

istration seems to want peace with China and war with Russia, whereas the Trump administration wanted war with China and maybe peace with Russia. It seems that the U.S., no matter which administration takes over, is always trying to divide Russia and China, and focus its attack on one country and not the other? Is there a strategy to confront this? And perhaps is there a strategy for China to cooperate with Russia to end the occupation of Syria?

Amb. Huang: If you follow China's foreign policy towards the U.S., you would find out that it is to find stable consistency. We always want to build a relationship with the U.S. that's non-conflict, non-confrontation, and with cooperation and win-win result. It has never been changed. We would hope that the U.S. will have a constructive and a positive attitude towards China. When we're talking about solving the problems, I think we should work together as big countries, really—U.S., China, Russia, those are the big countries. We all have responsibilities to maintain world peace and prosperity. We will work with all the major countries to help to solve the problems, whether it's in Syria, or other countries, for a political settlement.

Sec. Boguslavskiy: Thank you. First of all, I'd like

to comment to Dr. Happer about the Soviet professor who proposed to plant fruit in Siberia, somewhere in the North Pole. Maybe he was prescient: Now, our Siberia is getting warmer, so we can already plant some oranges, or I don't know, apples! [laughter] It's been 100 years since that time; the planet is changing a bit.

In terms of Russian-American relations, I hope that the new American administration doesn't want to have war with us. It was said by President Biden that he's ready for some cooperation in fields of mutual interest. As far as we know, this agreement on strategic arms, the New START agreement, was renewed with the Biden administration, and that's very good. And here, in my capital, we also like the agreement to continue and to restart cooperation with the United States in many fields. Because we are quite big countries, we have common interests about the whole planet, and our cooperation, as well as cooperation between the United States and China is beneficial to the whole planet. So I hope it will be understood here in Washington. Russia is always ready and open to strengthen cooperation with the United States.

In terms of Syria, Russia continues its support to the government of Syria, the fight against terrorism, and it will continue to do so in upcoming years, to also continue the support for rebuilding the country.

Denys Pluinage

Is Turkey Just an Anglo-American Pawn?

Denys Pluinage is vice-president of the association, L'Alliance Franco-Russe. He delivered this speech on March 20, 2021 to Panel 2 of the Schiller Institute conference, "The World at a Crossroads—Two Months into the Biden Administration."

Hello, I am Denys Pluinage, a French national, but having lived and worked for more than 30 years abroad, in the United States, Great Britain, Belgium, Switzerland and finally a little over fifteen years in Russia.

Today, I am vice-president and webmaster of an association with the name, "L'Alliance Franco-Russe."



Schiller Institute

Denys Pluinage

My subject today is the role of Turkey in the conflicts in the South Caucasus and its relations with Russia. I will try to answer the question asked to me, whether: "Turkey is just an Anglo-American pawn in this region?"

Turkey Balances Its Relations with NATO and Russia

I will start by pointing out that the antagonism between Russia and Turkey is not new. The relations between these two countries are not a long tranquil river; quite

the opposite. From the 16th to the 20th century, eleven wars were fought between the Russian Empire (until 1917), then the Soviet Union and the

Ottoman Empire (until 1918), and then Turkey.

After the signing of the Montreux Convention in 1936, Stalin's claims to territories to the west of Turkey and control of the maritime straits strained relations again. Especially after World War II, Turkey, which had benefited from the Marshall Plan, joined the Council of Europe in 1950 and NATO in 1952. But relations will then "warm up" after the death of Stalin in 1953, and the USSR will provide assistance to the industrialization of Turkey from 1956.

Since 2000, Turkey's foreign policy has aimed to establish the country's independence by maintaining a certain equilibrium between the United States and NATO on the one hand and the Russian Federation on the other.

In the Black Sea, for example, Turkey engaged in maritime patrols such as "Black Sea Harmony" in 2004, an operation joined by Russia in 2006, and then set up a "joint naval operations center" between the riparian countries (an institution which Georgia left in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014).

On the other hand, Turkey continues to defend the Montreux Convention, which limits the duration of the presence of warships from non-riparian countries to 21 days. Hence the rotation of NATO ships.

But its geographical position puts it at the center of a conflict zone in which it cannot avoid taking sides. Turkey has borders to the east and south with Georgia, Armenia, Iran, Iraq and Syria, but also to the west with Bulgaria and Greece. It is a road of entrance to Europe for refugees from war-torn countries, which it has to deal with in one way or another. On the other hand, it is one of the four countries (Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria) that have a large Kurdish population in search of a nation.

Erdogan's War on Kurds Drives Conflict with Syria and Russia

Today, the Kurdish problem is undoubtedly one of the main concerns of Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

In 2011, Turkey made the choice of trying to provoke the fall of Bashar al-Assad, which again put it on a collision course with the Russian Federation, which supports the legal government in Syria. Turkey supports the Syrian opposition. It also supports the groups fighting the Syrian Kurds. But at the same time, its refusal to engage in the fight against the Islamic State raises the question of its strategic solidarity with NATO.

In mid-2015, Turkey conducted air raids against the Islamic State, but took advantage of the opportunity to also intensify the fighting against the Kurds, who were supported by the U.S.

Erdogan's Belated Apology

In November 2015, a Turkish F-16 jet fighter shot down a Russian Su-24. The pilot was then killed on the ground by rebels. Russia did not react immediately, but asked an apology, which Turkey refused twice, once through the voice of its Minister of Foreign Affairs, then through the voice of its President.

At the end of the year, Russia imposed a series of sanctions including an embargo on imports of Turkish fruits and vegetables, the suppression of charter flights between Russia and Turkey, and a ban on Russian travel agencies selling holidays in Turkey. Two measures that are very penalizing for the Turkish economy.

On the military front, Russia is delivering weapons to the five thousand Kurdish fighters in Afrin and has provided them with air support. Result, on June 27, 2016, seven months after the destruction of the Russian bomber, Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent a letter of apology to Vladimir Putin, accompanied by condolences for the family of the killed pilot.

In comparison, when the Azeri army shot down a Russian helicopter during the recent Karabakh war, Azeri President Aliyev immediately called Vladimir Putin to apologize.

Russia Saves Erdogan from Coup Attempt

Turkey's foreign policy is undeniably marked by the domestic problems of a contested president. Prime Minister from 2003 to 2014 and President of the Republic of Turkey since 2014, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has to confront an active opposition.

We have already talked about the problem of Turkey's Kurds. He has also long advocated Turkey's integration into the European Union. At first, Brussels reacted favorably, but then changed its mind, which some of Erdogan's opposition blamed him for. In addition, relations with the EU have become strained, especially on the issue of migrants, which the Turkish president has transformed into a means of pressure, not to say blackmail.

In 2016, Recep Tayyip Erdogan had to face a coup attempt visibly steered from abroad. Its failure allowed him to strengthen his position and led to purges with

more than 50,000 arrests, including opposition deputies and the dismissal of more than 100,000 public sector employees, as well as the implementation of security reforms and a presidentialization of the regime. Erdogan was re-elected in the 2018 early presidential election.

It is worth noting that Moscow gave a helping hand to Erdogan to defeat the plot. Russian intelligence services had gotten early signs of an attack being prepared on the presidential palace aimed at Erdogan personally. Russia warned the Turkish president who was able to leave the building before the attack occurred.

Turkey Buys Advanced Air Defense System from Russia

The fact remains that Turkey is a member of NATO, even if its relations within this organization are very different from those of the other members. The purchase by Turkey of a regiment of Russian S-400 (anti-missile) missiles is an illustration.

From the American point of view, Turkey is part of the arc of encirclement of Russia and China. Brzezinski spoke in 1997 of a “geopolitical pivot.” But Recep Tayyip Erdogan doesn’t see it that way. Neither does his former foreign minister (from 2009 to 2014), then prime minister (from 2014 to 2016), Ahmet Davutoglu, whose policy was to avoid “all problems with the neighbors” and a balanced diplomacy between the Middle East, Europe and the Russian world.

Contrary to the position of countries like France or Germany, the Turkish president considers himself as a partner of the United States in the Alliance and not as a vassal. The United States has understood this and is in no hurry to implement the sanctions it has threatened Ankara with—with the exception, it is true, of the F-35 fighter program. They have excluded Turkey, but is this really a sanction?

The purchase of the S-400 poses several problems for the U.S. The first is the fear that, thanks to the sophisticated radar of the S-400 batteries, the Turks will realize that the F-35 does not have the performance it claims. In fact, many people already think so, including in the ranks of the U.S. Air Force.

But in addition, if, for the United States, NATO is certainly a defense tool for the Atlantic basin (in the broad sense), it is also a commercial tool that allows the sale of American weapons to allies. These allies are considered as captive clients and there is no ques-

tion of letting them buy their supplies elsewhere. This is all the more true since Russia is now in a position to offer more efficient weaponry at significantly lower prices.

The delivery of the S-400s, which began in June 2019, has now been completed. In early March 2021, Ankara, via the voice of its defense industry chief Ismail Demir, expressed interest in purchasing a second series of S-400s. Turkey is also interested in the new fifth-generation Russian fighter, the Sukhoi-57.

Turkey’s Arms Industry

Let us not forget that Turkey has its own arms industry. In the 1950s, Turkey benefited from American aid in this field. It was the third recipient of U.S. military aid, after Israel and Egypt. But in 1968, after the Turkish intervention in Cyprus, the United States declared an arms embargo. According to the usual pattern, a domestic production emerged following an embargo.

Turkey produced 240 F-16 fighter jets under U.S. license for its national army. It was part of the F-35 project for which it was to produce parts. The F-35 project is currently “frozen” (perhaps forever). Turkey also produces drones, whose exports are increasing. It has produced six submarines, based on German plans, as well as eight “Meko 400” frigates, again based on German plans. A tank program is underway.

In 2014 and 2015 Turkish exports of military equipment were more than \$1.6 billion.

Turkey also has the second largest army in NATO, behind that of the USA—an army based on conscription with 510,000 men, without taking into account the paramilitary forces (more than 100,000 men) and the reserves (378,700 men).

Turkish-Russian Economic Cooperation

In the economic field, Turkey is developing its cooperation with Russia. I have mentioned the import of fruits and vegetables and the importance of Russian tourism, which offers Turkey a lot of income. But it is in the field of energy that exchanges have become the most important.

The first gas pipeline, “Blue Stream,” has connected Russia and Turkey under the Black Sea since 2003. In January of this year, Presidents Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin inaugurated a second gas pipeline, “TurkStream,” which connects the city of Anapa in

Russia to Kiyiköy, in Thrace, the European part of Turkey. It consists of two conduits, one of which will supply more than 15 billion cubic meters per year to Turkey, while the second will deliver equivalent quantities to Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary and Slovakia.

The United States and several Eastern European countries have expressed their opposition to this pipeline, which bypasses Ukraine. The Americans have also spoken of sanctions as for “Nord Stream II.”

Presidents Putin and Erdogan officially launched the construction of the third unit of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant this week.

The construction of the fourth and final unit is expected to take place in 2022. This means that the plant could be in operation by 2023, the centenary of the Turkish republic. This will allow Turkey to increase the share of electricity produced by “clean” sources and decrease its dependence on coal imports from third countries. Rosatom is the main investor in this project, which therefore does not weigh on the country’s budget.

Russia Is More Reliable

As we can see, cooperation between Russia and Turkey is on an upward slope, whatever the geopolitical differences.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan does not consider himself as an unconditional ally of the United States, even less as an Anglo-American pawn. Nevertheless, Turkey occupies a key geographical position for NATO in the region. But the Turkish president is focusing on his own interests. He seeks to pursue an independent and sovereign policy while giving guarantees to Russia and NATO.

Simply, today the Russian neighbor offers more guarantees. The Russian Federation does not intervene in the internal affairs of other countries unless it has been invited by the legal government, as in Syria. It is a reliable partner, one can sign an agreement with it without risking that three years later a new president would unilaterally denounce this agreement.

Turkey’s Disagreements with the U.S.

Turkey disagrees with the United States on a number of important issues. There is a fundamental opposition between a policy of “regime change” with a global aim on the American side and a regional policy of maintaining the status quo on the Turkish side.

On the American side, relations with the new Biden

administration are not starting under the best of auspices. Antony Blinken, the U.S. Secretary of State, recently told the U.S. Senate that,

... Turkey is an ally that in many ways ... is not acting as an ally should and that is a very, very important challenge for us and we are very clear on that.

As for Joseph Biden, he said in 2015 that he expected to see an independent Kurdistan emerge in his lifetime, which is absolutely intolerable for Ankara because it infringes on the sovereignty of eastern Turkey.

Hence, the sky is not completely clear between Moscow and Ankara. I have already mentioned Ukraine, but Ukraine is above all an American project to destabilize Russia.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan certainly does not seek to destabilize his powerful neighbor. If he agreed to deliver drones to the regime of Volodomir Zelinski in Ukraine, it was above all a sign of goodwill to the United States in this period of tension between the two “allies.” The low price of the drones is, on the surface, an indication of the pressure under which were the U.S.-Turkey relations.

Turkey, Russia and Libya

Turkey and Russia also have different points of view on the situation in Libya, where they support two opposing camps. But Libya is a peripheral subject for the Kremlin, even if Russia has economic interests there. As for Turkey, it is the means it has found to claim its right to exploration in the Mediterranean and thus compete with the EastMed project of its adversaries in the eastern Mediterranean—Israel, Cyprus and Greece.

This long history of conflict and “rapprochement” has given Russia and Turkey the experience to engage in bargaining through compromise and compensation. Their acceptance of the logic of spheres of influence, the absence of Europe on strategic Mediterranean issues and the weakness of the American empire provide them with additional room for maneuvering to make their interests coexist. Because, in the end, neither of them wants to come to a direct confrontation.

As Arnaud Dubien, director of the Franco-Russian Observatory in Moscow, says, “Putin and Erdogan know how far to go in their disagreements.”