TURKISH-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS THROUGHOUT HISTORY: CONTINUITIES AND STRATEGIC REQUIREMENTS*

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Introduction

The diplomatic relations between Turkey and Ukraine were reestablished on 3 February 1992. By the year 2018, these relations have already entered their 26th year. In those twenty-six years, these two countries have succeeded in instituting and advancing social, economic and political relations between each other. One should be aware of the fact that the history of the Turkish-Ukrainian relations is not limited to these twenty-six years. On the contrary, Turkish-Ukrainian relations have a much longer history and deep rooted background. In fact, one can extend the history of contacts between Turkic peoples and the Eastern Slavic peoples, the *Rus* (not to be confused with the Russians), some of which became the Ukrainians in the 19th century at least to more than a millennium back. Throughout centuries, Turco-Tatar peoples of the Western *Deşt-i Kıpçak*[1] and the *Rus* people of Eastern Europe inhabiting the lands of the *Kievan Rus*[2] had been in various forms of interaction ranging from trade to war. In the later centuries, relations between the *Rus*, proto-Ukrainian and Ukrainian peoples, on the one hand, and the Turkic and Turkish peoples on the other hand continued, despite intervals.

Unfortunately, although these promising developments across the Black Sea in the last two and a half decades and the millennia-long history, a book-length historical study on Turkish-Ukrainian relations is still not on the bookshelves. There are a number of academic articles and book chapters on this topic, but their number is much fewer than desired. In brief, a comprehensive literature on the history of Turkish-Ukrainian relations is still yet to come to sight. What we, as political scientists, scholars of area studies, sociologists and so on, know about the Turkish-Ukrainian history largely depends on what we infer from the studies

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1 Western *Deşt-i Kıpçak*, also referred to as Western Tatary; Western Cumania; the Kipchak Steppe; Pontic Steppe, is the vast steppeland between the western shores of the Caspian Sea in the East, the eastern shores of the Dniester River in the West, the northern shores of the Black Sea in the South, and the South of Kyiv-Chernihiv-Pereiaslav region in the North.

2 The territory of the Kievan Rus stretched roundly from the present-day Finland in the North to the South of Kyiv-Chernihiv-Pereiaslav region in the South, and from the Baltics in the West to Nizhniy Novgorod in the East.

on Turkish, Ukrainian, Russian, Turkish-Russian, and Ukrainian-Russian histories or some other generic historical studies on the Wider Black Sea region, with the exception of the above mentioned shorter studies. Obviously, this is one of the major drawbacks, since knowing history helps us to understand today and to have perspectives for the future.

This study reviews the main episodes within the millennia-long Turkish-Ukrainian history in order to demonstrate that, in many turning points in the history of the Ukrainians, we see the relevance of the "Turkish factor" in varying degrees. In other words, our review reveals that both in the making of the Ukrainians and Ukraine in the historical course, Turco-Tatar people played certain roles. Our historical review and the following summary of the contemporary relations between Turkey and Ukraine reveal the existence of certain patterns with respect to Turkish-Ukrainian relations. In the second part of this study, we discuss these persistent patterns, the most outstanding of which is the salience of the "Russian factor" after the 17th century in the development and evolution of the Turkish-Ukrainian relations. Upon that, in the last part of the study, we discuss the potential for regionalization.

The *Rus* and the Turco-Tatar Peoples until the Dissolution of the Kievan Rus

During the prehistoric times (app. 1150 BCE-CE 850), present-day Ukraine's steppe and forest-steppe areas were dominated by the nomadic tribes originating from the steppes of Central Asia, while the coastal regions were under the Greek and Romano-Byzantium influence. Although the former were described as raiding barbarians in Greek, Romanian, Byzantine and Arab sources of the time, archeological findings in the 20th century reveal that, these nomadic tribes integrating the sedentary populations into themselves created a sophisticated civilization and established a stable environment that promoted trade and commerce in the region.[3]

Among those nomadic peoples, by the arrival of the Khazars, a Turkic group originally inhabiting in the westernmost parts of Turkistan, to the Northern Black Sea steppelands and further North, a new era was opened in the present-day Southern and Eastern Ukraine. Establishing themselves in the territory between lower Don, lower Volga, and Kuban-Terek River valleys,[4] Khazars brought stability and peace to the region by establishing diplomatic relations with the Byzantines and providing protection against the nomadic tribes coming from the East, as well as the Persians and the Arabs. This peaceful stability facilitated the growth of commercial activities in the region.[5] The *Pax Chazarica* that lasted from mid-7th

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3   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and its Peoples* (2nd Edition) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 25-26.

4   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 45-47.

5   Orest Subtelny defines Khazar Empire as a "unique commercial empire." Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (4th Edtion) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 22.

century to mid-9th century greatly contributed to the development of the region.[6] It should be noted that, despite the image of the "barbarian nomads coming from the East," Khazars achieved to establish *Pax Chazarica* through trade and diplomacy rather than war.[7] The Slavic inhabitants of the present-day Ukraine, who originated from the present-day central and Eastern Poland, Southern Belarus and Northwestern Ukraine and gradually expanded towards the South,[8] also benefitted greatly from the *Pax Chazarica*.[9]

Yet, Ukrainian and also Russian historians usually begin the Ukrainian and the Russian histories from the onset of the *Kievan Rus* in late-9th century for regarding this as the beginning of the Slavic history of Ukraine and Muscovy/Russia.[10] The significance of the *Kievan Rus* (late-9th and mid-13th centuries) both as a significant political entity and, probably more than that, as a nation building myth for the Ukrainians and the Muscovites/Russians in the later decades cannot be overlooked. It is because of this significance, even today a heated debate over the "ownership" of the *Kievan Rus* is still going between Ukrainian and Russian historians. Examination of the history of *Kievan Rus*, too, reveals the historical relevance of the Turkic peoples for this state.

The birth and the growth of the *Kievan Rus* went parallel with the demise of the Khazar Khanate. In formative years of the *Kievan Rus*, the fourth *Kievan Rus* prince Sviatoslav in search of expanding his domain launched a campaign against the Khazars and raided the Khazar capital at *İdil* on Volga in 964.[11] The advances of the Magyars (forefathers of the present-day Hungarians) and the Pechenegs (a Turkic tribe; in Turkish Peçenek) into the Khazar steppelands had also speeded up the dissolution of once mighty Khazar Kahante in late 960s. Following the demise of the Khazar Khanate, Pechenegs emerged as the dominant power in the region. In fact, retrospectively speaking, Sviatoslav's assault on the Khazars costed the *Kievan Rus* a buffer between itself and the Pechenegs, who began to challenge the eastern and southern frontiers of the the *Kievan Rus*.[12] As an irony, Sviatoslav died in the hands of the Pechenegs after an unsuccessful campaign against the Byzantium.[13] Pechenegs, then were worn down by another Turkic tribe, namely the *Kıpçak*s (also known as Qipchaqs, Cumans, Polovtsian) by the early 11th century, and finished off by the *Kievan Rus* Prince Iaroslav the Wise (1036-1054).[14]

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6   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 37-38.

7   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 47.

8   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 39&42.

9   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 50.

10   See for example, Paul Kubicek, *The History of Ukraine* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008).

11   Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 29.

12   Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 31.

13   Charles Ziegler, The History of Russia (2nd Edition) (Santa Barbara:Greenwood Press, 2009), 10.

14   Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 34.

While *Kıpçaks* became a principal power, different tribes including the Pechenegs found refuge in the *Kievan Rus* domain, formed a new Turkic tribal confederation called *Karakalpaks*, who settled at the southern frontiers of the *Kievan Rus and* remained loyal to their *Rus* rulers.[15] *Kıpçak*s remained as a main power threatening the borderlands of the *Kievan Rus* in the South and the East until late 12th century. As the *Kıpçak*s' power began to decline, while some of them moved towards the present-day Bulgaria, the remaining parts got more and more integrated with the *Kievan Rus* by marriages and other ways.[16]

One of the essentials of the mainstream Ukrainian and Russian historiographies is the era of the so-called "Tatar yoke" that lasted between the mid-13th and mid-15th centuries. According to this historiography, the 'barbarian Mongol-Tatar hordes' of Chingizid Empire ran over the *Rus* lands with outmost savagery, leaving a ruin behind everywhere they passed by. In fact, this historiography has been an instrument for the Ukrainians and the Russians to claim for their superior "western identity," in contrast to the "savage Asiatic identity."[17]

However, Paul Robert Magocsi, Serhii Plokhy and some other historians present another picture of the so-called "Tatar yoke." Plokhy argues that it was not before the last quarter of the 16th century that the myth of the "Tatar yoke" was invented in Muscovy and gained popularity by the second half of the 17th century through the intermediacy of the Kyivian literati. He states that whereas one function of that myth was to construct a heroic past for the Muscovite state, the other was to argue that it was Russia, who defended the West from the Tatar devastation.[18]

After the Mongol tribal leader Chengiz Khan gathered Mongol and Turkic tribes of Eastern Turkistan together, he began expanding his domain in all directions to build up the largest political entity in history, known as the Chingizid Empire. The armies of the Chingizid Empire, the soldiers of which were mostly composed of Tatar and Turkic peoples, marched towards Eastern Europe and the *Kievan Rus* for the first time in 1222. They first met and defeated the Alans and the *Kıpçak*s, after which *Kıpçak*s joined forces with the *Kievan Rus* but to no avail.[19] In the second half of 1230s, Chingizid armies returned back to Eastern Ukraine and eliminated the *Kıpçak*s. Following that, some *Kıpçak*s became subjects of the Mongols, some

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15   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 66-68&79& 94-95.

16   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 87&90; see also Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History…*, 39.

17   For the instrumentalization of the myth of the "Tatar yoke" in Russian historiography in these lines see, Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 132-133.

On the other hand, the Eurasionist school that developed in 1920s in Russia and gained popularity recently evaluate the era odd the "Tatar yoke" positively. According to this school, during the Mongol-Tatar period, Muscovy gained its peculiar identity as a result of the mix of Asian and European elements within the Muscovite / Russian identity. This gave Muscovy / Russia a peculiar (and superior) identity vis-à-vis Europe (see, Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations…*, 133; Charles Ziegler, *The History of Russia…*, 17).

18   Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations…*, 135.

19   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 110-111.

fled to the West, and some fled to *Kievan Rus*. Chingizid armies continued their march towards the *Rus* principalities of the *Kievan Rus*. They conquered Kyiv in December 1240 and established the western region of the Chingizid Empire, the *Kıpçak* Khanate, also known as the Golden Horde.[20] Although founded by the Mongols, majority of the Golden Horde population was composed of the *Kıpçak*s, who, in time, became rulers. Golden Horde established vassalage on *Rus* principalities up until 1480.

Magocsi states that, whereas the Golden Horde was cruel to the *Rus* principalities which did not submit themselves, it left alone those who complied and paid annual tributes. Magocsi adds that this was not specific to the Golden Horde, but a common policy of all the states in that time.[21] In this respect, one significant fact is that under the vassalage of the Golden Horde, which was tolerant to foreign religions, Orthodox Church in the *Rus* lands consolidated its hegemony over the *Rus* people. Serhii Plokhy even argues that there was a sort of alliance between the Golden Horde and the *Rus* metropolitanate in Northern *Rus*.[22] Magocsi argues that, in spite of the standard historiography, the so-called "Tatar yoke" brought a stability to the *Rus* lands in return of tributes.[23]

As it can be seen, from the earliest times to the last centuries of the middle ages, Turkic peoples had been an important actor on the historical stage set on the Ukrainian theatre. Importantly, in most of the present-day Ukrainian territory, presence of the Turkic peoples dates earlier than that of the Slavic peoples. The history shows that Turkic peoples played a major role in the political history of these lands not only as political and military powers, but also as merchants and diplomats. In fact, the history reveals that Slavic peoples' immigration to Western and Southern Ukraine was motivated by the peaceful stability set by the Khazars. Besides that, although we habitually speak about Ukrainians, Russians, and Turks and so on while talking about the Middle Ages and the earlier times, the history shows that there were no concrete social or ethnic borders but just permeable boundaries allowing fluidity of identities and loyalties. As the above review demonstrates, on many occasions, groups belonging to different *ethnies* amalgamated with each other. Likewise, loyalties were formed rather on common interest in the face of opportunities or challenges than ethnic identities.

The Emergence of the Muscovite / Russian and Ruthenian Identities

One of the interesting debates that has been going on since the 19th century among the Ukrainophile/Ukrainian, Belarusophile/Belarusian and Russian historians is related to the origins of the Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian nations, and the

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20 Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 113-114.

21 Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 111.

22 Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations…*, 134.

23 Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 114-115.

interrelatedness or its absence among them. Categorically speaking, nationally minded Ukrainian and Belarusian historians in search for genuine ethnic or national identity separate from a common "all-Russian" ethnic or national identity claim for either distinct ethnic roots or distinct evolutions of the Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian national identities from the common *Rus* ethnic roots. On the other hand, nationally minded Russian historians, just like the Soviet historians did, advocate that these three modern Eastern Slavic nations are indeed of the one and the same all-*Rus* national identity, which once disunited from each other by the dissolution of the *Kievan Rus*. The tacit implication of this hypothesis is that these disunited Eastern Slavic nations would, and probably should, once again reunite. Importantly, the advocates of this hypothesis either overtly or covertly imply that the *Rus* and the Russian identities are indeed the same. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, a well-known scholar of the Russian history in the USA as a stereotypical representative of the nationalist Russian historiography, for example, in his "Russian Identities: A Historical Survey" (2005) refers to the population of the *Kievan Rus* as "Kievan Russians," thoroughly disregarding and blurring the different meanings of the nouns *Rus* (рус), *Rusinskiy* (русинский), R*usskiy* (русский).[24] On the other side, some Ukrainian and Belarusian historians claim for the existence of separate Eastern Slavic national identities already in the *Kievan Rus* times.[25]

First and foremost, the hypothesis of a *Rus* or Russian national identity, or Ukrainian and Belarusian nations existing since the *Kievan Rus* times should be rejected at once, as a primordialist understanding, if not for anything else, then for the simple fact that the contemporary scholarship on the nations and nationalism evidently argues that nations are the products of modernity. In this sense, it should be noted that some Ukrainian historians even argue that what we refer as the Slavic peoples of the *Kievan Rus* today was not even composed of a single *ethnie*. According to that view, the people who lived around Kyiv were ethnically different from those who lived in the North.

On this question, we rather tend to agree with Serhii Plokhy and the like-minded historians. Firstly, one should be aware of the fact that the *Kievan Rus* population was not composed of just Slavic people. As shown above, among the subjects of the *Kievan Rus*, there were different peoples including the Turkic groups. Secondly, although a common high-culture among the elite of the princedoms of the *Kievan Rus* existed and certain common cultural, linguistic and religious similarities created an identity among the Slavic peoples of the *Kievan Rus*, this does not mean that we can speak about an all-encompassing ethnic unity or a solidified "imagined community" of the *Rus*. After all, in the absence of instruments and mechanisms that would facilitate ethnic homogenization and a *Rus* imagined community, local

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24 Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Russian Identities*…

25 Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations*…, esp. 50-56&354-361.

identities and loyalties were prevalent among the population of the *Kievan Rus*, which is, among other things, evidenced by the ongoing struggles among the *Rus* princedoms within the *Kievan Rus* domain. In brief, even though we can speak about a certain degree of ethnic unity, it is not possible to claim for the existence of a self-conscious *Rus* nation, not to speak of Ukrainian, Belarusian or Russian nations.[26]

Again in line with Serhii Plokhy and the like-minded scholars, we can say that the formation of three modern national identities, i.e., Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian, are constructed as a result of political developments, that is, the emergence of the rule of different states on the *Rus* lands, following the demise of the *Kievan Rus*. In the light of this perspective, we hold the idea that in the formation of Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian (proto) national identities, the relevance of the Turco-Tatar factor, together with the Lithuanian, Polish and Muscovite (Russian) factors emerge.

When the Chingizid armies arrived in the present-day Ukraine, *Kievan Rus* was already in a state of disintegration. As a result of this disintegration process, three independent and powerful princedoms, namely Novgorod in the East, Vladimir-Suzdal in the Northeast (later Moscow became the dominant power within this entity), and Galicia-Volhynia in the Southwest were born. These princedoms together with other princedoms engaged in a power struggle with one and other and the center in Kyiv. These struggles, in fact, brought the final demise of the *Kievan Rus*.

As these princedoms continuously fought each other, they formed alliances with the Golden Horde in order to defeat rival *Rus* princedoms, and other times fought with Golden Horde. Eventually, Galicia-Volhynia remained the only independent *Rus* state after the dissolution of the *Kievan Rus*, which became a part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1370. Actually, after the demise of the *Kievan Rus*, for two centuries or so, Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Golden Horde remained as two powers in Eastern Europe and much of the present-day Ukraine by the last quarter of the 14ᵗʰ century.[27] These two powerful states shared those lands; whereas Grand Duchy of Lithuania which later became Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth in 1569 ruled over the western and the southern parts former *Kievan Rus* land, Golden Horde ruled the northeastern parts.

This division of the former *Kievan Rus* lands resulted in disparate developments in the Northeastern, and Western and Southern *Rus* lands. Accordingly, whereas in the former domain, the Muscovite identity, which evolved into the present-day Russian identity, began to flourish, in the latter domain a Ruthenian (*Rusyny* or *Russes*) identity grew. Out of this Ruthenian identity, modern Ukrainian and

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26   Paul Kubicek, *The History of Ukraine…*, 29.

27   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…,* 85&110&115&129-130.133-137.

Belarusian national identities developed in time and as a result of later political developments.[28]

The Cossack Ukraine, Crimean Tatars and the Ottomans

Although tracking the evolution of separate Muscovite-Russian and Ruthenian identities (as a pre-Ukrainian and pre-Belarusian identities) out of the *Rus ethnie* starting from the second half of the 14th century is quite easy, doing the same for the formation of separate Ukrainian and Belarusian identities out of the Ruthenian identity is both thorny and fascinating. Several factors that led to these formations such as the relatively liberal socio-political context in Western Ruthenia (present-day Belarus) in contrast to Polish approach to Latinize the Southern Ruthenia (present-day Ukraine); the absence of learning centers in Western Ruthenia in contrast to Kyiv in the South as such a center; the assimilatory policies of the Russian empire in Western Ruthenia in contrast to the Austro-Hungarian policy that favored Ukrainophiles in Galicia as a counter-power to Polish strength; the ban on the Uniate Church (Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church) in Western Ruthenia in contrast to the paradoxical role of the Uniate Church (Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church) in the present-day Western Ukraine in preventing forced or voluntary assimilation of the proto-Ukrainians into Polish identity; the role of the same church in preventing assimilation of the Western proto-Ukrainians into Orthodox Russian identity, could be pointed out.[29]

In addition to these, one should not overlook the substantial factor of the "legendary" Cossacks as a major cause for the emergence of the Ukrainian nation and an instrument for the construction of the Ukrainian national identity. The Cossacks, who became a significant political-military force in the middle Dnieper region by the 17th century, not only laid the foundations of Ukrainian proto-state structures, but also provided a warehouse for the construction of national myths for Ukrainian nation-builders, together with the myth of the *Kievan Rus*.[30]

Starting from the last decades of the 16th century, *Rus* peasants fleeing from serfdom, harsh living conditions, religious persecution in Ruthenia under the Polish-Lithuanian rule, and the Muscovite domain began to inhabit the lands in the middle Dnieper region, which in the Ukrainian and Russian historiography are usually, yet misleadingly, referred to as "no man's land" or "wild lands," despite the fact that these lands were, indeed, not "no man's," but historical Turco-Tatar lands. Owing to this fact, *Deşt-i Kıpçak*, the historical Turco-Tatar soil, became the ground on which the Cossack political entity took root and flourished.

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28 Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations*…, 355-359.

29 See, Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations*….; Andrew Wilson, The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation (4th Edition) (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 40-57.

30 Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 167-168.

These runaway peasants taking advance of the loose Lithuanian-Polish control in the left-bank and adopting some organizational and cultural patterns of the Turco-Tatars, organized themselves as farmer and raider communities, and in the end of the 16th century became the "legendary" Cossacks. At this point it should be noted that the term Cossack comes from the Turkish word *Qazaq* or *Kazak* meaning adventurer, free, footloose or unencumbered. Although a quite questionable hypothesis, some historians, mostly in their endeavor to prove the separateness of the Ukrainians from the Russians, argue that Cossacks were of a different ethnicity, that is, they were largely the descendants of the Khazar Empire.[31] Whatsoever the academic worth of these arguments is, what is unanimously accepted is that there were also Crimean Tatars among the Cossacks.

As the Cossacks became a significant political/military power in the end of the 16th century, they began launching raids to Ottoman and Crimean Tatar fortresses in the present-day Southern Ukraine. They also launched sea raids to Ottoman shores in the Southern Black Sea (Sinop and Trabzon, for example) across the Black Sea. A major maritime battle took place between the Cossack and the Ottoman fleets in 1625. It can be argued that it was by the emergence of the Cossack naval force, Black Sea ceased to be an "Ottoman lake." As the Cossacks, who in popular imagination are mostly associated with the steppes, became a considerable sea force, Ottomans ,in 1648, considered employing the Cossack naval force in a war against Venice. On the other hand, Muscovy utilized the Cossack naval power in its campaigns against the Crimean Tatars and the Ottomans.[32]

The Cossacks strengthening their military and political organizations began to rebel against the Lithuanian-Polish rule starting from the late 16th century, showing an increase both in number and strength in 1630s. This gave another impetus for the military and political relations among the Cossacks, Crimean Tatars and the Ottomans. Among the Cossack chefs that led rebellions against the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth, Bohdan Khmelnytsky, who led the Cossack the rebellion between 1648 and 1654 and established the Cossack Hetmanate, was the most significant one.

Rebelling to overthrow the Lithuanian-Polish rule, Khmelnytsky sought alliance with different and often antagonist powers, including the Crimean Khanate, then a vassal of the Ottoman Empire. Khmelnytsky also sent envoys to Istanbul in 1648 and 1649 to secure support of the Ottomans for his cause. Eventually, Crimean Tatars engaged in an alliance with Khmelnytsky's forces with their own particular objectives, which were not precisely parallel to those of Khmelnytsky. Whatsoever

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31 For the theory of the Khazar origins of the Cossacks see Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia*…37-38. Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations*…, 340-342.

32 Victor Ostapchuk, "Cossack Ukraine in and out of Ottoman Orbit, 1648-1681," in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 127; Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Facts On File, 2009), 149-150.

was the idea of the Crimean Tatars, Victor Ostapchuk argues that unless the Tatar cavalry had joined Khmelnytsky's forces, although at certain moments Crimean Tatar Khan İslam Geray prevented Cossacks' decisive victories against the Lithuanian-Polish forces, Khmelnytsky revolt could not have grown strong enough to become the major Cossack uprising.[33]

Historical records reveal that Khmelnytsky requested Ottoman mandate against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Yet, the Ottomans who were waging a war in Crete and encountering internal difficulties, declined despite the diplomatic exchanges in 1648-1651.[34] Failing to achieve substantial support from the Ottoman's or elsewhere, Khmelnytsky eventually found the needed protection from Muscovy. In 1654, the Pereiaslav Treaty, which is still hotly debated,[35] was signed between Khmelnytsky and the Tsar's envoys. According to this treaty, Moscow took the Cossack Ukraine under its protection. However, the 1654 Pereiaslav Treaty had been a turning point in the Ukrainian history as Muscovy's colonization of Ukraine to turning it into *Malorossiya* (Little Russia) and the proto-Ukrainian into *Malorusskie* (little Russians) began with this treaty.[36] Retrospectively speaking, if the Sublime Porte in Istanbul had granted mandate to Ukraine, not only the history of Ukraine, but the entire history of the Northern Black Sea and the Caucasus could have flowed through radically different channels. In this vein, it should be noted that the colonization of Ukraine by Muscovy went parallel with the Muscovy's gaining a strong hold in Northern Black Sea and further advanced into Kuban region and the Caucasus. Given the importance of the Caucasus for the security of both the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey, we can argue that the 1654 Pereiaslav Treaty had consequences in the Turkish history, too.

The integration of Ukraine into the Russian Empire was a thorny path. After the Pereiaslav Treaty, Cossack hetmans continued fighting against their Lithuanian-Polish overlords or "big Muscovite brother." Similar to Khmelnytsky, two of the anticipated allies of these hetmans were the Crimean Tatars and the Ottomans. Only eleven years or so, after the "reunion of the Russian brothers" (to replicate one of the misleading clichés of the Russian historiography)[37] by the Pereiaslav Treaty, the right-bank Hetman Petro Doroshenko (ruled 1665-1676) initiated a rebellion to overthrow the Lithuanian-Polish and the Muscovite rules, and to unite the divided Cossack Ukraine. To achieve this goal, he signed a treaty with the Ottomans and the Crimean Tatars.[38] Accordingly, Ottomans granted Doroshenko protectorate and Doroshenko provided troops to Ottoman army in its campaign against the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth in 1672. Yet, Ottomans, defeating the

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33   Victor Ostapchuk, "Cossack Ukraine in and out of Ottoman Orbit, 1648-1681"…, 130-132.

34   Victor Ostapchuk, "Cossack Ukraine in and out of Ottoman Orbit, 1648-1681"…, 133-135.

35   For debates on the Pereiaslav Treaty, see , Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia*…, 90-112.

36   For the discussions and diverse views on the Pereiaslav Treaty see, Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia*…, 196-212.

37   Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia*…, 196-212, esp. 201.

38   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*…, 241&255.

Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth in 1672 instead of letting Doroshenko to establish his rule, occupied a huge territory in the right-bank (at least one third of Ukraine) and established an Ottoman province that lasted until 1699.[39] In 1668, Hetman Ivan Brukhovetsky in the left-bank reached out the Crimean Tatars and the Porte in Istanbul against Muscovy, offering subordination in return of assistance. However, with the support of the Crimean Tatars, Doroshenko crossed to the left-bank and eliminated Brukhovetsky to become the only hetman in the entire Cossack Ukraine, for a short time, though.[40]

On the other hand, Ottomans also kept contacts with other hetmans rivaling Doroshenko such as Bohdan Khmelnytsky's son Yurii Khmelnytsky (ruled 1677-1681), who was appointed as the Prince of Ukraine by the Ottomans. Ottomans and Yurii Khmelnytsky fought with Muscovite army and the Cossacks allied with the Muscovite army on the left-bank.[41]

For those who are familiar with the mainstream Russian historiography, the name Ivan Mazepa and the terms *mazepisti* (mazepa-ites) or *mazepinstvo* (mazepa-ism) that alludes to treachery and betrayal should not sound unacquainted. A competent hetman of the Cossack Ukraine between 1687–1709, Ivan Mazepa allied with the Swedes against the Russians during the Second Northern War (1700-1721). However, after the Swedes lost the Battle of Poltava in 1709, he took refuge at Ottoman-controlled Moldova and died there. Because of his "betrayal" to "all-Russian brotherhood" and "one and indivisible Russian state," the imperial Russian and the later Soviet historiographies downgraded Ivan Mazepa to a traitor. Aleksandr Pushkin, in his poem "Poltava," named Mazepa as a "Judas" and a "snake." On the other hand, for some Ukrainian nationalist political activists and historians the same Mazepa came to symbolize "the struggle for the independence of Ukraine."[42]

Eventually, after Mazepa's successor Hetman Pylyp Orlyk's failed attempt to initiate a revolt on the right-bank in 1711, the era of the Cossack rebellions came to an end. As a result, the present-day Ukrainian territory was shared by Muscovy, Lithuania-Polish Commonwealth and the Ottoman states. According to that *de facto* partition, autonomous territories in Ukraine, namely, Sloboda Ukraine, Zaporozhia and the Hetmanate went under Muscovite control. In 1765, 1775, and 1785, respectively, Muscovy abolished the autonomous statuses of these territories.[43] After the abolition of the Zaporozhian *sich*, the Cossacks who opposed Muscovy's policies fled to the Ottoman Empire and settled in the Danube River delta and

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39   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 241.

40   Victor Ostapchuk, "Cossack Ukraine in and out of Ottoman Orbit, 1648-1681"…, 140.

41   Victor Ostapchuk, "Cossack Ukraine in and out of Ottoman Orbit, 1648-1681"…, 139-145; Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 241.

42   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 253-254. For Ivan Mazepa see, Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 253-263.

43   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…*, 277-290

formed the Danubian *sich* in the same year. However, displeased with the Ottoman hegemony, some of the Cossacks in Danube considered moving either to Austro-Hungary or back to Ukraine. When some of them left for Ukraine, Ottomans perceived that as a betrayal and destroyed this Cossack *sich*.[44]

Ukrainian Nationalists in Galicia and the Ottomans during the World War I

Although from mid-17th to early 18th centuries, there were relatively intense diplomatic and military contacts between the Cossacks and the Porte in Istanbul, these contacts began to cease as the Cossack rebellions faded away and Moscow consolidated its hegemony over the Ukrainian territory. In fact, Muscovy, strengthening its hegemony over Ukraine, employed the Cossacks as a military force against the Ottomans. Among those employed by Muscovy against the Ottomans, Don and Kuban Cossacks played a significant role in Russians military campaigns against the Ottomans.[45]

Accordingly, there had not been any significant political or military relations between the (proto) Ukrainians and the Ottomans up until early twentieth century. A new period of diplomatic contacts started only when a Ukrainian nationalist movement seeking political independence emerged in Galicia and Ukrainian independence became a real possibility.[46]

The Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (*Soyuz Vyzvolennya Ukrayiny*- ULU) was formally founded in Lviv, then within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, on 4 August 1914. The ULU hoped for an independent Ukraine in the Russian held parts of Ukraine following the anticipated defeat of the Tsarist Russia in the World War I. With such hopes and the mediation of the Austro-Hungary, the ULU sent emissaries to the Ottoman Empire to lobby for its cause. The Porte in Istanbul together with the Central Powers, discussed plans about providing logistic and military support to a revolt in the Caucasus and Kuban regions that would be initiated by the Ukrainian nationalists to sabotage the war efforts of the Tsarist Russia. This plan known as the "Constantinople Action" was, however, dismissed. Despite that, the ULU emissaries continued their propaganda activities in the Ottoman capital and the Ottoman "Special Organization" (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*) kept its contacts with the ULU and provided logistic support, such as providing Ottoman passports and so on.[47]

With regard to the World War I era, one should recall that, in August 1916, Ottoman troops were sent to Galicia to give a hand to their allies. At the Galician front, these

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44   Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…,* 337.

45   Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire…,* 150.

46   Hakan Kırımlı, "The Activities of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (2006a): 177.

47   Hakan Kırımlı, "The Activities of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine…"

troops fought sight by side with the Ukrainian volunteer riflemen regiments until August 1917,[48] where approximately 12,000 Ottoman troops died.

Ukrainian and Turkish Relations between 1917 and 1922

Following the Bolshevik revolution in Russia on 7 November 1917, chaos prevailed in Ukraine. Until 1920, revolution and war became the characteristics of the Ukrainian lands. Overall, until the Bolsheviks constituted their authority all over Ukraine in October 1920, the situation in Ukraine remained a complete anarchy.[49] In 1920, Bolsheviks established their authority in much of the Ukraine, and the remaining parts were divided among Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania.[50]

Amid the chaos in the territories of the Russian Empire, on 20 November 1917 in Kyiv, Ukrainian Central Rada[51] proclaimed the Ukrainian National Republic (UNR) as a federal autonomous unit within Russia. However, Bolshevik dominated Kharkiv Soviet rejected the Central Rada's proclamation and refused its authority. On 25 December 1917, the first Soviet Ukrainian Government subordinated to Bolsheviks in Petrograd was proclaimed in Kharkiv. On 25 January 1918, Central Rada in Kyiv proclaimed the independent UNR to take part in the peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk. There, Central Powers and the UNR signed a peace treaty on 9 February 1918. By that treaty, Central Powers recognized the UNR as a sovereign state. Yet, on the same day, Bolsheviks occupied Kyiv and drew Central Rada out of the town. Only by the advance of the German troops, Bolsheviks left Kyiv some twenty days later. The continuing German advance, on the other hand, forced Bolshevik Ukrainians centered in Kharkiv to flee to Soviet Russia. However, the UNR failed to establish its authority in the countryside, and instability and chaos endured in Ukraine accordingly. Most importantly for the Germans, the UNR failed to supply the grain it promised. Hence, on 28 April 1918, Germany disposed the UNR and established another government known as the Hetmanate. Following the defeat of Germany in World War I, on 14 December 1918, Hetmanate was overthrown by the organization known as the Directory. Meanwhile, in Western Ukraine within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, only few days before the end of the World War I, on 4 November 1918, Western Ukrainian People's Republic (WUPR) was proclaimed, following which a Ukrainian-Polish war broke out for the competing claims on Galicia. On 22 January 1918, Directory in the East and the WUPR united under the name Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR). However,

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48 Hakan Kırımlı, "The Activities of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine…," 196.

49 Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…,* 524.

50 Paul Kubicek, *The History of Ukraine*…, 79.

  For a study on Ukraine between 1917 and 1922 see, Wolfram Dornik et al., *The Emergence of Ukraine: Self Determination, Occupation, and War in Ukraine, 1917-1922* (Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2015).

51 The Central Rada (Central Council) was formed on 17 March 1917, two days after the Tsar, at which all the major Ukrainian political parties were represented. However, these parties hardly had significant social bases (Paul Kubicek, The History of Ukraine…, 80-81).

squeezed between the Polish and Bolshevik guns and with different geopolitical orientations of the Directory and the WUPR, the UPR, together with the Directory and the WUPR eventually died out in May 1920; Galicia went under the Polish rule whereas Bolsheviks established their authority in the East.[52]

Ottomans welcomed the establishment of the UNR, which, they thought, would be a friendly buffer state between itself and the "Muscovite threat." In the meantime, hopes aroused in the Porte in Istanbul about the establishment of Muslim governments in Crimea and the Caucasus. In fact, Crimea and the Crimean Tatars turned into a serious issue with respect to Turkish-Ukrainian relations as the UNR remained reluctant to accept an independent republic in Crimea. However, this problem did not hamper the establishment of good relations and arrival of the Ottoman ambassador in Kyiv in October 1918. Ukrainian diplomats, too, continued their diplomatic missions in the Ottoman capital.[53]

In Autumn of 1920, Bolsheviks succeeded in predominating the Ukrainian lands except Galicia and Western Volhynia. In 1922, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was established. At the end of this year, Soviet Ukraine became one of the four constituent republics of the Soviet Union. The Ankara Government in Turkey that led the Turkish War of Independence after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the WWI signed a Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Ukraine on 2 January 1922.[54] In June 1922, Ankara Government's Ambassador arrived in Kharkiv.[55] The Friendship Treaty between Soviet and the Ankara Government was of great importance for the latter as it was one of seven treaties that the Ankara Government signed before the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty on 24 July 1923. In fact, this treaty was another step forward to recognition of the Ankara Government in the international domain. Upon the establishment of the USSR on 30 December 1922 and later by the onset of the cold war in 1947, not only the political relations but also social and other relations between Ukraine and Turkey once again drifted off for almost seventy years.

Turkey's Relations with Post-Soviet Ukraine

In the last days of the Soviet Union, a referendum for independence was held in Ukraine on 1 December 1991. At this referendum which was held with 84.8% voter turnout, 90.32% of the voters voted for independence. On 24 August 1991 Central Rada (The Ukrainian Parliament) declared independence from the Soviet Union.

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52 Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine…,* 509-535&547-556; Kubicek, *The History of Ukraine*…, 82.90.

53 Hakan Kırımlı, "Diplomatic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Ukrainian Democratic Republic, 1918-21," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (2006b): 202-209. Also see, Igor Tchernikov, "Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ve Türkiye–Ukrayna İlişkileri (1918-1938)," Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, accessed July 02, 2018, url: http://www.atam.gov.tr/dergi/sayi-55/mustafa-kemal-ataturk-ve-turkiyeukrayna-iliskileri-1918-1938.

54 Igor Tchernikov, "Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ve Türkiye–Ukrayna İlişkileri (1918-1938)," 320.

55 Igor Tchernikov, "Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ve Türkiye–Ukrayna İlişkileri (1918-1938),"322.

Two weeks after the independence referendum, that is, ten days before the official dissolution of the USSR, on 16 December 1991, Turkey recognized the independence of Ukraine. On 3 February 1992, the two countries signed a protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations. Following that, they signed the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation on 4 May 1992. Besides the developments in the bilateral relations, Ukraine became a founding member of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) which was founded as a Turkey-led initiative to institute stability in the Black Sea region. Ukraine's aim to integrate into the liberal-capitalist world and Turkey's objective to prevent instability in its surrounding countries motivated this rapid onset of the relations in early 1990s.

In 2000s, Turkey-Ukraine relations gained impetus. In 2003, following the visit of the then Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, Turkey identified Ukraine as a "priority country." This is a proof of the strategic significance that Ukraine gained in Turkish foreign policy outlook. Soon after the Orange Revolution, in April 2004, the then Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, paid a visit to Ukraine. During this visit, the "Enhanced Joint Action Plan," which prepared the institutional framework for cooperation in different fields including security, economy, science and technology, energy, environment, and navigation, was signed. This action plan also included articles regarding Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration. Cooperation between Turkey and Ukraine continued to be discussed by the visit of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül to Kiev in May 2005, and by the then Prime Minister of Ukraine, Victor Yanukovych's visit to Ankara in 2007.[56] In this vein, Turkey's sensitivities with respect to Black Sea security and Ukraine's perspective of NATO and EU membership shaped Turkey-Ukraine relations in 2000s.[57]

It is seen that no matter which political party is in power in both countries, relations between these two countries have steadily developed since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Also, Turkey and Ukraine continue to support each other on many matters to a large extent in international platforms such as United Nations, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Military relations between them are growing at the international level too, through partnership with mechanisms such as NATO-Ukraine Commission and BLACKSEAFOR and Black Sea Harmony in addition to bilateral cooperation. One of the very important steps in the further development of relations was the establishment of the High-Level Strategic Council (HLSC) in January 2011. This raised the relationship between the two countries to the status of a strategic partnership. In the same year, the "Agreement on the Mutual Abolition of Visas" was signed at the first meeting of

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56   Orta Karadeniz Kalkınma Ajansı, *Ukrayna Ülke Raporu*, 7-8, accessed July 6, 2018, http://www.oka.org.tr/Documents/Ukrayna_Ulke_Raporu.pdf.

57   Mithat Çelikpala, "Son Yirmi Yılda Türkiye'nin Azerbaycan, Gürcistan ve Ukrayna'ya Yönelik Dış Politikası ve Bu Ülkelerdeki Faaliyetleri, " in *Bağımsızlarının Yirminci Yılında Azerbaycan, Gürcistan ve Ukrayna- Türk Dilli Halklar- Türkiye ile İlişkiler*, ed. İsmail Aydıngün and Çiğdem Balım (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 2012), 355-356.

the High-Level Strategic Council. The visa agreement which was the signal of the beginning of a new period has come in force since 2012.[58] The two countries moved one step further on 14 March 2017 when a passport-free regime was realized. Today, citizens of Turkey and Ukraine can visit these countries only with their valid ID cards. For the last couple of years, Turkish and Ukrainian officials have been negotiating to sign a Free Trade Agreement.[59]

Until the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation in February 2014, the Crimean Tatar issue was one of the major and at times sensitive topics between Ukraine and Turkey, especially due to the difficulties they experienced during their return to their homeland Crimea starting from 1989. Turkey, having a significant number of citizens of Crimean Tatar origin, always supported their return to their homeland Crimea and their integration into Ukraine. It is important to note that political and economic instability in post-Soviet Ukraine and the dominance of Russians in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea constituted an important obstacle to the return and the integration of the Crimean Tatars to the peninsula. Many Crimean Tatar demands were disregarded by the Crimean government including their recognition as the indigenous people of the peninsula. Their demand related to indigeneity was also overlooked by the Ukrainian state.

The occupation and illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014 by the Russian Federation has been a turning point not only for Turkey-Ukraine relations but also for the relations between the Crimean Tatar leadership and the Ukrainian government. As a result of the annexation, Turkey, Ukraine and the Crimean Tatar leadership got closer to each other and showed high solidarity against Russia's illegal actions.

Turkey strongly defended the territorial integrity of Ukraine and did not recognize Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula. Published on June 2015, the report of unofficial Turkish delegation on the situation of the Crimean Tatars after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea was based on the information obtained during the interviews conducted in Crimea on April 2015.[60] The report clearly revealed the oppression that was experienced by the Crimean Tatars and human rights violations suffered by those opposing the occupation including Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars. It has also played an important role in the reshaping of the relations between Turkey, Ukraine, the Crimean Tatar leadership and the Crimean Tatar people. This report uncovered the violations related to the right to life and bodily integrity; security and freedom of individuals; the right to fair trial; freedom of expression, travel, demonstration and assembly; freedom of religion and conscience; the right to education and the use of the mother tongue; pressures

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58 Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Relations between Turkey and Ukraine*, 2011, accessed June 29, 2018, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-ukraine.en.mfa.

59 Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Relations between Turkey and Ukraine*…

60 *Crimea Report: The Situation of the Crimean Tatars since the Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation*, 2015.

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on cultural life and media. Also, legal issues regarding citizenship and property were analyzed, again based on the interviews. Furthermore, this report revealed evidences with respect to the pressure and the surveillance experienced by the Crimean Tatar national movement members and feelings of fear, uncertainty and despair experienced by the Crimean Tatar community in general. This report also made clear how the principles of the Copenhagen Document (1990) and the Ljubljana Guidelines (2012) were violated by the *de facto* Crimean government.

The Crimean Tatar leadership voiced their strong determination in defending the territorial integrity of Ukraine and their refusal of Russia's annexation of Crimea at every opportunity both at the national and international levels. The other turning point was the Russian intervention and the war in the Donbas region that took place soon after the illegal annexation of the Crimea in April 2014. For many Ukrainians, this war was a traumatic fact challenging their perception of the Russians and Russia very strongly. The quick and determined resistance of the Crimean Tatars to the occupation of both the Crimea and the intervention of Russia in Donbas was of course thanks to their historical experiences with Russia. One can argue that non-violent protests of Crimean Tatars which keep universal human rights values above all in their struggle against the Russian Federation had a deep impact on the Ukrainian society in such a period of turmoil, and has been one of the factors contributing to the mobilization of Ukrainian nationalism and Ukrainian resistance to the Russian Federation. The resistance of Crimean Tatars led, on the one hand, to a new and much stronger alliance between the Crimean Tatar leadership and Ukraine and on the other, to the one between the Crimean Tatar leadership and Turkey. In addition to the three parties' adoption of a rationalist perspective, new social interactions and networks have been developed among them. All these developments not only caused a rapprochement between Crimean Tatar leadership and Ukrainian state but also between Ukraine and Turkey despite the development of relations between Turkey and the Russian Federation.

Although not a significant actor in Ukrainian-Turkish relations, the Meskhetian/Ahıska Turks, a Turkish Muslim community deported from Meskheti-Javakheti (Georgia) to Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1944 are one of the victim communities in Donbas, which is an issue of high importance to stress. The beginning of their migration to Ukraine, Donestsk, Luhansk and to other Ukrainian cities goes back to 1989. Ahıska Turks migrated to different places within the Soviet Union including the Donbas region following the pogrom that took place in Fergana and in some other cities of Uzbekistan. These people were affected by the war in Donbas and many of them came to Turkey (Erzincan-Üzümlü and Bitlis-Ahlat) as settled migrants.

The Persistent Patterns of the Turkish-Ukrainian Relations throughout History

The above review reveals the existence of several consistent dynamics and characteristics prevailing in Turkish-Ukrainian relation over time. First and

foremost, Turkish-Ukrainian relations are mostly shaped by the Russian factor and developed as collateral of Turkish-Russian or Ukrainian-Russian relations. As the above review demonstrates, in the seventeenth century, the Cossacks appealed to the Ottomans in search for an ally vis-à-vis Russia; in the beginning of the World War I and afterwards, Ukrainian nationalists approached to the Ottomans with the same motive; it was the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent independence of Ukraine that opened a new page in Turkish-Ukrainian relations. Finally, only after the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and the onset of the conflict in Donbas, as well as the onset of the jet crisis between Turkey and Russia, Turkey and Ukraine moved towards each other for their analogous objectives vis-à-vis Russia.

In "Ukraine Prism: Foreign Policy 2015" related to Ukrainian approach to Turkey, it is stated that Turkey does not appear as a separate priority in Ukrainian foreign policy agenda. Rather, Turkey becomes a topic only indirectly with respect to Ukraine's relations with Russia and the West.[61] Despite the seemingly promising developments in the last two-three years in Turkish-Ukrainian relations, the last report of Ukraine Prism underlines the continuing lack of consistency in partnership and strategic vision.[62] Considering these, we can claim that, by and large, currently Russia continues to be an important factor in Turkish-Ukrainian relations just like it has been since the 17th century.

Since relations between Turkey and Ukraine are mostly determined by the Russian factor, we argue that Turkey and Ukraine still remain far from being independent actors vis-a-vis each other and game-settlers in the Wider Black Sea region. We believe that this feature of the Turkish-Ukrainian relations is the main reason why we, in 2018, still wait to see truly satisfactory and concrete results of this progress despite the upgrading of the relations between the two countries to a strategic partnership in 2011.

To continue with the same issue, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine's foreign policy adopted a bipolar orientation as to the question of whether to belong to the East, i.e., *Russkiy Mir* (the Russian World) or to the West, i.e., the Euro-Atlantic structures and the EU. In fact, this bipolarity, to a large extent, determined almost every aspect of the Ukrainian politics and social developments, the most salient examples of which have been the political upheavals in 2004 (Orange Revolution) and 2014 (EuroMaidan or the Revolution of Dignity). Developing strategies from such a bipolar orientation, western oriented Ukrainian political elite noticed the "use value" of the NATO member and EU candidate Turkey as a link to the West. This perception led this elite to open up Ukraine to the "South," i.e., Turkey.

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61 Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism," *Ukraine Prism: Foreign Policy 2015* (Kyiv: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2015), 48.

62 Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism," *Ukrainian Prism: Foreign Policy 2017* (Kyiv: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2018), 105-107.

Despite the above mentioned actors and dynamics, we do believe that Turkey and Ukraine, as the two important actors of the wider Black Sea region, should mobilize their own potentials for developing a regional identity and cooperation that integrates western elements with eastern elements and orientations. Such an approach would not only be consistent with the historical and geographical realities of these countries, but also give Turkey and Ukraine a significant geopolitical status in today's interconnected world. This would also help to construct solid relations among Wider Black Sea countries, and trigger new initiatives for regional cooperation and eventually the formation of a powerful region.

Certainly, this does not mean ignoring the significance of the third parties. Here the point we would like to highlight is the capacity and the necessity of both countries to initiate relatively independent bilateral relations and regional cooperation. Obviously, regional and global powers have been and will be important factors in Turkish-Ukrainian relations. However, in our opinion, these powers should remain factors, not determinants.

Secondly, history shows that the Ottomans had never had well-thought long-term strategic plans with respect to the Northern Black Sea region. Rather, Ottomans' main goal had been holding the key locations on the Northern Black Sea shore to preserve the Black Sea as an "Ottoman Lake." For that purpose, they delegated their trustworthy ally, the Crimean Tatars, the responsibility to control the steppelands of the Northern Black Sea region in order to create a buffer zone to protect the coastal regions. Certainly, there were some sound reasons that inclined the Ottomans to run such a policy, such as the low economic value of the steppelands to the North of the Black Sea and the difficulty of holding that territory for the geographical and topographical reasons, that is, the absence of natural defense lines against the threats coming from the North.[63] However, eventually, this policy costed the Ottoman Empire not just the dominance over the Black Sea, but also the Caucasus.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey's main approach had been the preservation of the status quo in the Wider Black Sea region. For this purpose, Turkey led the creation of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) in 1992. However, Turkey mostly remained incompetent to build effective relations with Ukraine and the other newly independent countries of the region on well-planned road maps. The exception to that has been the development of a relatively more successful relations among Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Given the historical experience of the Ottoman Empire, we can argue that Turkey needs to develop a long sighted strategic policy on the Wider Black Sea region for its own security, if not for anything else. For that, Ukraine that eventually got on the track to liberate itself from the "little Russian" identity and mentality may

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63   See, Victor Ostapchuk, "Cossack Ukraine in and out of Ottoman Orbit, 1648-1681"…, 125.

become a major partner for its unfulfilled potentials. The strategic location of the Black Sea region as an East-West and North-South nexus and the huge scale projects that have been discussed or put into action to connect Asia and Europe such as the China-led Belt and Road Initiative or the Southern Gas Corridor. This would provide important advantages for nourishing regional cooperation not only between Turkey and Ukraine, but also with other countries of the region.

Thirdly, as the available research on the Turkish-Ukrainian history reveals that both during the Cossack rebellions and the World War I, Ottomans, whatever the reason, did not provide effective support to the Cossacks or the Ukrainian nationalists in their struggle against the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth or Tsarist Russia. Today, some Ukrainian scholars and policy makers either overtly or covertly complain that, notwithstanding the requirements of the declared strategic partnership, Turkey fails to provide effective support to Ukraine in its struggle for the de-occupation of Crimea and neutralization of the Russia-backed separatists in Donbas. Related to that, Turkey's decision about implementing a "balance policy" with Ukraine and Russia is a realistic position, which recognize both Ukraine and Russia as important actors of the Wider Black Sea region.

Fourthly, the absence of awareness and knowledge about Ukraine in Turkey is another salient pattern in the last century. Hakan Kırımlı, a prominent Turkish historian, writes in one of his studies that: "It should be noted that before the First World War Ukraine as a political concept, let alone its cause for independence, was virtually unknown to Ottoman press circles." [64] He adds that the first book in the Turkish language about modern Ukraine and Ukrainian nationalists and revolutionary movements was published only in 1915, after the envoys of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine stepped in Istanbul in October 1914. [65]

In June 2018, a quick search on the online book stores in Turkey reveals that there are only seven books on Ukraine in Turkish language available in the market, and only four of them are authored by Turkish scholars. The same vacuum could be observed within the Turkish academia, since there are only a handful of academics who study Ukraine. There is also a striking social distance between the two societies.

Development of academic studies on Turkey and Ukraine in both countries and the minimization of the social distance between the members of the two societies will definitely contribute to the development of the relations between the two countries and to regional integration. Related to that, contacts that started between Turkish and Ukrainian universities and research institutions, and the establishment of visa and passport free regime are promising.

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64   Hakan Kırımlı, "The Activities of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine…," 192
65   Hakan Kırımlı, "The Activities of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine…," 193

Conclusion

Based upon the above review of the Turkish-Ukrainian history and the noticeable persistent patterns in Turkish-Ukrainian relations bursting into sight, we argue that Turkey and Ukraine can develop strong and long-lasting strategic relations by coming to terms with the fact that geography is their destiny. Keeping this in mind, working on the idea of a regional awareness and perspective, both countries may contribute to the regional integration on solid grounds, which would help their own development. Developing solid economic and political relations with each other and other Wider Black Sea region countries with an inclusive and egalitarian approach may lead to the regionalization of the Wider Black Sea. It should not be overlooked that large scale projects such as the China-led Belt and Road Initiative, and the Southern Gas Corridor that have been put into action or deliberated to connect Asia and Europe would not only boost the strategic value of the Wider Black Sea region as a connector on the East-West and the North-South directions, but also would have the potential to contribute to the regionalization. In this anticipated process of regionalization of the Wider Black Sea, Turkey and Ukraine, having a vast potential due to their size, technological and industrial infrastructure, human capital, strategic position, cultural characteristics, and a long history, can take the lead with a "balance policy."

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