counter-Terrorism, and Cultural and Diplomatic Relations.

4.1. Economic and Commercial Cooperation

Iran is one of Turkey's important trading partners . Since the 2010s, a significant increase has been observed in economic relations between the two countries. Turkey imports oil, natural gas, and other energy resources from Iran, and also cooperates with Iran in the construction and industrial sectors. In 2019, a trade volume of \$10 billion was targeted between Turkey and Iran, a large part of which was achieved through trade in the energy sector (Erdoğan, 2022).

However, US sanctions against Iran have made it difficult for Türkiye to maintain these economic relations. Turkey has developed alternative trade routes and currency exchange methods to help Iran overcome its economic challenges. In this context, trade with Iran has gained a strategic dimension in line with the national interests of both countries (Yılmaz, 2021).

4.2. Security Cooperation and Counter-Terrorism

Turkey and Iran cooperate against security threats in the Middle East. Joint operations against the PKK and other terrorist organizations are an example of security cooperation between these two countries. Furthermore, both countries combat the activities of radical Islamist groups in the region (Yılmaz & Başaran, 2022).

Turkey and Iran cooperate against security threats in the region. The PKK terrorist organization operates in southeastern Türkiye, while Kurdish terrorist groups such as PJAK operate in northwestern Iran. Both countries conduct joint operations against these organizations and establish various mechanisms to ensure border security (Büyük, 2020).

Furthermore, there is mutual security cooperation between Turkey and Iran against radical Islamist organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda in the region. Turkey also cooperates significantly with Iran in combating these organizations (Sönmez, 2020).

4.3. Cultural and Diplomatic Relations

Cultural relations between Turkey and Iran reflect a long-standing interaction between the peoples of the two countries. Turkey organizes various events and activities to strengthen cultural ties with Iran. In this context, Turkish television series and films are very popular among the Iranian people, and cultural exchange is increasing (Büyük, 2021).

In the diplomatic arena, Turkey ensures that Iran is seen as a partner not only in regional but also in global issues. Both countries support each other's positions in international platforms such as the United Nations. Furthermore, developing mutual understanding on regional cooperation and security strengthens the common interests of Turkey and Iran in foreign policy (Karaosmanoğlu, 2021).

Turkey and Iran have mutually sought diplomatic solutions to many crises and problems in the Middle East. In situations such as the Syrian crisis, the territorial integrity of Iraq, and the civil war in Yemen, although both countries have expressed different views, they have undertaken diplomatic initiatives to ensure stability in the region (Başaran, 2021).

5. Türkiye's Strategic Balance Policy

Türkiye's most prominent strategy in its relations with Iran is an effort to strike a balance between "competition" and "cooperation." Turkey maintains its relations with the West while simultaneously cooperating with Iran, one of its most important rivals in the Middle East. Turkey seeks to minimize the risks posed by geopolitical competition in the region while also cooperating with Iran in energy, security, and economic fields (Aydın, 2018).

The fundamental characteristic of Turkey's Iran policy is based on a pragmatic balance strategy. Turkey must both maintain its relations with Western allies and continue regional and economic cooperation with Iran. This balance policy requires Turkey to act in a multi-dimensional and flexible manner in its foreign policy (Aras, 2001).

Energy policies, security concerns, and regional crises play a decisive role in Turkey's approach to Iran. While Turkey views Iran as an important partner in energy supply, it must maintain a diplomatic and economic balance due to international sanctions and relations with the West (Parsi, 2012).

Regional crises have also influenced Turkey's balance of power policy. For example, political developments in Syria and Iraq have led Turkey to both cooperate with Iran and maintain strategic relations with the West. In this context, Turkey has adopted a "competitive cooperation" approach in its relations with Iran (Sinkaya, 2016).

Turkey's balancing act is evident not only in the areas of security and energy, but also in the diplomatic sphere. Turkey actively participates in various bilateral meetings, economic forums, and regional diplomatic processes to build mutual trust with Iran (Stein, 2017). This

approach allows Turkey to achieve strategic autonomy in the Middle East and maintain sustainable relations with Iran .

Furthermore, Turkey's balance of power policy aims to simultaneously pursue regional power competition and cooperation. While trying to counterbalance Iran's regional influence, Turkey also contributes to the resolution of crises by using diplomatic channels (Kardaş , 2015). This strategy allows Turkey to maintain its relations with Iran while protecting its interests in the Middle East.

5.1. A Policy Balanced with the West

Türkiye's strategic balance in its relations with Iran is not limited solely to competition and cooperation between the two countries. While strengthening its relations with the West, Turkey is also trying to deepen its ties with Iran. Particularly in regional crises such as those in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, Türkiye is seen to be trying to strike a balance between its alliances with the West and its cooperation with Iran (Erdoğan, 2022).

Türkiye's balancing act towards Iran is of strategic importance not only regionally but also globally. Particularly in crisis regions such as Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, Turkey is trying to counterbalance Iran's influence while simultaneously taking steps to ensure regional stability (Erdem, 2019).

Turkey has maintained its relations with both the US and the EU while also adopting a pragmatic approach towards Iran. Particularly due to the sanctions imposed on Iran, Turkey has created alternative trade routes to Iran and increased cooperation between the two countries in various fields (Yılmaz & Kaya, 2021).

5.2. Regional Stability and Middle East Policy

Türkiye's most important strategy in its relations with Iran is to ensure regional stability. Both countries act in accordance with their mutual interests in many issues in the Middle East. Turkey, by cooperating with Iran in particular, tries to take a balanced stance in regional conflicts, while Iran gains power in the Middle East by cooperating with Turkey (Aydın, 2020).

5.3. Strategic Independence and National Interests

Turkey strikes a balance between competition and cooperation in its relations with Iran, while prioritizing its strategic independence and national interests. This strategy is critically

important in terms of Türkiye's flexibility in foreign policy and its efforts to maintain regional balance (Kaya, 2021).

6. Conclusion

Relations between Turkey and Iran are complex, shaped by historical, geopolitical, economic, and security factors. Cooperation between the two countries is based on a multifaceted balance that also includes competition. Turkey strategically directs its relations with Iran, shaping the balance in these relations in line with regional stability and global interests. However, this strategic balance is sometimes challenged by the impact of regional crises, and Turkey attempts to overcome these challenges by maintaining flexibility in its policies.

Relations between Turkey and Iran are far more than just a bond shaped by the mutual interests of the two countries. These relations are closely linked to the complex geopolitical structure of the Middle East, regional security threats, energy resources, and global politics. Turkey's policy towards Iran is based on a constantly shifting and evolving balance where both competition and cooperation coexist. As an actor simultaneously seeking to increase its regional power, Turkey engages in both economic cooperation with Iran and competes against Iran for regional hegemony.

This book chapter offers important insights into understanding the strategic balance in Türkiye's relations with Iran. Türkiye's regional security concerns, particularly developments in Syria and Iraq, Iran's nuclear program, and energy security are key elements shaping its foreign policy. Türkiye's cooperation with Iran in the context of regional security also affects its relations with major powers (especially the US and the EU).

In its relations with Iran, Turkey maintains its strategic ties with the West while simultaneously deepening economic and security cooperation with Iran, a key actor in the Middle East. Through this two-pronged foreign policy strategy, Turkey contributes to efforts to ensure regional stability. However, maintaining this strategic balance is quite challenging for Türkiye due to the constantly changing dynamics in the region. Iran's efforts to increase its regional influence, and developments in Syria and Iraq, occasionally complicate Türkiye's attempts to strike this balance.

Cooperation between Turkey and Iran, particularly in the energy sector, holds significant importance. While Turkey maintains its dependence on Iranian energy resources, it

also continues its work on alternative energy supply routes and itineraries. This plays a crucial role not only in the economic relations between the two countries but also in ensuring regional energy security.

In conclusion, Türkiye's strategic balance in its relations with Iran reflects a complex structure where both competition and cooperation coexist. Türkiye's foreign policy, shaped by balancing these two elements, serves not only Türkiye's interests but also regional stability. Türkiye's future strategies in its relations with Iran will be determined by how it maintains this balance and how it responds to new developments in the region. Strengthening Türkiye's strategic position in the Middle East is a goal that can only be achieved by preserving this balance.

Türkiye's strategic balance in its relations with Iran is shaped not only by the mutual interests of the two countries, but also by regional security and global policies. Türkiye's multifaceted approach to foreign policy allows it to manage both cooperation and competition between the two countries simultaneously. Iran's nuclear program has influenced Türkiye's strategic decisions and shaped its relations with other major powers in the region. It has been observed that Türkiye, while cooperating with Iran to ensure regional stability, also seeks to counterbalance that country's influence in the region. Future developments may lead to significant changes in Türkiye's foreign policy; therefore, maintaining this strategic balance is of paramount importance.

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