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TURKEY-USSR RELATIONS DURING THE TURGUT ÖZAL ADMINISTRATION

Відносини між Туреччиною і СРСР в епоху правління президента Тургут Озала

Відносини між Туреччиною і СРСР в епоху правління президента Тургута Озала є останнім етапом взаємодії між двома країнами (1923–1991 рр.). У її розвитку в 1983–1991 рр. особливе місце посідає історичне тло, створене російсько-турецькими відносинами, які почали формуватися з XV ст., і турецько-радянськими відносинами в XX ст. У період правління Т. Озала (1983–1991 рр.) міжнародною обстановкою, в якій взаємодіяли Туреччина й СРСР, була система холодної війни (1945–1991 рр.), головною особливістю котрої була конфронтація між Західним і Східним блоками в ідеологічних, політичних, військових та економічних напрямках.

Відносини між Туреччиною і СРСР загалом також значною мірою визначалися багатоплановою боротьбою між Західним і Східним блоками та їхнім курсом. Коли конфлікт пом'якшав, це поліпшало відносини між Туреччиною та СРСР, але коли він загострився, це негативно вплинуло на відносини між цими країнами. Справді, ситуація позначилася на курсі відносин між Туреччиною і СРСР у період президентства Т. Озала. Пом'якшення і навіть співпраця набрали обертів, коли Генеральним секретарем Комуністичної партії СРСР став Михайло Горбачов. Спроби М. Горбачова реформувати радянську систему у відносно ліберальному напрямку та його зовнішньополітичні підходи започаткували трансформацію відносин із Західним блоком від конкуренції до співпраці.

Міжнародна система в період головування Т. Озала, динаміка взаємин, внутрішня динаміка обох країн та їхній вплив на зовнішню політику зумовили необхідність розвитку багатопланових відносин і забезпечення співпраці між Туреччиною і СРСР.

У цій статті дається оцінка відносин між Туреччиною і СРСР у період правління Т. Озала через теоретичні та практичні виміри, засновані на підході ліберальної теорії в міжнародних відносинах.

Ключові слова: Турецько-радянські відносини, російсько-турецькі відносини, Туреччина, СРСР, Т. Озал, М. Горбачов.

The relations between Turkey and the USSR during the Turgut Özal era constitute the last phase of the relations between the two countries (1923–1991). In the development of these relations during the period of 1983–1991, the historical background formed by the Russian-Turkish relations that had started to form from the 15th century and the Turkish-Soviet relations in the 20th century hold a special place. During the period of Özal (1983–1991), the international environment in which Turkey-USSR relations progressed was the Cold War system. In general sense, the main feature of the Cold War system covering the period from 1945 to 1991 was a struggle between the Western and Eastern blocs which had ideological, political, military and economic aspects.

The relations between Turkey and the USSR, in general, were also significantly influenced by the multidimensional struggle between the blocs. The alleviation of the conflict between the Western and Eastern Blocs positively influenced the Turkey-USSR relations, however, yet when the conflict between the blocs arose again, the relations between two countries worsened. Indeed, this dynamics of relations between Turkey and the USSR during Özal's presidency was obvious. This softening and even the cooperation process gained momentum when Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR. Gorbachev's attempts to reform the Soviet system in a relatively liberal manner and his approaches to foreign policy initiated the process of transforming the relations with the Western bloc from competition to cooperation.

In this regard, the present article evaluates the relations between Turkey and the USSR during Özal's period highlighting the theoretical and practical aspects using the liberal theory approach to the international relations.

Keywords: Turkish-Soviet relations, Russian-Turkish relations, Turkey, USSR, Özal, Gorbachev.

Introduction

“Turkey-USSR relations during the office of Turgut Özal”, in the narrow sense, form the final stage of the relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) covering the period from 1923 to 1991. In a broader sense, on the other hand, “Turkey-USSR relations during the office of Turgut Özal” include a part of Turkish-Russian relations which officially started at the end of the 15th century. These two considerations created a great historical point on which Turkey-USSR relations during Turgut Özal era partially sat.

In this context, Russian-Turkish relations had officially started 500 years ago back in 1492 (İnalçık, 1982). During the Russia-Ottoman period — a period covering 50 years of war, there were serious conflicts between the two countries on the line extending from the Caucasus to the Balkans. The Ottoman Empire considered the Russian Empire as a country that strived to split the Ottoman Empire and it was in competition and conflict in the Caucasus, the Balkans and the Straits, whereas Russia saw the Ottomans as the country that occupied Tsargrad (Istanbul), the holy city of Orthodoxy, and figured it as “the sick man of Europe”. The two

states took part in the opposing sides of the First World War and fought against each other.

At the time when the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia, a new state was founded in Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a new relationship started between the parties (Hale, 2012, pp. 35–36).⁵⁰² In the new era, we may talk about several different periods in the process progressing in the format of the relations of “the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics — Republic of Turkey”. The first period (1921–1939) is known as the era of good neighbourly relations while during the second period, i.e. during World War II between 1939 and 1945, Turkey pursued a policy of neutrality despite the pressure of the Allied Powers, and after how the war would end became clear, Turkey declared war on Germany and Japan in order to be among the founding members of the UN. In the later period, throughout most of the last century, the relations between Turkey and Russia were shaped by the Cold War conditions (Hirst & Isci, 2020). In this period, Turkey was one of the two main countries (the other was Iran) targeted by the aggressive Near East (Middle East) policy of the Soviets, which led Turkey to take part in NATO and ended with the death of Stalin. At the very least, Stalin seemed eager to utter a large-scaled strategic threat. He refused that he organized an offensive against Turkey, yet his actions showed otherwise (Mark, 1997). After Stalin’s death, there was a certain softening in the relations between the two countries.

By the end of 1960, the USA had deployed medium-range Jupiter missiles in Turkey. The USSR did not let this go unanswered, and in 1962, it deployed Jupiter-like medium-range missiles in Cuba. When the US intelligence detected this, the island was besieged.

Khrushchev sent a letter to Kennedy, and demanded the removal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey. He also stated in the letter that the USSR did not intend to invade Turkey, and the USA should also give the same assurance for Cuba. This was

⁵⁰² Документы внешней политики СССР [USSR Foreign Policy Documents]. Vol. 2., 1958. *Politiceskoy Literaturi*. Moscow. Pp. 724–726. [in Russian]
Документы внешней политики СССР [USSR Foreign Policy Documents]. Vol. 3., 1959. *Politiceskoy Literaturi*. Moscow. pp. 392–397, 597–604. [in Russian]

the beginning of the negotiation process which resulted in an agreement between the two countries. In April 1963, the Jupiter missiles were completely removed from Turkey. This process damaged Turkey's trust in the USA. The opinion that following a one-way foreign policy would be harmful for Turkey and that it was necessary to establish close relations with countries other than the USA were formed. The idea emerged that it is necessary to establish close relations with countries other than the USA. During the 1960s, there was a transition period to versatility in Turkish foreign policy. During the 1960s, there was a transition to versatility in Turkish foreign policy (Oran, 2013). Luckily, the clash of ideas between the USA and the Soviet Union didn't stop them arriving at a peaceful solution through diplomacy (Weaver, 2014).

Kennedy managed to make the USSR withdraw the missiles in Cuba and to deploy American forces there through well-executed diplomacy, making compromises behind the scenes to withdraw the American missiles in Turkey, and being sensitive towards the political demands of Khrushchev. Kennedy then went on to promote the relationship between the two countries (Larson, 2018).

As an extension of this process, reciprocal high-level visits were held between Turkey and the USSR from 1965 until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979⁵⁰³, and two important agreements, namely Declaration on the Principles of Good Neighbourly Relations (1972) and Political Document on Good Neighbourly and Friendly Relations (1978), were signed. With the aid the USSR provided, the cooperative relations were enhanced (Oran, 2013).

Between 1980 and 1983, the bilateral relations were stable. Mainly due to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the military coup in Turkey. In this process, the economic relations improved, which manifested itself in the political field too (Oran, 2013).

The relations gained the energy dimension with the Natural Gas Agreement dated 1984. When it comes to the perceptions of these countries for each other during the Cold War, Turkey was NATO's southern flank country for the Soviets and the

⁵⁰³ “Н. В. Подгорный в Турции”, Коммунист, 13 апреля 1972 г.

Soviet Union was the red menace for Turkey.

During the office of Özal (1983–1991), the international environment in which Turkey-USSR relations progressed was the Cold War system. In general sense, the main feature of the Cold War system covering the period from 1945 to 1991 was a struggle between the Western and Eastern blocs which had ideological, political, military and economic dimensions. During the Cold War, the struggle between the blocs was sometimes harsh and sometimes soft, but it was always multidimensional. In this context, the relations between Turkey and the USSR, in general, were also significantly influenced by the multidimensional struggle between the blocs and its course. The main reason was that Turkey was a member of the Western Bloc while the USSR was the leader of the Eastern Bloc. For this reason, when the conflict between the Western and Eastern Blocs softened, the Turkey-USSR relations were positively influenced, yet when the conflict between the blocs hardened, their relations was negatively influenced. Indeed, this situation revealed itself on the course of the relations between Turkey and the USSR during Özal's presidency. In general, a softening was observed between the Western and Eastern during Özal period, except for the first year of his presidency.

This softening and even the cooperation process gained momentum when Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR. Gorbachev's attempts to reform the Soviet system in a relatively liberal line and his foreign policy approaches initiated the process of transforming relations with the Western bloc from competition to cooperation. The perestroika and glasnost policies that Gorbachev implemented primarily affected the relations of the USSR with the USA, and détente was observed in Reagan's anti-Soviet policies. This naturally reflected on the relations between the USSR and Turkey.

This created favourable conditions in the international system allowing the development of the USSR-Turkey relations towards cooperation and multidimensional affairs during the office of Özal.

Furthermore, Turgut Özal's political approach was to implement a more liberal system at home and his foreign policy was based on developing cooperation

and multi-dimensional relations (Abramowitz, 2013). In particular, the presence of elements including cooperation, developing economic relations, and pragmatism in Turkish foreign policy was another important component created a suitable environment for the advancement of relations with the USSR.

In summary, the international system at the time of Özal's presidency, the dynamics of the mutual relations, both countries' internal dynamics and their implications on their foreign policy made it essential that multi-dimensional relationships be developed and cooperation be ensured between Turkey and the USSR.

In this regard, the present article evaluates the relations between Turkey and the USSR during Özal's office through the theoretical and practical dimensions being based on the liberal theory approach in the international relations realm.

Liberal Theory and Inter-State Relations

In ideological sense, liberalism is the most enduring and influential philosophical tradition brought up by the European Enlightenment (Burchill, 2005). Although the pioneer of the ideological liberalism movement was John Locke in the political sense, David Hume, Adam Smith, Montesquieu, Voltaire and Kant later played an important role in the development of this movement (Moravcsik, 1992). Liberalism, as a political philosophy, sought to explain the transforming individual-state relationship in the 17th and 18th centuries through the principle of rationalism (Yanik, 2015). Liberalism believes that politics will seek to maximize human well-being because rationality will prioritize human welfare and defend human freedoms with the perception of minimal state. Liberalism, which mainly aims to shape the characteristics of the society at the national level, tries the regulations at the national level to be reflected on the international level and pointed out that the order established in this direction can determine the foreign policy of the states. As it will be discussed below, this "internal to external" perspective, that is, the understanding that the principles inside can determine the external policies of a state outside marked the first half of the 20th century and it created an opportunity for the advocates of the realism

who supports the “external to internal” claims that the international system determines the foreign policy behaviour of the states to criticize the liberals. Basically, ideological liberalism indirectly contributed to the formation of liberal theory in international relations with its philosophical views on human nature, the qualities and purposes of the state, and the provision of security and welfare (Meiser, 2018).

Liberalism essentially formed a theoretical approach in international relations in the 20th century thanks to the contributions of such intellectuals as Norman Angell, Woodrow Wilson, David Mitrany, Ernst Haas, Karl Deutsch, Michael Doyle, Stanley Hoffmann, Joseph S. Nye, Jr. Robert O. Keohane, Richard Rosecrance, and Francis Fukuyama.⁵⁰⁴

In this context, the general perspective of the liberal theory on international relations can be summarized as follows.⁵⁰⁵ Firstly, liberal theory does not view international relations as a power struggle. The theory suggests that there are shared interests in inter-state relations, and these interests may have military and political aspects, as well as their economic, cultural and environmental dimensions. Liberals use factors such as economy, culture and environment as well as military power in the explanation of the international structure. Second, liberals argue that international order and peace can be achieved through cooperation, and in this sense, they attach special importance to cooperation both in international area and in mutual relations between states. Indeed, liberals believe in the innate goodness of humanity for cooperation and peace in the international system. Third, liberal theory argues that besides states, international organizations and non-state actors are also important factors in international relations. Thus, liberals care about the role of such structures and their instruments among the foreign policy instruments of states. Fourth, liberals

⁵⁰⁴ For detailed information, please see: Griffiths, M. 2009. *Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge. pp. 65–122.; Yanık, L.K. 2015. Liberalizm: Bir Yazın Değerlendirmesi [Liberalism: A Review of the Literature]. *International Relations*, 12(46), pp. 37–45. [in Turkish]

⁵⁰⁵ For detailed information, please see: Viotti, P.R. and Kauppi, M. V. 2011. *International Relations Theory*. 5th ed. Pearson. pp. 129–188; Burchill, S. 2005. Liberalism. In: S. Burchill and A. Linklater, eds. *Theories of International Relations*, 3rd ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 55–83; Matthews, E.G. and Callaway, R. L. 2019. *International Relations Theory: A Primer*. 2nd ed. pp. 81–132; Reus-Smit, C. and Snidal, D. eds. 2008. *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 201–266; Moravcsik, A. 1992. *Liberalism and international relations theory*. [online] Center for International Affairs, Harvard University. Available at: <https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/liberalism_working.pdf>.

attach serious importance to economic relations and trade in foreign policy. On one hand, trade increases the cost of war and conflict as humanity becomes interdependent, on the other hand, it facilitates the emergence of international cooperation for the provision of peace, prosperity and justice. Liberal theory argues that international peace can be achieved not only by deterrence, intervention, hegemony or regional power, but also by economic integration leading to political integration. In this context, the liberal worldview claims that the economy and economic integration are determinants of permanent peace in the international system. At this point, liberal theory specifically emphasizes the understanding of “interdependence” in inter-state relations, which have financial, commercial, economic and cultural dimensions. Fifth, liberals assert that diplomacy in international relations is essential for peacefully resolving problems, controlling conflicts and ensuring common prosperity.

In summary, one of the concepts that liberalism taking its philosophical and political roots from the Enlightenment period puts attention in international relations is cooperation, and one of its most important aims is to ensure international cooperation. In this context, liberal thinkers draw attention to not only political and military but also economic, commercial, social and technological dimensions in inter-state relations. The assumption that these dimensions bring the understanding of “interdependence” in inter-state relations into open is one of the issues emphasized by liberals. In short, the liberal approach lays emphasis on the importance of diplomacy in achieving international cooperation.

In the light of what has been discussed above, liberal theory in international relations is, in several aspects, an important theoretical framework for explaining Turkey-USSR relations during the Turgut Özal period. First of all, the mentioned relations took place during the Cold War, during which the power struggle was the main element in the international system. Nevertheless, in Turgut Özal's period, economic, cultural and similar factors, as well as military power, held an important place in Turkey-USSR relations in accordance with the approach advocated by liberal theory. Second of all, despite the competitive landscape of the Cold War, special attention was paid to cooperation in bilateral relations between Turkey and the USSR,

in line with the thesis defended by liberal theory during the Turgut Özal period. Third, in this period, it was observed that the role of non-state structures and companies in foreign policy increased in Turkey-USSR relations, albeit partially, in line with the approach advocated by liberal theory. Fourth, in the period of Turgut Özal, in accordance with the thesis defended by liberal theory, it was seen in Turkey-USSR relations that the importance of economic relations and trade increased in the foreign policy of both Turkey and the USSR, and a partial interdependence began to develop in some issues. Lastly, it was also observed in this period that both Turkish and Soviet authorities mostly preferred diplomacy and negotiation in their mutual relations and talks, as stated in liberal theory. In the following parts of the article, these issues are presented in detail by giving examples.

The Nature of Turkey-USSR Relations before Özal Government Came to Power

It is understood that the softening efforts whose presence started to be felt in international relations in the late 1970s worldwide were abandoned and apathy began to prevail in international relations. With the military intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, international law rules were clearly violated (Reuveny & Prakash, 1999). It is observed that the participation of the Soviet Union and the United States in an arms race in this process generally negatively affected international relations. This naturally influenced the mutual relations of Turkey and the Soviet Union (Qasımlı, 2012, pp. 9–13). The Soviet Union has achieved a great improvement especially in the powers deployed in the Balkans and the Caucasus and in the naval power in the Eastern Mediterranean which was also dependent on the general developments. The USSR, which acquired bases in different countries, began to stand out in the world's seas with aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines. Thanks to its anti-colonialist rhetoric, the USSR getting rid of its loneliness in the 1950s became in close cooperation with especially the Non-Aligned countries in several fields (Roy, 1988, pp. 79–80).

The USA encountered much greater resistance than expected in Vietnam.

Communists in the region were only able to withstand the widespread military intervention of the Americans thanks to the constant flow of aid from the Soviet Union (McNeill, 1998, pp. 531–532). On the other hand, when the USA was forced to devalue the dollar in 1971, the Bretton Woods System considered an indicator of American world domination collapsed. This development significantly adversely affected the US economy, which had been under the corrosive competition of the German and Japanese economies for a while and of which growth rate approached to zero (Sönmezoğlu, 2006, p. 205).

Political and military developments in Jimmy Carter’s time further weakened the US position in the world. Although Carter tried to use a US policy based on respect for human rights to drive the USSR into corner, his approach did not result as he hoped. In this context, when Carter withdrew his previous support from the allies who committed serious human rights violations, some of these regimes were overthrown and the relevant countries left the US area of influence. The overthrow of the Shah administration in Iran by the Islamic opposition led by Khomeini is an example to these regimens (Sönmezoğlu, 2006, p. 206).

Considering the general situation at this period, just as how America had been stuck in a complete swamp in Vietnam from 1965 to 1975 and escaped with great difficulty from there, so did the Soviets from December 1979 to April 1988, that is nearly nine years of adventure, they sank into the swamp of Afghanistan. During this war, America tried to avenge Vietnam upon the Soviets (Armaoğlu, 2005, pp. 895–897).

When it came to Turkey, the Parliament and the Government were repealed by the September 12 military coup and the Armed Forces under the leadership of Kenan Evren came in power.⁵⁰⁶

At that time, there were different perspectives in Turkey towards the Soviets. For example, in an interview he gave to Newsweek, Turkey’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations Coşkun Kırca said, “The danger of interference in internal affairs of Turkey comes from the Soviet Union”. However, Turkish

⁵⁰⁶ Silahlı Kuvvetler Yönetime el koydu [Armed Forces seized power], 1980. *Cumhuriyet*, 12 Sep. [in Turkish]

political commentator Ali Sirmen had a different view. Sirmen argued that the Soviet Union did not have such an intention. Of course, Sirmen was telling his opinions while Kirca expressed the views of the government (Qasımlı, 2012, pp. 137–138).

Period of Turgut Özal's Prime Ministry: General Characteristics

The period when Turgut Özal was in power as Prime Minister witnessed an unusually quick change of leaders in the Soviet Union. The Soviets then passed through a softening and disintegration process. Nevertheless, Turkish economy became much stronger and Turkey developed a more active foreign policy during that time. From a point of view, it can be said that it was a period of convergence in different processes for these two states. That is to say that in the period we analysed, Turkey progressed from considerable uncertainty (the military coup environment) towards a certain direction, whereas the Soviets started to turn from a certain line to uncertainty (from strong state to disintegration).

On November 6, 1983 the Motherland Party led by Turgut Özal won the elections in Turkey.⁵⁰⁷ The same days were a period of rapid change in the USSR. After the death of Soviet leader Leonid Brejnev who was in power for many years, Yuri Andropov took office on November 12, 1982 as the new secretary general of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union.⁵⁰⁸ Upon Andropov's death on February 9, 1984, Konstantin Chernenko, who also had health problems, took office in the USSR.⁵⁰⁹ After Chernenko's leadership lasted from 13 February 1984 to 10 March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev came in power.

During this period, there were several issues that would affect the relations between the two countries and the occupation of Cyprus and Afghanistan by the Soviets was particularly important.

When Andropov came to power, Turkey and NATO had some expectations

⁵⁰⁷ Resmi Gazete [Official Gazette], Issue: 18221, 14.11.1983 Available at: <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/18221_1.pdf>. [Accessed: 13.04.2020]. [in Turkish]

⁵⁰⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/11/12/nyregion/news-summary-friday-november-12-1982.html>, [Accessed: 25.12.2019].

⁵⁰⁹ Cooke, A. 1984. Chernenko is Soviet leader. *BBC Radio 4*. [online] 19 Feb. Available at: <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b043xcbv>>. [Accessed: 10.12.2019].

from the Soviet Union. One of these was the softening of the Soviet policy towards Afghanistan.⁵¹⁰ About Cyprus, however, the Soviets and Turkey had very different views. The Soviet Union, however, was in very opposing views with Turkey on the Cyprus issue. Due to Andropov's background as the chairperson of KGB, expectations for Andropov's foreign policy in general were different. According to the opinion of the Turkish press, after Andropov came to power, the foreign policy of the Soviets would harden. In his article published in the newspaper called *Türkiye*, Mustafa Necati Ahmetoğlu wrote, “No matter who takes over the power in Russia, their aims would not change. The communist regime have not given up the imperialist policy of Tsarist Russia, on the contrary, it has fallen a firm heir to that policy... Russia’s goals are clear: to dominate the world by either spreading communism all over the world or conquering countries from within with the cold war or invading territories as the Red Army did in Afghanistan” (Qasımlı, 2012, p. 212).

Both during the period of rapid changes in power until Mikhail Gorbachev's presidency and after Gorbachev took the office, Turkey sought to make further progress in mutual relations with the USSR. It is possible to observe this that effort not only in economic and cultural relations, which had traditionally been noted for their positive aspects, but also in political, security and other relations.

In fact, Turkish foreign policy of the Turgut Özal period resembles the Soviet foreign policy of the Gorbachev period in general, and this resemblance was significantly reflected in mutual relations. Both leaders adopted liberal economy, tried to pursue rational active foreign policy, and both paid attention to the creation of a peaceful environment in the international arena. Nevertheless, it bears repeating that at the beginning of the prime ministry of Turgut Özal, Turkey could not find exactly what they expected from the Soviet Union. One of the most important reasons for this was the difference in the way countries viewed each other. During this period, the USSR was a great and powerful neighbour for Turkey, whereas

⁵¹⁰ Sovyetlerin Afganistan Politikasında Yumuşama Bekleniyor [Softening expected in the Soviets' Afghanistan policy], 1982. *Milliyet*, 15 Nov. [in Turkish]

Turkey was considered as the exterior guide of the greatest enemy (i.e. USA) far away as well as a country with which the USSR had historical issues, including territorial claims.

In general, the cold war environment, the U-2 crisis, the events that emerged during the Cuban crisis, and especially the fact that the USSR was seen as an important pillar of the containment policy of the United States against the Soviets after 1979 (an important NATO ally both in the Middle East and against the USSR, as required by the Carter Doctrine, and also an important part of the “green belt”) pushed the USSR to pursue cautious policies. Due to these and other reasons, the Soviet Union and even the United States generally acted with higher deliberation in relations with Turkey even while taking steps to soften their relations with the West, China, Japan and others (for example, Gorbachev did not meet Turgut Özal when Özal visited the USSR).

Turgut Özal’s accession to power and the first steps

In the First Özal Government Program, which was read by Turgut Özal on 19 December 1983, the following were very briefly noted about the relations with the USSR, possibly due to the complex conditions mentioned above: “...we wish to maintain stable relations with our northern neighbor the Soviet Union, with mutual respect for rights and a constructive understanding of cooperation”.⁵¹¹

During this period, the Soviet Union realized that as they increased their aid for left-wing organizations in Turkey, the Western states were becoming closer with Ankara Government and increased their aids to Turkey. The Turkish government was tightening measures against the leftist organizations in the country which was not matching with the interests of the Soviets. For this reason, the USSR leadership needed to affiliate with Turkey. In this way, the Soviets aimed to exercise influence over Turkey, undermine the influence of the West on this country and even weaken the Turkish society from inside (Qasımlı, 2012, p. 271–273).

Within the framework of the preparations conducted prior to the Özal

⁵¹¹ I. Özal Hükümet Programı [1st Government Program of Özal], <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/TBMM/d17/c001/tbmm17001010.pdf>. [in Turkish]

government's accession to power, the "Protocol on the Joint Control of the Turkish — Soviet State Border Line in Rivers, Watercourses and Streams" was signed in Ankara on December 20, 1983. The Protocol was approved by the Council of Ministers' decision numbered 84/7564 dated January 3, 1984 and entered into force on January 18, 1984 when published in the Official Gazette.⁵¹² Although it seems like a very ordinary protocol, such a document signed between a NATO member state and the contiguous USSR was meaningful in terms of preventing the emergence of problems (crises) in bilateral relations.

As soon as Özal government was established, one of the first steps taken was to take action towards deepening economic relations with the Soviet Union. In line with this aim, Ekrem Pakdemirli, the Undersecretary for Treasury and Foreign Trade of the Prime Ministry, paid a visit to Moscow on January 20–27, 1984 with 60 businesspersons. During the visit, the parties signed an agreement on January 26, 1984 allowing the payment of principal and interest instalments of the facility credits provided by the USSR for the establishment of some industrial facilities in Turkey with goods.⁵¹³

Furthermore, a Russian delegation under the presidency of G. N. Sergeyev, the Deputy Minister for Iron and Steel Industry visited Turkey and made on-site examinations at İskenderun Iron — Steel Plant on February 1–10, 1984.

During this period, the USSR-Turkey relations stayed away from possible tension on a different issue. The Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR G. Kornienko visited Ankara on March 12–13, 1984 and had a private meeting with Kenan Evren, the President of Turkey. It was argued that the visit, which was not planned in advance and took place abruptly, was about NATO missiles (Cruise and Pershing missiles) claimed to be deployed in Turkey. Later, at a press conference on March 15, 1984, Ambassador Nazmi Akıman responded the questions he received saying that if they would receive an offer regarding the deployment of nuclear missiles in

⁵¹² Resmi Gazete [Official Gazette], Issue: 18285, 18.01.1984. Available at: <<https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/18285.pdf>>. [Accessed: 10.12.2019]. [in Turkish]

⁵¹³ Council of Ministers' Decision no 84/7754 dated 22.02.1984, Resmi Gazete [Official Gazette], Issue: 18333, 18.03.1984. Available at: <<https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/18333.pdf>>. [Accessed: 10.12.2019]. [in Turkish]

Turkey, they would not accept it.⁵¹⁴

The 7th Term Meeting of the Joint Commission for Turkish-Soviet Economic Cooperation which was one of the most important structures for mutual relations was held on June 24 — July 4, 1984 in Ankara.

Undoubtedly, one of the most important developments in Turkey-SSCB affairs was the “Agreement on Delivery of Natural Gas from the Soviet Socialist Republics to Turkey” signed between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on September 18, 1984.⁵¹⁵ The agreement was signed at the end of the Turkish-Soviet trade negotiations held in Ankara on September 15–19, 1984. The Agreement, which entered into force after being published in the Official Gazette dated December 7, 1984, was envisaged to remain in effect for 25 years from the commencement date of natural gas shipment.⁵¹⁶

Turkey was giving special attention to further development of relations in economic and cultural fields with its northern neighbour. In this way, Ankara was heading towards a multilateral, multi-planned foreign policy. Cooperation did not mean that the parties would leave the military and political blocs to which they belong. The natural gas purchase agreement was signed between the USSR and Turkey in such an environment (Qasımlı, 2012, p. 271–273).

As per the agreement, Soyuzgazexport, the All-Union Foreign Trade Organization, was assigned to determine the details and price of the natural gas delivery and make a commercial contract. Relevant studies in Turkey were carried out by BOTAŞ and consumption potential and pipeline route were determined with the Natural Gas Study commissioned in 1985. With this study, especially North West Anatolia was chosen as a favourable region (Hodaloğulları & Aydın, 2016, p. 746).

One of the most important indicators of Turkey’s view about the relations with

⁵¹⁴ Cruïse ve Pershing füzeleri [Cruise and Pershing missiles], 1985. *Cumhuriyet*, 12 Mar. [in Turkish]

⁵¹⁵ Sovyetler Doğal Gaz Vermeyi Kabul etti [The Soviets concur to give natural gas], 1984. *Milliyet*, 23 Feb. [in Turkish]

⁵¹⁶ Council of Ministers’ Decision no 84/8806 dated 22.11.1984, Resmi Gazete [Official Gazette], Issue: 18598, 07.12.1984. Available at: <<https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/18598.pdf>>. [in Turkish]

the USSR was the speeches the foreign ministers of Turkey gave at the parliament (in both the Committee on Planning and Budget of the Grand National Assembly (TBMM) of Turkey and the General Assembly). As emphasized in these speeches, the USSR was seen not only a party of mutual relations in Turkish foreign policy, but also a determining factor of Turkey's overall security environment and of relations with some other countries (particularly with the Eastern European countries). For example, in the speech he made on November 10, 1984 on the occasion of the negotiation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1985 Fiscal Year Budget Draft at the Committee on Planning and Budget of TBMM, Vahit Halefoğlu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated that they welcomed some promising signs of relieving the tension in East-West relations which had been going on since the early 1980s, that especially the hope that the negotiations on the control of nuclear weapons start between the US and the USSR without preconditions and that the new softening period would bring negotiations and a compromise mentality for the allies of the two great states in Europe instead of conflict and tension. Also it was highlighted that Turkey attached great importance to maintain the stable affairs with the Soviet Union based on good neighbourly relations, mutual trust and equality of rights.

In the interview published in *Milliyet* newspaper dated November 24, 1984, the Foreign Minister Vahit Halefoğlu made positive statements about the attitude of the USSR towards armament in the Aegean, and also stated that they were making progress in relations with the USSR despite the USA from time to time.⁵¹⁷

In the speech he made on December 16, 1984 on the occasion of the negotiation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1985 Fiscal Year Budget Draft at the TBMM General Assembly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Vahit Halefoğlu particularly emphasized that they had a high opinion of the decision to re-establish the dialogue between the USA and the USSR and to deal with the issues related to arms control with a new understanding, and give importance the Shultz-Gromyko meeting, which was expected to take place in January 1985. He also stated that they

⁵¹⁷ Ne olacak şimdi [What now?], 1984. *Milliyet*, 24 Nov. [in Turkish]

consider positive the continuation of stable good neighbourly relations with the Soviet Union and the development of relations with Eastern European countries in this context (for example, the Kemerköy Thermal Power Plant project, which was decided to be built with Turkish-Polish cooperation).

One of the most important points in the relations was the two-day official visit of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers N. A. Tikhonov to Turkey on the invitation of Turgut Özal, the Prime Minister of Turkey.⁵¹⁸ During his visit, Tikhonov was accompanied by the Chairman of the State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations of the Soviet Union Sergueychik, Vice Minister of Foreign Trade Komarov, and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Rıjov as well as a large delegation. Turkey's Foreign Ministry announced the visit with the title, "the first official visit at this level for the last 9 years".⁵¹⁹

Turgut Özal and Tikhonov made statement at the welcoming ceremony of Tikhonov at Ankara Esenboğa Airport on December 25, 1984, emphasizing the different dimensions of the mutual relations. Özal emphasized the economic dimension of the relations saying, "Turkey attaches great importance to the existing good neighbourly relations and friendly cooperation with the northern neighbour the Soviet Union and wishes for the stable development of these relations based on reciprocity. Since our government came to power, it has been determined to improve our commercial relations and economic cooperation with the Soviet Union within the framework of mutual benefit. Tikhonov said, "the Soviet Union, desires good relations with the Republic of Turkey and wants to consolidate the foundations of these relations which were laid by Vladimir Lenin and Kemal Atatürk" manifesting that opposition to imperialism (not being in line with the West) in the USSR-Turkey relations in the 20th century were considered more reasonable.⁵²⁰

During the visit, the parties signed the 10-year "Long Term Program for the

⁵¹⁸ Ruslarla 7 Konu Pazarlık Masasında [7 topics at the negotiation table with the Russians], 1984. *Milliyet*, 24 Dec. [in Turkish]

⁵¹⁹ Dışişleri Bakanlığı 1984 Tarihçesi [1984 Bulletin of Ministry of Foreign Affairs], February 1985. *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs Executive Secretariat*. p. 25. [in Turkish]

⁵²⁰ Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belleteni [Bulletin of Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs], October 1985. *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. p. 120. [in Turkish]

Development of Economic, Commercial, Scientific and Technical Cooperation”, “Agreement on the Exchange of Goods” covering the period of 1986–1990, and “Cultural and Scientific Exchange Program”.⁵²¹ Besides the meetings between the delegations during the visit, Tikhonov was welcomed by President Kenan Evren and also Özal gave a dinner in honour of his guest. During conversations at dinner, the issues were assessed more in detail (for instance, Özal touched on almost all foreign policy priorities of Turkey), yet it was observed that the line at the reception at the airport was preserved considerably.⁵²² During the conversations here, Özal expressed that the agreement between the USSR and the USA in the field of arms control and disarmament would lead to positive changes in the relations between the East and the West, contribute to the increase of trust in Europe, and that Turkey gave importance to the development of Turkish-Soviet relations in an environment of peace, trust and cooperation. Tikhonov reemphasized that the cooperation between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Turkey were based on the oldest traditions and the foundations of this cooperation were laid “in the period when the Turkish people fought an anti-imperialist war for the sake of their national independence and the Russian labourers were fighting to consolidate the world’s first young socialist state, which was born as a result of the revolution.” Tikhonov also added that the Friendship and Brotherhood Treaty signed in 1921 “entered the history of the two states as an unforgettable event” and that the Soviet Union always tried to develop its relations with Turkey following the traditions that “Vladimir Lenin and Kemal Atatürk founded.”⁵²³

In general, Tikhonov talked about the USSR’s intention to improve relations with Turkey.⁵²⁴ Stating that the period of recession in the relations between the two countries was over, Özal mentioned the importance of the agreement on the transportation of natural gas and expressed his hope that the trade volume would

⁵²¹ Sovyetlerle üç anlaşma [Three agreements with the Soviets], 1984. *Cumhuriyet*, 27 Dec. [in Turkish]

⁵²² Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belleteni [Bulletin of Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs], October 1985. *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. pp. 120-127. [in Turkish]

⁵²³ Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belleteni [Bulletin of Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs], October 1985. *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. pp. 43–44. [in Turkish]

⁵²⁴ С официальным визитом [On an official visit], 1984. *Известия*, 27 Dec. [in Russian]

reach 6 billion dollars between 1986 and 1990. Moreover, he complained of the anti-Turkish policy exacerbated in the Armenian SSR and the unfounded territorial claims against Turkey. The Turkish government expressed their discomfort with the strengthening of the Armenian terrorist acts and their doubts that the USSR might be behind these acts. Tikhonov, on the other hand, stated that the official policy of the USSR had nothing to do with the propaganda pursued in the Armenian SSR (Qasımlı, 2012, p. 280–281).

In the meanwhile, the second term meeting of the joint control commission, which controls the crossing of the Turkish-Soviet state borderline in rivers, was held in Ankara on December 14, 1984 — January 8, 1985. At the meeting, the determinations made by the technicians of both parties on their own beaches in 1984 were evaluated, and a Protocol was signed to regulate the further studies, and the relevant Instructions and Joint Control Commission 1985 Working Plan were accepted. Since the rivers constitute half of the 630 km long Turkish-Soviet border, joint studies on this issue were considered important by the authorities of both countries.

The Turkish authorities continued to emphasize the importance of the softening of relations between the blocs and their belief in the potential favourable consequences it would bring on every occasion, even at meetings with the officials of third countries. For example, in a statement he made on February 19, 1985 assessing the British Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe's visit to Turkey, the Turkish Foreign Minister Vahit Halefoğlu specifically highlighted Turkey's expectations regarding the disarmament talks, which would begin between the US and the Soviet Union in Geneva in March besides their thoughts on the UK-Turkey relations.

New Era and New Circumstances in the USSR

The death of USSR leader Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko on March 10, 1985 was the beginning of a new era not only in terms of Soviet domestic policy but also in terms of global politics and inter-bloc struggle (Caxapob, 2016, p. 724). On March 12–13, 1985, the Turkish presidential delegation under the presidency of

Prime Minister Turgut Özal went to Moscow to attend Chernenko's funeral ceremony.⁵²⁵ Both Turkish and Soviet press shared news on the event⁵²⁶.

Being determined to rejuvenate the Soviet Union from top to bottom, a new political cadre under the presidency of M. S. Gorbachev came to power under the circumstances of administrative conflicts ongoing behind the scenes (Грачев, 2001). The perestroika and glasnost years led to positive developments in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. It was understood in the international arena that it was only possible to ensure the security of your own country if the security of other countries and states was taken into consideration (Орлов, Георгиев, Георгиева, & Сивохина 2013, p. 460). The ongoing reformations and severe economic situation in the country affected the foreign policy of the USSR seriously. In 1987, the concept of foreign policy, which was called "new political thought", came in useful. This concept accepted that the two systems should stop opposition, the idea that the world is integrated and indivisible, humanitarian values precede class and ideological values in foreign policy relations (Согрин, 2001). Although Gorbachev looked askance at relations with Turkey under these circumstances, he always kept it in view.

Between May 21, 1985 and May 29, 1985, a Turkish Parliamentary Delegation paid an official visit to the Soviet Union under the presidency of chairperson of TBMM (Great National Assembly of Turkey), Necmettin Karaduman. During the visit, the Turkish delegation made contacts in Leningrad and Uzbekistan, and held talks with supreme Soviet members under the presidency of Tolkunov and Voss, the presidents of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities, and with Kuznetsov, the First Vice Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, in the Kremlin. In the statement Karaduman made upon his return to Turkey, he stated that they came back from the Soviet Union with positive

⁵²⁵ “Траурный митинг на Красной площади”, “Встреча глав иностранных делегаций с советскими руководителями”, ИЗВЕСТИЯ, 14 МАРТА 1985 г., Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi [Republic Archives of the Prime Ministry], Document no: 30-18-1-2_527-334-2. [in Turkish]

⁵²⁶ "Известия", 14 марта 1985г. (стр.5) — Старые газеты, <https://www.oldgazette.ru/izvestie/14031985/text5.html>, Date accessed: 07.06.2021

impressions and put emphasis on the opportunities to improve their neighbourhood and cooperation relations during their contacts, and that the visit to the Soviet Union enabled the parliaments of both countries to re-establish a dialogue after a while.⁵²⁷ Although most experts had favourable opinions about this visit, it was also stated that the sincerity existing in mutual relations a few years ago started to weaken with Gorbachev.

A Soviet military cargo vessel called "Khasan" and a Turkish assault boat called "Meltem" collided in Istanbul Strait on September 24, 1985, and five Turkish marines died as a result, which caused huge public resentment. Allegedly, the Soviet military cargo vessel did not stop despite warnings and hit the Turkish assault boat. During the negotiations, the USSR side did not acknowledge its legal responsibility in the incident, but with the statement made after long discussions on February 9, 1988, the USSR provided a total of 250 thousand USD through the USSR Red Cross and the Turkish Red Crescent Societies to the families of the marines who lost their lives by "taking humanitarian considerations into account". The Turkish side thought it was a positive development.

Undoubtedly, one of the most important steps in bilateral relations during the Özal's rule was Özal's comprehensive visit to the USSR that started on July 28, 1986.⁵²⁸ The main purpose of the visit was to regulate the Turkish-Soviet relations, which had gone through ups and downs recently, and to establish an atmosphere of mutual trust.⁵²⁹ During the talks, important issues such as the Cyprus problem and the pressure exerted by Bulgaria on the Muslim-Turkish minority would be discussed, while both sides would evaluate what could be done to "strengthen" and "develop" good neighbourly relations.⁵³⁰ This meeting would also reveal first clues about what Gorbachev, who gave a new impulse to Soviet foreign policy, thought

⁵²⁷ Dışişleri Bakanlığı Belleteni [Bulletin of Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs], October 1985. *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. pp. 27–28. [in Turkish]

⁵²⁸ Советско-турецкие переговоры [Soviet-Turkish negotiations], 1986. *Известия*, 27 Jul. [in Russian]

⁵²⁹ Resmi Gazete [Official Gazette], Issue: 19344, 17.01.1987 Available at: <<https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/19344.pdf>>. [Accessed: 13.04.2020]. [in Turkish]

⁵³⁰ Özal Moskova'da [Özal in Moscow], 1986. *Milliyet*, 27 Jul. [in Turkish]

of Turkey.⁵³¹

Labelling this visit as "the most important political visit in recent years", Sedat Ergin, a columnist at Cumhuriyet newspaper, commented that "The "pragmatic" approach of Prime Minister Turgut Özal and the "aggressive" and "innovative" style of Gorbachev's leadership, which opened a new era in the Soviet Union, face each other in the Kremlin".⁵³²

However, the visit started in uncertainty and apathy.⁵³³ The leader of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev, did not give an appointment to Özal, which caused serious unrest in the Turkish delegation. It was realized that Gorbachev would not even be in the capital during Özal's Moscow visit, and the possibility that the meeting would take place was largely eliminated. However, about 8 years ago, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit had paid a visit to the Soviet Union and Leonid Brezhnev accepted him.⁵³⁴

Being left out in the cold when Gorbachev did not give an appointment to meet in person, which was his tradition, Prime Minister Özal met with the President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Gromyko, and Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov while Minister of Foreign Affairs Halefoğlu met his Soviet counterpart Shevardnadze.⁵³⁵ It turned out that the agenda was mainly about economy during the negotiations.⁵³⁶ Sedat Ergin wrote in Cumhuriyet that Prime Minister Özal "did not see any political malice" in Gorbachev's attitude. It was also reflected in the press that Özal said to journalists, "If you wish, you can ask them why as well".⁵³⁷

The negotiations were centred upon 4 main topics.

1. "The Aegean dispute: If Greece increases its territorial waters to 12 miles, nobody can reach the Mediterranean without entering Greek territorial waters.

⁵³¹ Başbakan'ın Moskova ziyareti bugün Başlıyor [Prime Minister's visit to Moscow begins today], 1986. *Cumhuriyet*, 28 Jul. [in Turkish]

⁵³² Özal Gorbachev randevusu [Özal Gorbachev meeting], 1986. *Cumhuriyet*, 29 Jul. [in Turkish]

⁵³³ Başbakan Özal Moskova'da resmi görüşmelere başladı [Prime Minister Özal began official talks in Moscow], 1986. *Milliyet*, 28 Jul. [in Turkish]

⁵³⁴ Özal Moskova'da [Özal in Moscow], 1986. *Cumhuriyet*, 29 Jul. [in Turkish]

⁵³⁵ Советско-турецкие переговоры [Soviet-Turkish negotiations], 1986. *Известия*, 27 Jul. [in Russian]

⁵³⁶ Moskova'da hava ikinci turda yumuşadı [The air is cleared in the second round in Moscow], 1986. *Cumhuriyet*, 31 Jul. [in Turkish]

⁵³⁷ Siyasi ilişkilerde rahatsızlık sürüyor [Conflict in political relations continues], 1986. *Cumhuriyet*, 30 Jul. [in Turkish]

2. The FIR (Flight Information Region) problem: The Soviets agreed to sit at the negotiation table about the FIR. Joint research will be conducted on shield.
3. Turkish shipyards: Soviet ships will anchor in Turkish ports and shipyards. Repair works will be held in Turkey's shipyards.
4. Bulgaria: According to high-level officers of the ministry of foreign affairs, the Soviets "went beyond simply listening to Turkish views" on this issue. However, a source close to the Prime Minister said, "It is obvious that they stand by the Bulgarians".⁵³⁸

In fact, although Özal's visit to the Soviet Union revealed some uncertainties in the political field, it heralded an intense period of cooperation in the economic field. As will be discussed in more detail under the economic relations section, a natural gas agreement was signed between Turkey and the USSR after this visit. Turkey would purchase natural gas from the USSR and pay most of the price through exported goods. With the commissioning of the natural gas pipeline, 70 percent of the gas price would be paid through Turkish export products, which opened the door to a huge market. Approximately 80 businesspeople who came with Prime Minister Özal also tested the waters to get a share from this export pie in their meetings. Meanwhile, the "green light" that the Soviet side gave at political level to increase trade encouraged Turkish businesspeople. The Turkish contractors and exporters returned from the Soviet Union in an optimistic mood. Regarding the process, TÜSİAD (Turkish Industry and Business Association) President Sakıp Sabancı stated "Although people are in different systems, the only language they can communicate with is buying and selling. We have a growing market with increasing needs ahead of us".⁵³⁹

Beginning in the atmosphere of uncertainty created when it was understood that the Soviet leader Gorbachev would not accept Prime Minister Turgut Özal, Özal's visit to the Soviet Union ended with the question marks that were raised in minds when Gorbachev gave an appointment for a date when it was impossible to

⁵³⁸ Ağırlık ekonomide [Economy is in focus], 1986. *Cumhuriyet*, 30 Jul. [in Turkish]

⁵³⁹ Sovyetler, ticarete yeşil ışık yaktı, işadamları umutlu [Soviets gave green light to trade, businesspersons are optimistic], 1986. *Cumhuriyet*, 1 Aug. [in Turkish]

carry out the meeting.⁵⁴⁰ Prime Minister Turgut Özal thanked Gorbachev for his proposal, but did not extend his stay in the Soviet Union and returned to Ankara. Regarding the issue, Özal said, "It is not important whether I met with Gorbachev, the important thing was the two talks I had here with Prime Minister Ryzhkov".⁵⁴¹ When asked "How sincere is it to give an appointment for a date after your departure?", Özal replied "I do not want to analyse it. I do not think it was deliberate". Besides, while Özal said that the Soviet side made an appointment upon the news published in the Turkish press, the Soviet officials stated that the request "came from Özal".⁵⁴²

In the press conference held after the visit, the focus was on Gorbachev's appointment, and questions that put Foreign Minister Vahit Halefoğlu in a difficult position were raised at the meeting from time to time.⁵⁴³ When Özal was asked "When did you learn that you could not meet with Gorbachev?", he answered "I learned it after coming here that the meeting would not take place". It also appeared in the news that when asked by a journalist "If you had been notified in advance that there would be no meeting, would you have cancelled your visit?", he replied "I do not think so, I would not have cancelled it".⁵⁴⁴

In fact, the Turkish delegation went to Moscow at the invitation of not Gorbachev but Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov. Nevertheless, Turkey was swift to respond Gorbachev's approach to Özal. Turkish members of parliament pressured the USSR. The issue of Crimean Tatars, who had been exiled by the order of Stalin, was brought to the agenda in TBMM (Qasımlı, 2012, pp. 306–345).

While Turkish representatives were being shot down by Armenian terrorists, the discrimination against the Turks in Bulgaria was becoming violent, and the

⁵⁴⁰ Gorbaçov "Bekle" dedi, Özal kabul etmedi [Gorbachev said "Wait", Özal declined], 1986. *Milliyet*, 1 Aug. [in Turkish]

⁵⁴¹ Birand, M. A. 1986. Gorbaçov "Bekle" dedi, Özal kabul etmedi [Gorbachev said "Wait", Özal declined]. *Milliyet*, 02 Aug. [in Turkish]

⁵⁴² Ergin, S. 1986. Gönülsüz randevuya soğuk teşekkür [Frigid thank to reluctant appointment]. *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Aug. [in Turkish]

⁵⁴³ Dışişleri Bakanı öfkeli, Halefoğlu: İstifa yok [Minister of Foreign Affairs is furious, Halefoğlu: Nobody is resigning], 1986. *Milliyet*, 2 Aug. [in Turkish]

⁵⁴⁴ Ergin, S. 1986. Gönülsüz randevuya soğuk teşekkür [Frigid thank to reluctant appointment]. *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Aug. [in Turkish]

Aegean dispute with Greece was still on the agenda, this stance of the Gorbachev administration, just like during the Stalin era, was aiming to pressure Turkey and leave it in a tight spot, and to attain a strategic position in the Mediterranean. Undoubtedly, the Soviet proposal was not triggered by a desire to solve the Cyprus issue (Qasımlı, 2012, pp. 357–358).

However, both sides wished that the development in relations would continue. In this context, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vahit Halefoğlu, met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Eduard Shevardnadze, and evaluated the bilateral relations in detail when they were both in New York between September 22 and October 6 for the 39th meeting of General Assembly of the United Nations.

Turkey was declared to be an Exclusive Economic Zone in the Black Sea with the Decree of the Council of Ministers published in the Official Gazette on December 17, 1986. In the Decree in question, it was stated that Restrictive Agreements would be made with other countries coastal to the Black Sea in an equitable way. In this framework, as a result of the bilateral contacts with the USSR, an agreement was reached on February 11, 1987. The border that was agreed to delimit the Continental Shelf between Turkey and the USSR in 1978 would also be the border for the Turkish and Soviet Exclusive Economic Zones.

Between May 15–22, 1987, the Co-chairman of Turkey-USSR Joint Economic Commission and the Minister of Finance and Customs, A. K. Alptemoçin, visited the USSR. During his visit, on May 21, the Turkey-USSR Scientific and Technical Cooperation Activity Report for 1987–1988 was signed in Moscow.

The Deputy Prime Minister of the USSR, V. M. Kamentsev, visited Turkey between June 22–24, 1987 to attend the opening ceremony of the Turkey-USSR Natural Gas Pipeline⁵⁴⁵. Taking place between September 2–9, the negotiations for the Consulate Agreement between Turkey and the Soviet Union resulted in success when a working document was signed on September 9 in Ankara, and the 6th term meeting of the Turkish-Soviet Joint Control Commission that was jointly controlling the River Crossing of the Turkish-Soviet State Borderline came to an end when a

⁵⁴⁵ “История поставок советского и российского газа в Европу”, Коммерсантъ, 05.06.2018

protocol was signed on September 11.

As a result of the negotiations held in Moscow between December 21–25, the Air Travel Agreement signed between Turkey and the USSR in 1967 was revised. Thanks to this revision, THY (Turkish Airlines) would be able to fly to the Far East by using the Siberian line after Moscow. This revision was one of the indicators of mutual trust in the aviation field of the two countries. As it may be recalled, the U-2 spy aircraft crisis had been experienced between Turkey and the USSR earlier (in 1960) even though it was due to the USA.

Bilateral relations, regional and international problems were discussed during the talks held on December 9–10, 1987 in Ankara between the Soviet delegation presided by Ambassador Yuri Alekseyev, who was also the Head of Middle East Unit under the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs and responsible for relations with Turkey, and the Turkish delegation presided by Ambassador Nurver Nureş, the Deputy Undersecretary of Bilateral Political Affairs. All of these are indications of the importance both sides attached to relations with each other.

Meanwhile, the Anavatan (Motherland) Party, of which Prime Minister Turgut Özal was the leader, won the parliamentary elections of 29 November 1987 with 292 deputies and obtained the absolute majority in the Parliament.⁵⁴⁶ Özal uttered the following statements about the relations with the Soviet Union in the Program of the 46th Republic Government in TBMM on December 25, 1987: "We aim to develop friendship and good neighbourly relations, and to increase cooperation especially in the economic and commercial fields with our northern neighbour the Soviet Union and other socialist states within the framework of the principles of sovereignty, independence, equality of rights, respect for territorial integrity and non-interference in their internal affairs".⁵⁴⁷

Having started on March 17, Civil Aviation negotiations between the Soviet and Turkish Delegations resulted in success on March 25, 1988, and a Protocol and

⁵⁴⁶ "29 Kasım 1987: ANAP İkinci Kez Tek Başına İktidar Oldu [29 November 1987: ANAP came to power alone for the second time]", <https://www.gzt.com/lugat/29-kasim-1987-anap-ikinci-kez-tek-basina-iktidar-oldu-3466440>, [Accessed: 13.04.2020]. [in Turkish]

⁵⁴⁷ <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/TBMM/d18/c001/tbmm18001003.pdf> [in Turkish]

two accompanying agreements were signed. Thus, the issues related to the Black Sea Airspace that had been going on for 19 years between the two countries were resolved.

In accordance with the Protocol signed on April 8, 1988, the Sarp Border Gate between Turkey and the Soviet Union was opened to road and freight transport on August 31, 1988.

During the visit of the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, Yuli M. Vorontsov, to Turkey between April 26–30, the Consulate Agreement that had not been brought to a conclusion for 20 years was signed. In addition, the possibilities for further development of cooperation with the Soviet Union in various fields were reviewed.

In the meantime, in the statements made by the Turkish authorities, the steps the USSR took to embrace détente in global politics and the decision to leave Afghanistan were evaluated positively. Besides, following the earthquake that caused serious loss of life and property in the Armenian SSR, Turkey declared that they were ready for all kinds of help through governmental agencies on December 8, 1988.

Between December 26–28, 1988, Ambassador Nüzhet Kandemir, the Undersecretary of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, paid a visit to the Soviet Union as a guest of Alexander Bessmertnykh, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, in order to hold political consultation. During his visit, Nüzhet Kandemir also held a meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze and Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Katushev. Shevardnadze thanked Turkey for their support after the earthquake that took place in the Armenian SSR.

On May 20, 1989, Pilot Captain Aleksandr Zuyev landed at Trabzon Airport with a MIG-29 type plane he was piloting and notified Turkish authorities that he would like to defect to the USA, which caused tension in the Turkey-USSR relations again. The USSR requested the return of Pilot Captain Aleksandr Zuyev and the plane. The Soviet Embassy in Ankara presented the documents prepared by the Caucasus Military District Prosecutor's Office in the attachments of two notes dated

June 1 and 2 to Turkey. Ankara 8th Criminal Court of First Instance stated in its decision dated June 6, 1989 and numbered 1989/54 that the crimes attributed to Zuyev were of a political and military nature; and in this respect, the Turkish Penal Code ruled that the perpetrator would not be extradited in the light of the Turkish law and the decisions of the Supreme Court and the international agreements to which Turkey was a party. Therefore, the asylum request of the pilot to the USA was met, but the plane was returned to the USSR.

Between November 29 and December 7, 1989, a delegation presided by the First Deputy Chairman of Council of Ministers of the USSR, Lev Voronin, visited Turkey. The "Final Protocol" was signed in Moscow at the end of the 10th term meeting of the Turkish-Soviet Joint Control Commission that was jointly controlling the River Crossing of the Turkish-Soviet State Borderline that took place between November 29 and December 8.

In the meantime, after Kenan Evren, whose term of office expired, Prime Minister Özal was elected the 8th President of the country with 263 votes in the third round of the voting in TBMM on October 31, 1989.⁵⁴⁸ He took the Presidential oath on November 9, 1989 and came into office.⁵⁴⁹

President Özal and the Dissolution Period of the USSR

As of 1990, irremediable dissolution process gathered momentum for the USSR, and a busier process began in the foreign policy with Turgut Özal becoming president and due to the effects of new global conditions. Among the important issues in this new period in the Turkey-USSR relations was how Turkey would react in the face of the struggle for independence in the Soviet republics and the territorial claims and attacks of the Armenian SSR against the Azerbaijan SSR. In the official statement made on this topic on January 16, 1990, it was stated that the issue was considered as an internal matter of the USSR, but it was followed closely. On January 18, 1990, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, A. Mesut Yılmaz, met

⁵⁴⁸ "31 Ekim 1989: Turgut Özal Türkiye'nin 8.Cumhurbaşkanı Seçildi [31 October 1989: Turgut Özal Elected 8th President of Turkey]", <https://www.gzt.com/lugat/31-ekim-1989-turgut-ozal-turkiyenin-8-cumhurbaskani-secildi-3461215>, [Accessed: 13.04.2020]. [in Turkish]

⁵⁴⁹ "Turgut Özal", https://www.tccb.gov.tr/cumhurbaskanlarimiz/turgut_ozal/, [Accessed: 13.04.2020]. [in Turkish]

with the Soviet Ambassador at a reception in Ankara to discuss the conflict going on between Azerbaijan and Armenia SSRs of the Soviet Union. In a statement he made after the meeting, Minister of Foreign Affairs Yılmaz said "There are alarming events that the whole world is watching closely. Having a natural affinity with Azerbaijanis with whom they share the same language and culture, the Turkish nation follows these developments very closely". Ankara Ambassador of the Soviet Union, Albert Chernyshev, delivered the opinions of the Soviets about the events in the Caucasus and the stance Turkey maintained in this regard to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, A. Mesut Yılmaz, on January 20, 1990. It was highlighted in the Soviet opinions that the events were totally internal matters of the USSR and that they were satisfied with the stance of Turkey. It was also emphasised that "It is of significance that the Turkish side maintains the realistic and balanced stance that it adopted in line with mutual trust and understanding enabled by excellent relations between the Soviet Union and Turkey".

In the midst of all this, Moscow administration attacked civilian demonstrators asking for independence with tanks in Baku, and 131 people were killed and thousands were injured as a result (the events known as "Black January"), which caused a huge public reaction in Turkey. In many cities in Turkey, demonstrations against the USSR were held to support the Azerbaijan SSR. Being in the USA at the time, Turgut Özal made a statement implying that the issue was an internal matter of the USSR and the Azerbaijan SSR had more affinity with Iran in fact. However, upon intense reactions, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mesut Yılmaz invited the Soviet Ambassador to Ankara to his office on January 21 and received information about the latest developments in the Azerbaijan SSR. Another interesting development was that the rumours that Nakhchivan Supreme Soviet (the parliament of autonomous republic) decided to declare independence from the Soviet Union and join Turkey reached Ankara. Upon these developments, a crisis unit was established at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara. Desiring Nakhchivan to maintain its autonomous status as per the 1921 agreement, Ankara felt uneasy about the latest developments. Although the 1921 agreement authorized

Turkey to have a say according to official sources, Ankara did not want to confront with Moscow. As a result, Turkey reacted to the January Massacre via all of its political parties including the ruling party, but not at governmental level (Şimşir, 2012).

Having overcome two important crisis risks (pilot captain and Black January) in less than a year, the Turkish-Soviet relations continued to develop, and the First Consultation Meeting of the Turkish-Soviet Ministries of Foreign Affairs was held in Moscow on July 9–16, 1990. Within these dates, the USSR Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, B. N. Chaplin, paid a visit to Turkey on June 13. During this visit, the “Visa Simplification Agreement” was signed⁵⁵⁰.

On August 25, 1990, Özal had a telephone conversation with Gorbachev. During the meeting, Özal conveyed his ideas to Gorbachev on the establishment of a "Black Sea Economic Zone" that would include the coastal republics on the Black Sea and other Balkan countries with a coast on the Black Sea. Gorbachev, on the other hand, invited Özal to the USSR again. Özal stated that he would endeavour to perform this visit early next year (1991).

The Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eduard Shevardnadze, visited Turkey at the invitation of the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmet Kurtcebe Alptemoçin, on December 13–14, 1990. Turkey and the USSR signed Cooperation Agreement on Fisheries.

On March 11, 1991, Turgut Özal went to Moscow upon the invitation of USSR President Gorbachev.⁵⁵¹ State Minister Güneş Taner, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Kurtcebe Alptemoçin and Minister of Culture Namık Kemal Zeybek accompanied President Turgut Özal during the visit held between March 11–16.

Cumhuriyet newspaper reflected this news as "President Turgut Özal's first visit to the Soviet Union after the 'Cold War'", and emphasized that Özal was accompanied by 3 ministers, 40 bureaucrats, 65 businesspeople and 30 journalists.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵⁰ “Соглашение в форме обмена личными нотами между послом СССР в Турции и Министром иностранных дел Турции об упрощении визовых формальностей”, <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901729238> Date accessed: 24 April 2021.

⁵⁵¹ “Встреча Президентов СССР и Турции”, Известия, 12 марта 1991

⁵⁵² Özal bugün Moskova yolcusu [Özal is off to Moscow today], 1991. *Cumhuriyet*, 11 Mar. [in Turkish]

Özal officially proposed the establishment of the Black Sea Economic Organization in Moscow. Following the meetings lasting 2 days, the Soviet Union and Turkey declared each other as "friends" for the first time after the Stalin era. Three agreements were signed between the parties. The most important of these was the 20-year long treaty of friendship, alliance and cooperation⁵⁵³.

During Turgut Özal's meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev, the developments in the Gulf and the Middle East were discussed. Stating that a peaceful solution was tried to be delivered to the Gulf crisis and that he appreciated Gorbachev's efforts in this respect, President Özal stated that it was clearly shown that the international community would not allow the legal order to be violated with the Gulf crisis. After the negotiations were completed, it was announced that full consensus was achieved between the two countries on the Gulf issue.⁵⁵⁴

In terms of political relations, Turkey was no longer a distant neighbour of the Cold War era for the USSR. Both countries could solve the problem between each other and freely discuss regional and international issues concerning them. Therefore, located in a complicated region, Turkey had no other way other than conducting multilateral foreign policy after the Cold War became a thing of the past. Close relations were for the benefit of both countries (Qasımlı, 2012, p. 423).

The dialogues also revealed that the meetings went well.⁵⁵⁵ Boris Yeltsin praised Turgut Özal in front of journalists after their talks and said, "We also need an economist president", which also appeared in the press.⁵⁵⁶

President Turgut Özal flew to Kiev after completing the official part of his visit to the USSR.⁵⁵⁷ Özal was welcomed by the President of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian Republic, Leonid Makarovych Kravchuk, at the airport and a meeting was held between the two. Kravchuk said he believed this visit would contribute to the deepening of relations between Ukraine and Turkey. Then, official talks started

⁵⁵³ "Завершение Переговоров М. С. Горбачева и Т. Озала", Известия, 13 марта 1991

⁵⁵⁴ Özal Gorbacov ile 3 Saat görüştü [Özal-Gorbachev meeting lasted 3 hours], 1991. *Cumhuriyet*, 12 Mar. [in Turkish]

⁵⁵⁵ Türk modelini örnek alın [Take Turkish model as an example], 1991. *Milliyet*, 12 Mar. [in Turkish]

⁵⁵⁶ "РСФСР-Турция: динамика взаимовыгодных связей", Российская газета, 15 марта 1991; Özal Gorbi'ye öğüt Verdi [Özal counselled Gorby], 1991. *Cumhuriyet*, 13 Mar. [in Turkish]

⁵⁵⁷ Pravda'dan Özal'a övgü [Pravda praised Özal], 1991. *Milliyet*, 15 Mar. [in Turkish]

and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Kurtcebe Alptemoçin, Minister of Culture Namık Kemal Zeybek, Presidential Spokesperson Ambassador Kaya Toperi and Turkish Ambassador to Moscow Volkan Vural put in an appearance in the Turkish delegation during the official talks.⁵⁵⁸

This visit of Özal's was the second visit of a President of the Turkish Republic in the 70-year history of Soviet-Turkish relations. Cevdet Sunay had made the previous visit to the USSR in 1969 (Qasımlı, 2012, p. 429).

While the relations were developing this way, Turkey exhibited an extremely cautious attitude again during the August 1991 coup d'état attempt (SCSE event), which was a critical event for the USSR. Regarding a question about the developments in the Soviet Union on August 19, 1991, Minister of Foreign Affairs Safa Giray stated his wish that this development would not yield results contrary to the Soviet people's aspirations of democracy and economic reform, would not interrupt the positive developments achieved in the fields of international peace and security thanks in part to the USSR administration, and that our friendship and cooperation relations with the Soviet Union, which improved especially in recent years, would continue at the same level.

The visit of the Commander of the Turkish Armed Forces, Doğan Güreş, to the Soviet Union between October 8–12 was one of the most important turning points in terms of bilateral military relations. He had a talk with Soviet Defence Minister Marshal Shaposhnikov and invited him to Turkey.⁵⁵⁹ Doğan Güreş also visited Azerbaijan on October 11, 1991 with the Turkish Ambassador to the USSR. Permitting such a high-ranking Turkish military official to visit the USSR, especially to visit Azerbaijan after Moscow, was probably due to the disintegration process experienced in the USSR after the failed "SCSE" coup attempt of August 1991.

The last senior level meeting between the Government of the Turkish Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was the USSR visit of the Turkish Minister Finance and Customs, Adnan Kahveci, between November 4–6,

⁵⁵⁸ Moskova'yla Yeni Dönem [New era began with Moscow], 1991. *Cumhuriyet*, 14 Mar. [in Turkish]

⁵⁵⁹ Güreş'e büyük ilgi [Güreş attracted great interest], 1991. *Milliyet*, 10 Oct. [in Turkish]

1991, and the last document signed between the two countries was the protocol dated November 28, 1991 regulating the flights of commercial aircrafts and military crafts with civil transportation purposes that would land at and take off from Leninakan Airport under force majeure with Instrument Flight Rules (IFR).

During the dissolution process of the USSR, Turkey was worried about the troubles that might arise due to the Soviet military inheritance on the one hand and endeavoured to pursue an active policy about the Soviet republics that had declared their independence on the other.⁵⁶⁰ Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize former Soviet republics, and it recognized the independence of Azerbaijan on November 9, 1991 (Veliyev, 2020). In addition, before the USSR was officially dissolved, Turkey recognized the independence of Russia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Georgia.

Being considered the final step of the dissolution process of the USSR, Gorbachev's speech dated December 25, 1991 was received favourably by Turkish President Turgut Özal and was considered to be the end of an era.⁵⁶¹

Conclusion

The relations between Turkey and the USSR during the Turgut Özal era constitute the last phase of the relations between the two countries (1923–1991). In the development of these relations during the period of 1983–1991, the historical background formed by the Russian-Turkish relations that had started to form from the 15th century and the Turkish-Soviet relations in the 20th century have a special place.

On the other hand, the relations between Turkey and the USSR during the Turgut Özal era were affected seriously by the international system of the time, the basic dynamics of bilateral relations in the world in general, the internal dynamics of each of the two countries and how these dynamics had impact on the foreign policy. At the beginning of the Özal period, the Turkey-USSR relations gained a new dimension other than being countries partaking at two different blocs in the

⁵⁶⁰ Demirel, DYP Meclis Grubunda Türkler Politikasını Anlattı [Demirel described policy of Turks during DYP (True Path Party) parliamentary group meeting], 1991. *Cumhuriyet*, 25 Dec. [in Turkish]

⁵⁶¹ Özal'dan Gorbi'ye davet [Özal invited Gorby], 1991. *Cumhuriyet*, 27 Dec. [in Turkish]

tough conditions of competition of the Cold War and having topical problems. The international and internal dynamics in question and the new conditions these created in the foreign policy of both countries enabled the Turkish-Soviet relations to evolve from conflict and rivalry into developing friendship and cooperation.

This situation enabled the Turkey-USSR relations during the Özal period to be handled with the dimensions of discourse and execution by centring upon the liberal theory approach in international relations. In this context, it was observed that issues such as cooperation, interdependence, mutual negotiation and diplomacy, which are important to liberal theory, came to the fore in both political discourse and foreign policy practices in the process of the relations. The underlying reason was that the Özal period (1983–1991) was the one when both Turkey and the USSR went through changes in their domestic and foreign policies.

The Özal period could be named as the liberalization process of the country in terms of economy, politics and sociology after the 1980 Turkish coup d'état. This liberalization highlighted issues such as cooperation, interdependence, mutual negotiation and diplomacy, which are important to the liberal approach, in both political discourse and foreign policy practices of Özal's foreign policy. In general terms, the Özal period was a period of foreign policy in which Turkey attempted to develop more active, cooperation and better relations with other countries, especially with its neighbours, on the basis of both discourse and practice.

On the other hand, the period in which Özal was in power was the one when the Soviet Union changed its leaders unusually frequently and then entered a process of softening and dissolution. In March 1985, new political cadres were assigned under the leadership of the USSR Communist Party, whose leader was M. S. Gorbachev, and a renewal process began, which changed the situation in the country to a great extent. The years of "perestroika" and "glasnost" resulted in developments that could be defined as liberalization in both domestic and foreign policy of the Soviet Union. The concept of foreign policy that was in effect in the Soviet foreign policy and was called "new political thought" suggested the cooperation of the two systems instead of competition and accepted the superiority of human values over

class and ideological values in foreign policy relations. This foreign policy discourse and practice in the USSR caused the Cold War system, which was based on multi-dimensional competition, to soften globally. Thus, this softening also affected the development of the relations between the different blocks.

In terms of these dynamics, Turkey and the USSR could be said to go through détente period in different processes. In other words, in the period we analysed, Turkey was evolving from coup d'état environment into liberalization in terms of discourse and practice in its domestic and foreign policy while the Soviets were also evolving from a totalitarian political system and confrontational foreign policy to a structure that was becoming liberalized and open to cooperation.

These processes had positive impacts on the Turkey-USSR relations during the Özal period in terms of both discourse and practice. However, it is worth mentioning that the Turgut Özal administration did not find what they had expected from the Soviet Union at the beginning of his rule. One of the most important reasons for this was the negative historical background of the countries and the alienation that the Cold War reality created. During this period, the USSR was a powerful and huge neighbour for Turkey, and for the USSR, Turkey was a country that they had historical problems, including territorial claims, with, but above that, it was regarded as an "outpost" of their archenemy located far away, the USA.

Under these circumstances, although Gorbachev approached their relations with Turkey in suspicion, this attitude became reversed in time. During the period of frequent government changeovers until Gorbachev and when Mikhail Gorbachev was in power, Turkey attempted to improve their relations with the USSR. In fact, the Turkish foreign policy of Turgut Özal resembled the Soviet foreign policy of Gorbachev in general terms, and this was significantly reflected on bilateral relations. Both adopted the liberal economy, both tried to pursue rational active foreign policy, and both paid attention to the creation of a peaceful international environment. This relationship process manifested itself not only in economic and cultural relations, which traditionally attract attention with their positive aspects, but also in political, security and other relations, in discourse and in practical terms in

mutual visits where various agreements were signed.

On the other hand, a more active process began in the foreign policy of Turkey as of 1990 when irremediable dissolution process of the USSR gathered pace, Turgut Özal became the President in Turkey and new global conditions took effect. Struggle for independence in the Soviet republics and the territorial claims and attacks of the Armenian SSR against the Azerbaijan SSR gained prominence in the agenda of the Turkey-USSR relations in the new period. Initially, Turkey officially reacted to both of these events in a way not to ruin the relations with the USSR, but to convey the close interest of both the government and Turkish people about these developments through diplomatic channels to the Soviet side, in other words they remained relatively passive. Nevertheless, it was observed that Turkey began to develop an active political stance both in general and about the independence movement in the Azerbaijan SSR and the Nagorno-Karabakh issue when independence movements gathered strength in time and the future of the USSR was questioned more than before.

In summary, during the Turgut Özal period, the Turkish-Soviet relations developed multidimensionally due to internal and external dynamics, active diplomacy was pursued, reciprocal official visits and meetings took place more often, and relations were established in almost every field.

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