

and ideational connectivity, and not just in its passive historical significance.

Throughout the book, Khalid is also adamant, and correct, in dispelling some of the unfortunately persistent myths surrounding Central Asia especially (but not only) in the Western literature – the Great Game, the isolation of the region from the global political economy, the threat of Islamic terrorism, and the shakiness of political order. In this respect, the fact that Central Asia is ‘normalised’ by showing its similarities to other parts of the world and its non-unique character when it comes to navigating colonial contexts and managing the legacies thereof is refreshingly decolonial. Yet, the book itself is not immune from the allure of some sedimented tropes in the literature. For example, the book seems to embrace the notion that the Central Asian states were “catapulted to independence” a bit uncritically, despite recent work being done on how local elites in the mid-1980s prepared themselves for the eventuality of sovereignty, even if unwanted. Furthermore, while the book rightfully stresses the lack of authentic indigenous calls for Central Asian unity, it still paints a picture of contemporary intra-regional cooperation as a chimera. While certainly far from the standards set in other regions, Central Asia is an area where dialogue, coordination, and pragmatic cooperation have found a place and nourishment, especially in the last five years.

Having said this, the book constitutes an eminent opus that not only re-centres Central Asia in global history but dignifies it with the local agency, complexity, and liveliness that is too easily forgotten in much scholarship on the region. The book should be an introductory reading to all modules on Central Asia and would certainly enrich the libraries of those interested in history in general.

Filippo Costa BURANELLI
University of St Andrews, Fife, Scotland

Fatma Asli Kelkitli. *Turkish-Russian Relations: Competition and Cooperation in Eurasia*. London: Routledge, 2017. 146 pp. (ISBN 9781138218284) Hardback. doi:10.22679/avs.2022.7.2.010

© Academia Via Serica, Keimyung University, 2022

Eurasia has long been the focus of global leaders and, since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, has also become a battleground for geopolitical influence and regional supremacy. Russia and Turkey are among those players for whom Eurasia is an area of vested interests and the relations between these two powers are strategically important. Fatma Asli Kelkitli’s book, *Turkish-Russian Relations: Competition and Cooperation in Eurasia*, is of value to experts, international relations professionals, and all those interested in the geopolitical intricacies of postures and positions in Eurasia. Both before and after this publication there have been attempts to understand the nature and range of fluctuations from convergence to confrontation in the geopolitical strategies of the partners, but this volume is distinguished by two components. The first is the careful selection of the theoretical foundation, which

explains the dynamics of bilateral Russia-Turkey relations to be traced after the end of the Cold War. The second is the author's original classification of the fluctuations described.

As such, the book departs with the core idea that the relations between Turkey and Russia have proceeded through three phases (or waves). The first phase, characterized by positional confrontation, started in the early 1990s and ended by the mid-2000s. The next shift has replaced the period of mutual complaints with some convergences in regional affairs. This phase was crushed in 2015 due to the shooting down of a Russian Sukhoi Su-24M by Turkish air forces at the Syria-Turkey border. Since then, the third wave of interactions has emerged. The author's concept is based on a combination of complex interdependence theory and leadership theory, with the latter playing a supporting role. Thus, in the first two phases of interaction, according to the author, complex interdependence theory helps to explain the causes of fluctuations from mutual complaints to convergences and cooperation in the areas of mutual interests - energy, trade, and regional security; yet, this theory is not sufficient to justify the specifics of interaction in the third period (p. 5). Meanwhile, leadership theory perfectly docks with the interdependence theory in explaining the decision-making process in the so-called "troubled regions," that is Eurasia and the Middle East. In the considerations, the author follows the widespread assumption that between 1990 and 2015, neither Turkey nor Russia had the role and ambitions of regional (or even, global) leaders. Indeed, at least in the 1990s and mid-2000s, Russia was involved in cooperation projects with the European Union, though in 2004, a turn to the East took shape with a focus on Central Asia, partnership with the Middle East, and its own Eurasian projects. On the other hand, Turkey's ambitions as a regional leader in Eurasia are obvious, although not always feasible. The clash of ambitions and interests seems to be what has caused the fluctuations in the actors' bilateral relations.

The book structure follows the classification proposed by the author. The first part describes the initial period from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s as the emergence and strengthening of multilayered relations. Despite directly opposed political visions on situations around the South Caucasus, Central Asia, or the Balkans, Turkish-Russian ties deepened on the basis of economic and then people-to-people contacts. The 1990s witnessed the raising of a multi-faceted (multi-dimensional) partnership (p. 20) sealed by authority consolidation in both states. The reader comes to a clear and fair conclusion about the core reasons for the tightening of Turkish-Russian links, that is 'economy goes first' and far before political tensions.

Part two scrutinizes the period from the mid-2000s to 2015 utilizing the premises of complex interdependence theory concerning military instruments in the promotion of national interests. Political divergences are the focal point of the analysis. The South Caucasus seemed to be the focus of encounters between the geopolitical interests of the two powerful actors. The author argues that the inevitable tension stems from Turkey's awareness of Russia's historical superiority over Central Asian states (high hand), particularly as there is an ongoing competition for influence with China and the US (p. 37). The South Caucasus is divided between two regional leaders with the financial, economic, and military assistance of Turkey to Azerbaijan, disputes over Nagorno-Karabakh, and polar opposite views on the

unrecognized republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In this light, sensitive Chechen and Kurdish concerns have created a highly competitive context for exercising strategic leadership in the region. In detail, whilst it is “demonstrated once and for all that Russia was ready to show muscle if it believed that vital interests were at stake in the South Caucasus region” (p. 49), Turkey relied upon economic and political cooperative ties and all available soft power instruments settling a platform for stronger (inter) dependence.

Furthermore, the Black Sea became the area of convergence in bilateral relations and the reason for such cohesion was resistance to US attempts to establish its hegemony in the region. In 1992, Turkey initiated the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), which still needs to prove its effectiveness. Due to the multiple obligations of the BSEC members to other international organizations, it is difficult to sustain the goals and tasks of the BSEC and to keep the status quo in the region. Specifically, the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 has stirred up Turkish concerns about the economic sustainability and the preservation of the political rights of the Tatar population on the peninsula.

Additionally, the Middle East has assumed a significant place in the foreign policy agenda of both countries quite recently and appears to be a constitutive element in terms of implementing strategic leadership in the Eurasian macro-region and geopolitical decision-making. The Russian Su-24M incident in November 2015 reinforced the focus on the Middle East in the foreign policy agenda of both states and undermined the emerging Turkey-Russia connectivity.

The third part of the volume addresses economic consolidation as the prominent glue for tightening Turkey-Russia relations. As Asli Kelkitli explains, complex interdependence theory swaps military security items in favor of economic security in the list of current global challenges (p. 105). Thus, energy, trade, investments, and construction services make the necessary pillow for political cooperation and create a platform for dialogue despite existing differences. Finally, the conclusion captures the nature of Turkey-Russia relations, which are moving far beyond bilateralism and should be considered in the wider context of Eurasian regionalism and the global competition of powers.

Overall, the book gives a comprehensive and well-balanced overview of the contradictory trajectories in the post-Cold War development of Turkey-Russia relations. It is well-designed, soundly researched, and written for a wide audience. The book will ultimately be useful for practitioners and policymakers who need to gain a solid understanding of Eurasian development as well as international studies undergraduates and postgraduates.

Oxana KARNAUKHOVA

Institute of History and International Relations, Southern Federal University, Russia