



# TATARSTAN

Contested autonomy and pursue of foreign relations with Turkey

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*A Thesis on  
contemporary foreign  
policy of the republic  
of Tatarstan and its  
ability to pursue  
foreign relations with  
Turkey*

**Master Thesis**

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## List of Acronyms

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FPA - Foreign Policy Analysis

IR - International Relations

KFU - Kazan Federal University

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

TIKA - Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency

UCCE - The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey

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# 1. Introduction

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The special status of the republic of Tatarstan that granted them a fair degree of autonomy has ultimately become contested in 2017. Furthermore, attempts to get an extension from the Russian federal center has failed (Smirnova 2017, Kashin 2017, Antonov 2017). On the other hand, it remains unclear whether it has affected the republic's capacity to pursue paradiplomatic relations with other countries since little research has been conducted on this particular topic. Therefore, the focal point of this research is the end of Tatarstan's special status and their paradiplomatic relations with Turkey. At first, to get an idea of the origin of Tatarstan's pursue of autonomy and external relations, it is important to briefly analyze its historical ties with Russia.

In the eighth and ninth century, both Tatars and Russians became part of the Khazar Suzerainty. Between the ninth and tenth century, relations became difficult when Tatars chose Islam as their dominant religion while their counterpart chose for Christianity. Between the Thirteenth and fifteenth century, the Russians were conquered by the Golden Horde that consisted predominantly of Tatars. The year 1552 was a pivotal moment to the Tatar domination when Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible conquered the Kazan Khanate. As a result, Tatars had to give up their sovereignty (Yemelianova 2000, 38). The following two-hundred years had been difficult for the Tatar population as they were restrained in their cultural practices. Tatars were forced to convert from Islam to Christianity, give up their culture, hand over their fertile land, and occasionally were extruded to Central Asia. Under Catherine the Great, the persecution of Tatars ended. The reason was that Tatars had aided Catherine in putting an end to Pugachev's uprising. What followed was that they were granted rights that made Islamic education possible. In turn, this effectively boosted their sense of building their statehood (Malik 1994, 6-8). When the Bolshevik Revolution came in 1917, the Tatars attempted to establish their own state that encompassed the territories of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and a part of the Orenburg region. However, the Tatars were forced by the Bolsheviks into an administrative unit of the Soviet Republic that was similar to Tatarstan's territory nowadays (Yemelianova 2000, 38). Under Soviet rule, Tatarstan became known as the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Although referred to as an autonomous subject within the Soviet Union, in practice it did not enjoy such status. The republic was exposed to Russification policies and suppression of their cultural rights, a situation that would be would

change under glasnost' and perestroika and continue after the fall of the Soviet Union (Slocum 1999, 52-3).

In the 1990s, Tatarstan revived the notion of having their own statehood. Initially, they pursued sovereignty and independence, but in the end gained a fair share of autonomy and the ability to pursue foreign external relations after concluding a treaty with the Russian federal center in 1994 (Malik 1994). In relation to Turkey, ties were established in 1991 and have continued to grow exponentially (Suleymanov 2015a). Important to these relations is the idea that Tatarstan and Turkey have been the closest in regard to their cultures and economies (Albina 2010, 114) On the other hand, Tatar-Turkey relations have also been subjected to challenges which include the period when Putin came to power in 2000 and the 2015 Russia-Turkey crisis as a result of downing a bomber plane (Semyonov 2011, 24-5, Belenkaya and Krivosheyev 2015). Nevertheless, the question remains of how Tatarstan has been able to pursue its independent foreign policy with Turkey after the end of their special status in 2017.

The structure of this research consists of a theoretical framework, background information on Tatarstan since the 1990s, a case study concerning Tatarstan-Turkey relations, and a conclusion on the impact Tatarstan's special status on Tatar-Turkey relations. First of all, the theoretical framework introduces the definition of foreign policy and further divides it into (a) core elements needed for foreign policy to exist, (b) tools used to conduct foreign policy, and (c) the notions of self-determination, autonomy, and paradiplomacy. These elements are important to demonstrate that Tatarstan has an active foreign policy, that it falls under the concept of paradiplomacy, and that these elements are important to its ties with Turkey. Second, the background information explains how Tatarstan became an autonomous entity, what political institutions are present, and its ability to pursue paradiplomatic ties with other countries as well as challenges to it. Third, the case study focusses on the relations between Tatarstan and Turkey which includes its start in the 1990s, cooperation between these entities in recent times, the 2015 Russia-Turkey crisis that challenged Tatar-Turkey relations, and a discussion on the end of their special status and possible impact on paradiplomacy with Turkey. Lastly, the conclusion gives an answer to the research question that is backed up with arguments.

Altogether, Tatarstan's autonomy has considerably been limited by the Russian federal center over the years. While this phenomenon has become visible in the internal matters of Tatarstan, this

research attempts to contribute to the existing discussion on how it has impacted Tatarstan on a foreign policy level. The outcome of this research will hopefully render interesting insights on Tatarstan's contemporary situation in its pursuit of paradiplomatic relations with Turkey and add to the knowledge of how particular regions within Russia are able to function on an international stage.

### 1.1 Research question

After the end of Tatarstan's special status in 2017, how has the republic been able to pursue its independent external relations with Turkey?

### 1.2 Methodology

In order to assess Tatar-Turkey relations, qualitative with elements of quantitative research have been used guided by the framework of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). In short, FPA engages in how states make and execute foreign policy as well as react to it (Potter 2010). Secondary data analysis applies to the approach taken in this research overall. Even though primary data collection had been a planned part of this research by travelling to Tatarstan to conduct interviews, the measures taken surrounding the coronavirus made it impossible within the time period this thesis needed to be written.

Secondary and primary sources have been collected using scientific search engines which include Leiden University Catalogue and Google scholar as well as the regular Google search engine. These sources consist of academic books, journal articles, newspaper articles, statistics, and websites containing either background information or depict recent events. Altogether, except for statistics, qualitative sources have contributed to create an overview of how Tatarstan became autonomous, had the ability to pursue foreign relations, autonomy and foreign external relations became contested, and developed its relations with Turkey. The quantitative research consisting of official statistics on trade turnover between Russia-Turkey and Tatarstan-Turkey have contributed to demonstrating the viability of relations between these entities in terms of numbers. Data overall has been analyzed by intensive reading, constructing a timeline in order to build the analysis, and critical thinking to be able to interpret the current situation.

## 2. Theoretical framework

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The aim of this theoretical framework is to outline what concepts and theories of foreign policy exist. Even though foreign policy consists of many more elements in comparison with what has been described in this chapter, the emphasis and aim of this framework is that it will be applicable to the case of Tatarstan. The chapter starts with the overarching idea of foreign policy and will further narrow definitions down into different subcategories.

### 2.1 Definition of foreign policy

Foreign policy is defined as the “totality of a country’s policies toward and interactions with the environment beyond its borders” (Breuning 2007, 5). The purpose of foreign policy is that it focusses on external rather than domestic politics. Furthermore, in order to conduct external relations, states are indicated as a primary group that are central to this aspect, however, this is not always the case (Kesgin 2011, 336). What used to be the main characteristic of foreign policy, is that there had been the emphasis of a state attempting to retain and increase its security and power. Moreover, it resided on how to prevent war, to fight when necessary and to ensure its borders were safeguarded. Yet, a shift from war to economic relations arose after the end of the Cold War which is known as Globalization. This phenomenon emphasizes the interrelatedness of world economies rather than focusing on power and war (Breuning 2007, 5). An additional interpretation of globalization it is aimed at stability in an international context, to increase economic prosperity and to maintain a national identity. Still, the way foreign policy is formed depends on factors such as the time period, states and individuals. Altogether, there is no definitive definition for foreign policy, rather there are multiple ways to view it. (Morin and Paquin 2018, 19)

There are different ingredients that need to be present for foreign policy to be created. First of all, it concerns the presence of a certain physical area, which generally can be defined as a state or territory. Second, resources are essential for the capability to pursue external relations. These resources can be of human, economic or political nature. Last, population and various forces within a state or territory are influencing factors in making foreign policy. It creates favorable circumstances or brings about uncertainties and challenges. (Webber and Smith 2013, 29-30). On the other hand, it is not as straightforward as it seems. It must be emphasized there are a myriad of factors involved that make up foreign policy. Some examples are national history, culture, the

presence of political institutions, the extent of territory, geographic location, etcetera (Breuning 2007, 163). Also, there are different ways to analyze foreign policy from the perspective of international relations (IR), which in turn can be divided in different theories. Examples of major theories are realism, liberalism and constructivism. The aim of these theories is to describe how states correlate with each other. Alongside theories, there is aspect of different approaches to foreign policy (Kesgin 2011, 337). At least one approach is FPA which, simply put, aims at how states or actors within a state shape, carry out, and conduct foreign policy. The origin of this approach can be found in the 1950s when the need to create a better understanding of foreign policy appeared (Potter 2010). A more extended view on FPA describes individuals, groups and society that are key to the decision-making process. This approach looks deeper into what influences decision making divided into these different categories (Kesgin 2011, 339).

## 2.2 Bases that determine foreign policy

As Snyder, Morin and Sapin (2002:68) define it, is that no state pursues a single path of action and that the actions pursued differ in scope and content. As such, the path a country or territory will take on an international stage is based on different aspects. In order to identify such a path, at least four of these aspects that can be analyzed are foreign policy objectives, a doctrine, and national interest, and resources (Morin and Paquin 2018, 19).

First of all, foreign policy objectives as a definition is hard to define. However, it could be viewed as either long or short-term objectives, considered as favorable or unfavorable, or even be related to each other. Another way to regard objectives is to divide them into certain groups such as economy, security, culture etcetera. A formula that would determine the creation of such objectives would be in order a target, a direction, expectations and a time span. Subsequently, this is known as a “directional aspect of state behavior” (Snyder, Bruck and Sapin 2002, 72-73). Nonetheless, these foreign policy objectives are not as apparent as it may seem. Even though foreign policy exists when there is an aim that is thereafter executed to achieve a certain goal, the intentions behind such policy can have different meanings. Policies are connected with the words spoken by individual actors that determine a certain course of action. Such a policy may contain hidden intentions in order to make a crucial move. Therefore, the initial objective conceived could actually include a deeper of different aim. On the other hand, actors could come to a reciprocal agreement that is based on an assertion of their intentions (Onuf 2001, 77-79). Some examples of hidden intentions could either imply military intervention under the guise of global stability whilst actually



seeking to obtain national resources or to showcase power, political leaders toning down the extent of their foreign policy objective in order for it to be favorable on a national or international scale, or setting trade restrictions under the banner of safeguarding the environment whilst actually protecting domestic businesses (Morin and Paquin 2018, 20).

Second, a political ideology is defined as a “set of ideas, beliefs, values, and opinions” that intentionally or unintentionally determines a certain course of action in the creation of public policy that can legitimize, define, challenge or alter the state of a political community. In this definition, doctrine is identified as one of the main pillars (Freeden 2001, 7174). Yet, another approach is placing political ideology and political doctrine parallel to each other. In this matter, political ideology is to be identified as a more common or universal way to conceive reality, whereas political doctrine is to be identified as having a narrow focal point that is mainly aimed at particular topics. In practice, a political doctrine is utilized as a tool to consolidate a political identity among a specific group of people by putting forward a set of principles that one willingly identifies with (Şandru 2012, 93-95). In foreign policy, looking for a doctrine is an approach if one seeks to identify foreign policy objectives. Usually, doctrines can either be located in official documents or statements made by the government that is used to put forward their interests or goals (Morin and Paquin 2018, 21). Around the world many political doctrines can be identified, but to at least demonstrate one case, Russia’s foreign policy concept of 2000 would be an example. It consisted of general principles that described bases on which the Russian Federation acted and how they viewed the modern world and challenges within. It is to be recognized that doctrines, such as this one, are mainly generic and conceptual of nature (Foreign Policy Concept 2000).

Third, a national interest in its basis is to be viewed as a political community, regardless of a person’s individual interest, that is capable of expressing a common interest or concern that can lead to collective action (Burchill 2005, 13). The first aspect important to national interest is language, the element needed to express thoughts or ideas. Within language there are certain words such as “totalitarianism”, “terrorist”, and others that are used to create an image of the world. One concrete example would be the “puppets of the Kremlin” which could be utilized to create a certain perception on politics in Russia within the international system. On the other hand, such a perception can also be subjected to alternative views if these become commonly accepted (Weldes 1996, 275, 284-6). Another aspect is that national interest is crucial to the formulation of policy

and strategy, which is essential for a singular nation, sovereign nation, or any entity that participates in the international system. Its creation starts with an aim that is deemed to have a positive effect on itself which can be of economic, cultural, political, environmental, or other nature. In this regard, the national interest is multi-faceted. Furthermore, it becomes relevant if it voices the importance of either the whole, or a significant part of its political community. The ones that rely on national interest as their means of influencing policy are statesmen. Contrarily, a statesmen's interest is not an aspect that determines the final outcome of a certain policy because their power is limited. Furthermore, the formulation of national interest does not necessarily mean that the desired goal of a state or entity will entirely be achieved, rather, it can work towards a certain outcome within the limits of an actor's power. Altogether, even though national interest could be considered a "permanent feature of the international system", the essence is that its characteristics can change over time (Stolberg 2012, 13-15).

Last, resources could most likely be understood in the perspective of power, which indeed is an essential part of international relations, but is not the only aspect that determines foreign policy (Morin and Paquin 2018, 27). Moreover, it also does not necessarily portray itself in the means of war. Historically, power is connected to military force and the number of soldiers an empire or any other entity could provide together with equipment (Aron 1966, 150, 157-8). Yet, there are different resources that could be analyzed for measuring foreign policy. These include territory size, population size, presence of raw materials, diaspora present in other countries or regions, moral or ethical influence, historical aspects, and so on. However, noteworthy is that resources as a tool are not necessarily applicable to all cases concerning foreign policy. Another aspect is that measuring resources should be adapted to the circumstances of any country or entity (Morin and Paquin 2018, 27-). To briefly demonstrate at least one example where resources play a role, the case of Russia and its strategy of 'carrot and sticks' is an appropriate case. As Russia managed to reenter the international stage as a regional power under Putin, it increasingly began to utilize their gas and oil as a means of conducting foreign policy. Its method consisted of giving out subsidized prices for countries as a token of their loyalty, but on the other hand, would punish countries for their disloyalty. Ukraine could be taken as an exemplary case. Under former president Leonid Kuchma deals in favor to Moscow were rewarded with oil and gas deals, whereas under Viktor Yushenko, whose orientation was pro-Western, gas and oil sanctions were utilized to reassert power over Ukraine (Newnham 2011, 134-5, 138, ).

### 2.3 Tools of foreign policy

There are different tools of foreign policy that are utilized to reach a certain goal. This can be achieved by using either hard, soft or smart power. To elaborate on these terms, hard power is an aspect that forces another country or entity to behave in a manner that it would otherwise not do. This type of power is to be understood in the perspective of military action, forceful persuasion, or through the means of economic sanctions to advance national interest. Contrarily, soft power is defined as a tool of influencing a country or entity to do what one desires without the use of force. This can either be done by persuasion or attraction. The last term, smart power, is to be understood as a mix of hard and soft power that a country or entity could use to reach a certain goal (Wilson 2008, 114-5).

Another more concise description of foreign policy tools is socialization, coercion, and intervention. In first instance, socialization in itself to be understood as “a transfer of beliefs, values and ideas from one actor to another” and is achieved through passive manners under which rational communication, rhetorical action and public diplomacy are the main factors in this category (Morin and Paquin 2018, 32). Its principles are based on a civilized manner to resolve conflict or maintain political stability, peacefully persuading another country or entity with ideas or arguments, and developing an understanding of the other to build and maintain stable relations as well as peacefully advancing interests and values (Eriksen and Weigard 1997, 219, 227-8, Kratochvil, Cibulková and Beneš 2006, 499, Tago 2017). Second, coercion is the next step to advance one’s interests. However, it is based on a more aggressive manner by generally using threats to influence another entity which includes carrot and sticks, sanctions, dissuasion, coercive diplomacy (Bratton 2005, 100-3, Morin and Paquin 2018, 35-7). These aspects are characterized whereas (a) carrot and stick is a system of reward or punishment whereas the stick is the punishment, and the carrot is the prize, (b) sanctioning is an approach that pressures another entity in the case of misconduct which are mainly economic in nature, (c) dissuasion is an approach that convinces an entity not to take a certain action for it would undermine either the aims and interest of another entity, or threaten world peace, and (d) coercive diplomacy is a tool that is a combination of threatening another entity, but using limited controlled force providing it will generate positive outcomes (Akçay and Kanat 2017, 416-8, Weiss 1999, 503, Kugler 2002, 1, Levy 2008, 539). Lastly, intervention can be divided two distinct categories which are political or military in nature. A political intervention in foreign policy is to be understood as disrupting the operations of a

separatist or rebel group, or by supporting a weak governing authority, and a military intervention involves an entity physically intervening in another territory by using military force (Baumann 1988, 173, Morin and Paquin 2018, 37). Nevertheless, in the case of Tatarstan, it must be noted that hard power in the form of intervention is not applicable as there was no war, but nevertheless noteworthy as there has been a mention that conflict could develop if Tatarstan would not cooperate with the Russian federal center, an aspect that will be described in the next chapter (Erlanger 1992).

#### 2.4 The concept of self-determination, autonomy & paradiplomacy

There are many regions around the world that either gained autonomy or are in the process of doing so. The idea of autonomy has generally been gained through peaceful means. However, in order to understand autonomy, it is important to capture the notion of self-determination in first instance. After these terms have been defined, the concept of ‘paradiplomacy’ in perspective of sub-national units, or in other words, autonomous regions will be defined as they are interrelated.

In order to understand what drives regions to gain self-determination and autonomy, it is important to establish some core values. For a long time, self-determination and autonomy have been analyzed as being one and the same idea. In the time of colonization, self-determination was understood by governments as a dangerous aspect of regions wanting to secede themselves from their hosts. This view started to change after the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, its collapse was met with many conflicts that included Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Georgia, Yugoslavia, and so on. A dangerous aspect of self-determination had been that of Yugoslavia that ultimately fell apart as a country. Thus, the term was perceived as a threat to territorial integrity. In order to fend off any heated conflicts, autonomy became an instrument for secessionist movements (Wolff and Weller 2005, 1). Thus, autonomy preserved the territorial integrity of a country while at the same time secessionists were able to exercise self-determination (Cornell 1999, 186).

Self-determination is mainly to be recognized in the perspective of colonized states and the urge of becoming independent. This aspect has gradually become incorporated into international law since the 1950s. It emphasizes the importance for recognition of people’s right of self-determination (Young 2004, 177-8, 181). Secession is one aspect that falls under this term. It is a decision made by a region or territory within an existing state to secede itself and its population

without approval from the central government. Under international law, this notion is not generally recognized, nor is it prohibited. In this case, states are allowed to fight secessionists to preserve its territorial integrity. It is only when it involves human rights that self-determination might get precedence over state integrity (Walter and von Ungern-Sternberg 2014, 2-4). In practice however, the pursuit of self-determination has led to bloody conflicts. At least one example would be that of Chechnya, even when they were offered autonomy, they declined. Nonetheless, autonomy is a way to transfer a form of self-determination without giving up territorial integrity (Cornell 1999, 186, 191-2).

Autonomy has multiple meanings and conceptualizing this term presents difficulties. Yet, there have been attempts that give at least an idea of what autonomy encompasses (Wolff 2010, 19). Michael Hechter (2000;114) defines autonomy as “a state of affairs falling short of sovereignty”. Another definition comes from Hurst Hannum and Richard Lillich (1980;860) who wrote, “autonomy is understood to refer to independence of action on the internal or domestic level, as foreign affairs and defense normally are in the hands of the central or national government, but occasionally power to conclude international agreements concerning cultural or economic matters also may reside with the autonomous entity”. However, there is a common notion that can be identified whereas central governments are key to the transfer of a certain degree of power to autonomous regions. What this includes is that regions often have access to a great extent of executive, legislative and judicial powers. It must however be emphasized that, even though it comes close to sovereignty, it is still the central government that is in charge. Yet, it could be considered wrong for a central government to interfere in the business of an autonomous region unless it concerns such a region to surpass central power or become a threat to national security (Wolff 2010, 20).

An aspect that comes with autonomy is paradiplomacy. Originally the world was viewed through the lens of two perspectives in world politics, mainly those of states and, on the other side, those of non-state actors, with the latter to be understood as entities ranging from non-governmental organizations (NGO) to terrorist groups (Rosenau 1988, 327-30). However, shortly before the end of the Cold War the notion of ‘paradiplomacy’ came into being. Due globalization processes, the world saw many changes that also led to an upcoming presence of sub-national units on the international stage (Lecours 2002, 91-3). Subnational activism was the main force behind this

notion which was stimulated by the economic and political effect of globalization (Tavares 2016, 14).

Paradiplomacy is described as sub-national units having to ability to pursue their own interests regardless of what state they are situated in. Furthermore, it is to be understood as something that sub-national units in either provinces, regions or autonomous entities within a state pursue (Wolff 2007, 1). The notion of paradiplomacy is found in both domestic and world politics. The domestic dimension of paradiplomacy consist of regional actors and features both regional and national political structures. The structures present create the opportunity to operate on an international level which regional politicians can utilize to subject their region to the international stage. These domestic structures in relation to paradiplomacy are important in the sense that (a) the existence and power of a region is determined by how national and regional institutes develop, (b) it is an extension of a specific domestic situation or conflict rather than seeking power or influence, and (c) gives regional politicians guidelines of what interests they aim to pursue on an international stage. The dimension of world politics features four distinctive structures that are important to paradiplomacy. These structures include (a) NGO's, (b) foreign state structures seeking active relations with a regional government, (c) regional governments that seek ties with other states or organizations, and (d) the global economy itself whereas regions become important economic entities that import, export, seek investments, and work out agreements (Lecours 2002, 96-7, 103-4).

There is another perspective that can be added to paradiplomacy that includes cities. These have emerged over time as important international hubs. Even though their concept within paradiplomacy has not yet been defined, there has been discussion on this aspect and mentioning cities adds relevance to the notion of paradiplomacy (Tavares 2016, 1-2, 14). Nonetheless, in the scope of sub-national units, autonomy along with paradiplomacy has been regarded as a threat, which is also mentioned above. The idea for a state that a sub-national unit can pursue its own foreign policy is met with suspicion because it is considered that it undermines sovereignty of the state itself and, in turn, conflicts with the state's wider interests. On the other hand, where borders of a state are not threatened by any means, considering this as a threat is often without reason. Instead of conflicting with the state's wider interests, it is mainly an aspect that turns out positive for a state. In terms of power, an effective central government retains authority over the foreign

relations pursued by autonomous entities. Likewise, autonomous entities will always be searching for new way of pursuing foreign relations with other entities or states (Wolff 2007, 12-3).

The notion of paradiplomacy reached a new milestone in the new millennium. It saw a rise in entities able to pursue external relations, which does necessarily include the notion of regions, provinces or autonomous entities, but is most likely becoming applicable to cities as well. Paradiplomacy is not special in the sense that it is present in numerous cases around the world (Tavares 2016, 14, 28). However, it is to be recognized that paradiplomacy does differ from case to case, which is identified at sub-national, but also at state level. On a sub-national level, autonomous regions have different reasons for pursuing external relations. These relations are mainly based on cultural, economic and political aspects. Where one sub-national unit might focus on expanding their cultural ties with another country that share the same cultural features, another unit may be aimed at economic development by promoting tourism or focusing on internationalizing their economy to become more competitive. Finally, there are units that focus either on politics to promote a self-interest of becoming a national unit, use political motives for building regional cohesion, or use it to increase political influence on diasporas located in other states (Keating 1999, 4-5, 11). On a state level, there are countries (e.g. Belgium, Germany and others) that integrated the notion of paradiplomacy into their constitutional framework. In these countries, autonomous regions are well-aligned with the interests of the state and enjoy a fair share of autonomy. In other countries (e.g. Argentina, Brazil and others) this notion has been integrated into their constitutional framework, but is dominated by other factors that obstruct it. Although, in the cases of India and Russia, even though paradiplomacy is an integrated aspect, it is limited in practice due to centralization of power (Schiavon 2019, 34-91).

### 3. Tatarstan's autonomy & foreign relations

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This chapter provides background information on how Tatarstan became an autonomous entity and how they gained the right to pursue foreign relations that are needed in the context of Tatarstan-Turkey relations in the next chapter. The first subchapter will outline the process of negotiations for independence and the right to pursue foreign relations. The second subchapter will describe the political institutions that are present in contemporary Tatarstan and that are responsible for foreign relations. The last subchapter focusses on Tatarstan's right to pursue

foreign relations whereas the emphasis will be on the concept of paradiplomacy and challenges to it when Putin came to power.

### 3.1 Tatarstan's pursue for sovereignty within the 'new' Russian Federation

Gorbachov's 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' were the first steps towards democratization and spurred regions outside and within Russia to compete for power. In regions predominantly inhabited by a relative homogenous ethnic group, the aim was to revitalize their independence according to an ethno-historical course. Other regions that had a mixed population were modest in their pursuit for independency and preferred autonomy instead. Tatarstan, rich in oil, was such a region with a mixed population, respectively 48.5 percent Tatar and 43.3 percent Russian at that time, that opted for more political and economic autonomy. On 30 August 1990, a year prior to the collapse of the USSR, Tatarstan officially claimed state sovereignty. It became the sixteenth region within the Soviet Union to do so. It was under the leadership of Mintimer Shaimiev, who eventually became the first president of Tatarstan in 1990, that such a step was taken. More importantly, it was emphasized this declaration included all people in Tatarstan regardless of ethnicity. This notion had also been incorporated into Tatarstan's 'white book', the official document proclaiming sovereignty. Tatarstan's political foundation had already been created in the time of the Soviet Union. However, becoming fully independent was not possible, nor a desired outcome. Examples had been its ethnic diversity, but also its interdependency on raw materials elsewhere in Russia that made them dependent on the Russian market. Therefore, rhetoric in this perspective might seem becoming self-determent, but aimed at becoming autonomous (Hanauer 1996, 68-72, Khakimov 1996b, 71, Khakimov 1996a, 1).

On 26 December 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed where Russia as a 'new' country emerged. However, there was concern this 'new' country would disintegrate. On the other side, among the predominantly Muslim regions, it was feared Russia would utilize hard power through military force to preserve its integrity. It was believed many regions, including Tatarstan, would pursue the notion of becoming an independent state. At that time, Tatarstan was one of twenty-one regions within the 'new' Russia that indicated their pursue of sovereignty (Malik 1994, 1). What followed were negotiations that were held at three levels at the same time. The parties involved were ministries, the government, and the top consisting of the president and its advisors. Each of these parties had their own tasks, the ministries were responsible for working out the standards of bilateral relations, the government was working on the realization of the treaty, and the top was



occupied with the devising the treaty (Khakimov 1996b, 74). Tatarstan's main incentive for negotiations had been its oil resources. In Soviet times, these resources had been exploited whereas, (a) it was sold at cheaper prices in comparison to Azerbaijan because of Tatarstan's lesser status, and (b) Tatarstan never saw any revenue from the sale of oil that was extracted and sold. This exploitation was a thorn in the eye of Tatarstan's leaders and therefore became a reason to seek economic nationalism instead of ethnic self-determination (Hanauer 1996, 71-2).

The negotiations itself consisted of four rounds with the starting point in 1990 with Tatarstan's declaration of independence. During these negotiations, the aim was to come to an agreement that would satisfy both parties. On 30 August 1991, just before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the first rounds of negotiations started (Malik 1994, 13-5). An important aspect to the negotiations had been the right for Tatarstan to hold a referendum concerning independence and sovereignty. The main question given was: "Do you agree that the Republic of Tatarstan is a sovereign state, the subject of international law, building its relations with the Russian Federation, other republics and states on basis of legal agreements?" (Konstitutsionniy Sud RSFSR 1992). On 21 March 1992, the referendum rendered an outcome of sixty-one percent in favor of Tatarstan (Malik 1994, 15). However, the Russian side, and in particular Yeltsin, regarded the scope of the question as a signal of secession. In turn, the Tatars criticized Yeltsin's famous words of "Take as much sovereignty as you can swallow" whereas it became clear Russia was not ready to accept Tatarstan's sovereignty. Moreover, his words got a more sinister tone when Yeltsin warned the Tatars not to secede from Russia as "interethnic conflict" could become a reality (Erlanger 1992). Eventually, the lack of recognition for the outcome of the referendum along with Tatarstan's reluctance to sign the Federal Treaty, resulted in a halt of negotiations for six months. On the other hand, there had been an economic agreement that was signed on 22 January 1992. This gave Tatarstan elevated rights over their natural resources, certain businesses and influence over their own Central Bank. Yet, in practice it had little effect (Kahn 2002, 152-5).

Negotiations proceeded in March 1992 and a draft treaty was submitted by Tatarstan on 15 August 1992. Even though throughout the negotiations Tatarstan emphasized autonomy, the draft itself contained the declaration that Tatarstan was a sovereign state able to govern itself. Tatarstan furthermore highlighted the rights of foreign policy, foreign economic relations, military service, and the right to command Russian troops within its territory (Malik 1994, 18). In November 1992,

the Tatarstan parliament presented a new constitution that systematized a legislative, executive and judicial branch. In effect, this would mean Tatarstan would possess all the branches similar to those of an independent state (Graney 2001, 33). Furthermore, it raised hopes for Tatarstan that perhaps one day they would be able to attain sovereign status. Still, the negotiations were yet again delayed until February 1993. However, Tatarstan's refusal to participate in the federal constitutional conference led to tension and the belief that Tatarstan indeed sought secession, but this time not only by Russia, but on an international scale (Malik 1994, 19).

A third round of negotiations commenced in June 1993. At that time, Tatarstan sought to establish a coalition of republics that had more or less the same goal that would ensure their sovereign status, albeit demanding that outside of the Federal Treaty Tatarstan could have a special relationship with Russia based on equal standing (Kahn 2002, 154). Ultimately, these negotiations failed and the Tatar delegation left the conference due to conflicting views. Despite the situation, an agreement was signed with Russia that enabled Tatarstan to pursue its first external economic relations with Turkey, Uzbekistan, Lithuania, Hungary, Ukraine and Crimea. Although, these relations were initially restricted to delivering supplies of oil with the exception of Crimea, where KAMAZ, an automobile factory, was allowed to produce vehicles on Crimean territory (Malik 1994, 21-2). In fall 1993, Tatarstan effectively advocated a boycott of a constitutional referendum that was to take place in December 1993. Consequently, this referendum resulted in a low turnout (Graney 2001, 34). It was not until Yeltsin attacked the White House when there was a pivotal change in Tatarstan's stance towards signing a treaty (Malik 1994, 22).

The fourth and last round consisted of a compromise between Russia and Tatarstan. On February 1994, both parties signed a treaty that would stipulate Tatarstan would be governed according to three legal documents, namely, (a) the Russian Constitution, (b) the Tatar Constitution, and (c) the conditions that were agreed upon in the treaty itself (Malik 1994, 22). This treaty ultimately agreed on (a) Tatarstan's sole right of governing most elements according to its own constitution, and (b) powers that would jointly be shared by Russia and Tatarstan, which in practice would keep Russia in power. In the case of Tatarstan, some key elements encompassed the rights and freedoms of its citizens, command over their own budget and tax system, the right of establishing an alternative civil service for citizens who have the right to substitute the military forces, the ability to govern their own lands, to establish and maintain relations with other regions and republics within Russia,

and the ability to pursue economic foreign relations. In the case of Russia, some key elements were ensuring Tatarstan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, maintaining authority over the production of military equipment, managing Russian property on Tatar lands, coordination of family and education, coordination of law enforcement, and coordination of foreign economic relations. On the whole, it is to be said that this treaty did not give Tatarstan full independence, but rather a fair share of autonomy (Dogovor 1994). Nonetheless, Yeltsin attempted to bring Tatarstan's constitution and other legislation in line with the Russia's federal constitution and legislation, but due to a weak central government, Russia was not able to bring any changes. This meant Tatarstan would on occasions ignore court rulings which, in turn, would be justified according to the treaty concluded. Furthermore, according to Shaimiev, the treaty also meant both the Russian and Tatar constitutions to be on equal footing and that changes to it should be harmonized (Graney 2001, 34).

The treaty concluded by Russia and Tatarstan ultimately became to be known as the 'Tatarstan model'. Altogether, Tatarstan managed to strike a deal with Moscow that would give Tatarstan its special status (Yemelianova 2000, 39). However, the treaty was perceived with mixed feelings whereas, on the one hand, the Russians were pleased with the outcome, but on the other hand, the Tatars were noticeably more pessimistic in their reaction. In relation to Russia, this treaty averted military conflict and it did not lead to the disintegration of the Russian Federation. In relations to Tatarstan, there were three arguments, defensive, moderate and critic. The defensive argument was put forward by former president Shaimiev is that he could not act in accordance of full independence due to Tatarstan's economic dependency and political pressure from Russia, but emphasized sovereignty and independence would remain a long-term goal. The moderate argument was by Khakimov who thought that preserving peace and good relations with Russia was important, but concluded a better outcome of a treaty could have been possible if Shaimiev would not have digressed from its initial aims. Criticism on the treaty was that it contradicted with its declaration of independence and that the Tatar population would continue to struggle in their aim to become sovereign (Malik 1994, 26-33). Nevertheless, the Tatarstan model became a concept as a result of the treaty that gave Tatarstan a special status that initiated shared power between Moscow and Tatarstan, albeit asymmetrically. Its definition was political of nature and involved a 'stable political system' with Soviet leftover structures and democratic institutions and became a model for other regions in Russia in pursue of autonomy. Lastly, along with its economic

and political freedom, the pursue of foreign relations was another achievement of which, and also mentioned above, Turkey was one (Yemelianova 2000, 39-42).

### 3.2 Political institutions of Tatarstan

There eight political authorities present in Tatarstan that consist of the (1) president, (2) a state advisor, (3) council of state, (4) government, (5) municipalities, (6) territorial structures of federal authorities, (7) judicial branch (Ofitsialniy Tatarstan 2020). Although not relevant in terms of external foreign relations, but important to Tatarstan as a whole are the municipalities, territorial structures of federal authorities, and the judicial branch. First of all, the municipalities basically consist of all representations of the municipalities that are present within Tatarstan (Munitsipalniye Obrazovaniya 2020). Second, the territorial structures of federal authorities consist of different branches present in Tatarstan that govern certain aspects. These branches range from science, penitentiary facilities, security services, to agriculture, medical, military and other elements (Territorialniye strukturi 2020). Lastly, the judicial branch is made up of eight different branches with each their own focus that work in accordance work in accordance with the principles of the constitution and laws. (Sudebnaya vlast 2020).

Important for Tatarstan's pursue of external relations are the president, the state advisor, the council of state, and the government. First of all, the president that leads Tatarstan today is Rustem Minnikhanov, he succeeded Shaimiev in 2010 and has since ruled the republic. He is the highest authority that guarantees the rights of its citizens, complies with the Tatar constitution, laws and international agreements, complies with the Russian constitution, and acts as a bridge between the federal center and Tatarstan. Moreover, he heads the executive branch of authorities and has many responsibilities that range from ensuring rights, introduce proposals to the council of state, signing laws, to determining internal policies and external foreign activities. (President respubliki Tatarstan 2020) Second, the state advisor appointed is former president Mintimer Shaimiev. On 22 January 2010, after he stepped down, he created this position that gave him a wide range of powers (Reisinger and Moraski 2013). He is responsible for giving out Tatarstan's main tasks, rights and obligations according to the law of Tatarstan. He is supported by a secretariat that gathers information on the socio-economic and socio-political of Tatarstan in order to inform the state advisor, organizes events, meetings and work trips for the state advisor, provide technical and organizational support where necessary, but also fulfills other functions on behalf of the state advisor (Gosudarstvenniy Sovetnik 2020). Third, the State Council has officially been transformed

from the Soviet Supreme Council on 29 November 1994. The Council of State consists of seven committees that each have their own responsibilities ranging from law, ecology, culture to state building and other aspects. Their main occupation is to safeguard, keep in check and follow the Tatarstan constitution. Their main tasks have been adopted in constitution article 75. Noteworthy is that the council, besides domestic policy, is co-responsible in determining the directions of foreign activity (Gosudarstvennyy Sovet 2020). Lastly, the government of Tatarstan is an executive and administrative body that replies to the president. It consists of a cabinet of ministers that lead and monitor different ministries and state committees that each have their own responsibility. Their main tasks have been laid down in the constitution and several laws. The ministers appoint people for the ministries, state committees and other executive bodies and monitor whether the people working within the executive and administrative branches work conform the law (Pravitelstvo 2020).

The official website of RT points out they conduct foreign relations at political, economic and cultural levels which are coordinated with the federal authorities. Furthermore, it mentions their economy has been integrated within world economic relations. Nonetheless, the republic enjoys foreign investments and points out to have a healthy political climate. It is explicitly mentioned that RT has a long-standing relationship with the eastern world in the light of Islamic Cooperation. This includes Putin's vision of Tatarstan uniting other countries against threats concerning Islamic extremism, but also economic, cultural and educational cooperation. The main drivers behind RT's external relations are the president, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Science. An example of big cultural, political and economic events in Tatarstan have been the World Summer Universiade in 2013, FIFA World cup in 2018, the economic Kazan Summit, restoration project of the ancient Tatar city of Bolgar, and Tatarstan's pivotal role in the Islamic world (Pravitelstvo 2020, O respublike 2020).

### 3.3 Paradiplomacy & Challenges

Despite their initial goal of independence and sovereignty, the treaty concluded in 1994 gave Tatarstan autonomy and the right to pursue external foreign relations (Graney 2001, 34-5). The concept that applies to being an autonomous entity with the ability to pursue external relations is paradiplomacy. The fact that Tatarstan has been behaving like a state and forming external relations while at the same time been recognized by international actors, have been key ingredients for this notion (Sharafutdinova 2003, 613-4). More specifically, since the 1990s, Tatarstan has

signed over forty international treaties with different countries on economic, educational and cultural cooperation (Dogovory i soglasheniya 2011). In term of business relations, Tatarstan has had trade with more than hundred countries that include the CIS, European countries and others based on statistics available on the official website of Territorial authority of the Federal state statistics services. However, it must be understood that most of these trade relations are purely based on import and export (Tatarstanstat 2020). On the other hand, there are twelve countries that have stationed their representations in the capital of Tatarstan, Kazan, whereas Turkey is one of them (Predstavitelstvo MID 2020). Turkey is represented by a consulate that, besides serving their compatriots, is key in maintaining relations with Tatarstan. Cooperation between Turkey and Tatarstan is an important feature that includes trade, investments, educational and cultural cooperation which are further elaborated on in chapter four (Erikan 2019, Ministerstvo kulturey 2019, EADaily 2019, Khomenko, Khayrutdinov and Aytach 2017). Yet, Tatarstan does not only maintain ties with countries, but also cooperates with international organizations such as UNESCO, The Organization of Islamic Cooperation and others. Cooperation with these organizations are aimed at economic, cultural, educational or political matters. For example, cooperation with UNESCO is of cultural nature and features the ancient city of Bulgar that has been included in the List of World Heritage in 2014. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation could be considered of political importance as it is part of Russia's geopolitical strategy of "Russia - the Islamic World" that was resumed in 2015 (O respublike 2020). As a whole, Tatarstan, through its paradiplomacy, has been able to pursue its own foreign relations while maintaining a balance with the federal center. Yet, it must be acknowledged this did not go without any challenges (Albina 2010, 101).

Under Yeltsin, shortly after the treaty with Tatarstan was concluded the first signs of difficulties emerged whereas it was attempted to bring Tatarstan's constitution and legislation in line with the other autonomous republics. However, because the federal center was too weak to act, Tatarstan could stand its ground (Graney 2001, 34). In 2000, Putin started the process of centralization which was aimed at reducing the power of the regions through federal reforms. This has had a noticeable impact on the notion of federalism, but in particular on the republics in Russia (Alexander 2004, 234, 239-40). In the case of Tatarstan, their claim of being a sovereign entity was declared illegal by Russia's constitutional court and was the first sign their sovereignty became contested. However, Tatarstan adopted a defensive stance and stated that if changes were to be executed, this

only could be done if another bilateral treaty would be created and agreed upon (Graney 2001, 32, 37-8). Yet, due to pressure from the federal center, Tatarstan had to comply to a certain degree and eventually revised their legislation and constitution, but was nevertheless able to retain their rhetoric of sovereignty and their pursue of foreign relations (Sharafutdinova 2003, 625).

In 2006, the Financial Times published a newspaper article that expressed Tatarstan's eroding special status. At that time, a new agreement on the extension of the existing treaty was being negotiated. Still, there were concerns upcoming agreement with Russia, would further incapacitate Tatarstan's special status (Ostrovsky 2006). Already with Putin's power vertical it became clear for Tatarstan that they would be forced to compromise with the federal center. By the time of the expiration of the treaty in 2007 the federal center either wanted to abolish Tatarstan's special status in comparison to the other regions in Russia, or discourage other regions for seeking out agreements with Moscow (Farukshin and Giniyatullin 2019, 2-3). Still, out of all regions, Tatarstan was able to renew its special status with signing a new treaty with the federal center that same year. This treaty reasserted the republic's control over economic, cultural, environmental, and their external relations (Albina 2010, 112).

Altogether, the trend of maintaining autonomy has become more difficult for Tatarstan. The federal center has increasingly demanded that Tatarstan would subordinate to the Russian constitution. Another aspect related to this is the abolishment of the title of president in 2010, which was not carried out as it would violate the treaty. Furthermore, it was believed this would considerably weaken their special status. Since 2007, Tatarstan had been able to preserve its autonomy for ten years in the areas of economy, culture and ecology since 2007. Moreover, Tatarstan featured some prominent projects which feature the uniqueness of the Tatar culture (Nizamova 2016, 74). On the other hand, the notion of autonomy remains key to discussion. The economic crisis of 2008-2009 has also had a negative impact on the republic. Therefore, the republic's status has deteriorated along with other factors. In 2014, though complemented by Russia for its good overall performance, Tatarstan has not received support for the extension of its special status (Yakovlev, et al. 2017, 9-11, 23-4). As a whole, Tatarstan's special status ended on 24 July 2017. It was the last region within Russia that enjoyed such status. (Smirnova 2017, Kashin 2017). It had become clear the vertical power Putin had built over the years has arguably become stronger since the last agreement was concluded in 2007. The implication for Tatarstan as an entity

is that it has been incorporated into Russia as one of the regions. Despite, Minnikhanov will stay in power and Tatarstan will remain an exemplary region (Kashin 2017). However, obtaining a new agreement has become a somber perspective and could mean they had to revoke their foreign relations. This will be the focus of the case study on the relations between Turkey and Tatarstan in the next chapter (Smirnova 2017, X. Snyder 2017).

## 4. Case Study: Tatarstan-Turkey relations

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This chapter consists of the case study that will focus on Tatarstan and its paradiplomatic relations with Turkey. It consists of an overview of how relations between the two entities commenced, difficulties that arose and Tatarstan's maneuverability to maintain these relations, the ending of their special status and impact on their foreign policy, and ultimately the impact in Tatar-Turkey relations.

### 4.1 Beginning of Tatarstan-Turkey relations

The adoption of Tatarstan's sovereignty together with the constitution resulted in systematic international activity, or in other words, paradiplomatic activity. In 1991, Shaimiev undertook his first international trips to foreign states where Turkey was the first one among them because they were the closest in regard to their cultural and economic relations (Nasyrov 2002, 21, Albina 2010, 114). Following Shaimiev's visit, an agreement on cooperation was concluded with the emphasis on religion as a factor of unification (Suleymanov 2015a). Likewise, when the Soviet Union collapsed Turkey took an interest in expanding its foreign policy into the Post-Soviet space where Tatarstan became a priority. Overall, its aim was to spread the notion of pan-Turkism. Turkey sought cooperation with Tatarstan in the economic, socio-political, ethno-cultural, and religious spheres. Moreover, Tatarstan, whose quest for sovereignty and independence was a top priority, sought international recognition and regarded Turkey extremely important for two matters. First of all, besides being a secular country, Turkey had a Muslim population just like Tatarstan. Second, the country served as a gateway to the Western world due to its NATO membership. Therefore, Kazan regarded Turkey as a role model and allowed them to strengthen their influence in the region (Yegorov 2004, 143, Suleymanov 2016b, 6-7). On the other hand, Tatarstan would not have had the ability to pursue foreign relations with Turkey if their paradiplomacy would not have been well developed. The institution that played a central role in forging these ties were the Cabinet of



Ministers who created essential ministries on economic external relations and international cooperation (Albina 2010, 114).

Since 1991, Turkey's influence in Tatarstan gradually expanded and became more integrated. The main developments within Tatarstan were focused on investments into the region and the establishment of Turkish businesses. One crucial actor in contributing to Tatar-Turkish relations was Ertürk Deger, a prominent businessman that operated in Tatarstan. In 1990, still during Soviet Times, he founded his first company in Tatarstan. His importance in building relations between the Turkey and Tatarstan had been his contact with high ranked officials, which included the former Turkish president Turgut Özal. Deger used these connections to organize a high rank meeting between the two entities. In December 1991, former prime minister Muhammed Sabirov was officially invited by the Turkish government. The meeting that took place emphasized Turkey's recognition of Tatarstan's sovereignty as well as signing an agreement on the foundation of the Tatar-Turkish-Russian company Tatuross that would export oil to Turkey. Ultimately, this company monopolized all trade between Tatarstan and Turkey by 1996 and had to suspend its operations due to Deger, head of Tatuross, not paying the Tatar government (Suleymanov 2016a, 41-2). Apart from this issue, Tatar-Turkey relations began to improve with Shaimiev's official visit to Turkey in 1992. At that time, a joint statement was set up that would emphasize the need for economic cooperation. In the same year, Shaimiev also sought support from Turkey in its referendum for sovereignty and independence, which Turkey granted. The signing of the treaty between Russia and Tatarstan ultimately opened the opportunities to pursue deeper ties with Turkey (Suleymanov 2016b, 8). On 22 May 1995, a bilateral agreement was signed between Tatarstan and Turkey that encompassed a multitude of areas on cooperation. These areas included oil, agriculture, construction, transport services, trade, tourism, cultural and religious development, and education. Furthermore, in the perspective of this agreement, Turkey opened a consulate in Tatarstan in 1996. Beside regional representatives from within Russia, the Turkish consulate was the only foreign representative established. The purpose for a consulate in Tatarstan had been to implement the agreement and maintain bilateral ties. (Murataliev and Imamutdinova 2017, 163-4, Sharafutdinova 2003, 616, Tatarstan Trade House 2014). On 13 September 1997, Shaimiev issued a presidential decree on the establishment of the Tatar representation in Turkey that would ensure the relations would be mutually beneficial. On 14 April 1998, Tatarstan officially opened their representation in the Turkish city of Istanbul. Overall, the results brought by the 1995 treaty and

both the Tatar and Turkish representations were progressive and constructive. For instance, different contracts had been signed on the trade of car parts by Tatarstan's national business 'KAMAZ' as well as food products, medicine, sheepskin and so on. Since 1996, Tatarstan has participated in the Russian-Turkish Business Council 'DEIK' and contributed to exchanging ideas on investments, trade, technology and science. There had been frequent official visits by Turkish and Tatar officials that traveled to Tatarstan or Turkey. Moreover, these official visits along with its positive economic and cultural outcomes have progressed and continued well into the twenty-first century (Murataliev and Imamutdinova 2017, 164-7, Shaimiev 1997).

Another important aspect that has influenced Tatar-Turkish relations is most certainly religion, which in turn relates to education. At least one person that had a prominent influence in this process was Fethullah Gülen, an influential thinker of Islam. Gülenist Religious institutions were established in Russia's regions, including Tatarstan to spread the influence of Islam. Furthermore, his educational materials on Islam brought universal values and interaction between different religions, but also viewed Islam as opposing other world religions as they "underwent distortion and lost their true appearance" (Kireev 2016, 72-3). Yet, by Russia this Turkish influence was considered to be a threat. As for Tatarstan, this ideological, political and religious influence from Turkey was valued beside its economic ties. It created a deeper bond between the two entities. The foundation of Turkish schools in Tatarstan were aimed at the revival of interconnectedness of state and religion as they were in Ottoman times (Suleymanov 2016b, 8, 11). Another person that brought different religious influence to Tatarstan had been the Turkish Baytulla Mayak. In the early 1990s, among other missionaries, he was sent to spread the teachings of 'Nurjular', one of the seven branches of Said Nursi, a radical preacher that died in 1960. He was the first to gather people around him to revive teachings of Islam. After him, a second missionary by the name of Adjar Takhsin arrived who translated the Nurjular teachings from Turkish into Russian and Tatar and spread them for free. Yet, in comparison to Gülen's teachings, the Nurjular teachings were considered extremist and their branch was ultimately prosecuted by Russian authorities. As for Gülen's teachings, these bore secular elements and did not require males to have beards and females to cover up nor did it prohibit creativity and entertainment. One of first Gülen schools was opened in 1992, in the capitol of Kaza and other regions in Russia would follow as well. In 1997, the Educational Society 'Ertugrul Gazi' was established. Altogether, eight Turkish schools were established in five different cities in Tatarstan. Nevertheless, also Gülen's influence got attention

from Russian authorities and by 2003 Turkish schools were closed in other regions. On the other hand, while schools were terminated in other regions, Gülen schools situated in Tatarstan could continue their activities because the Tatar authorities intervened and successfully defended their establishments, but did change in nature considerably (Suleymanov 2015c, Ivshina 2016).

Altogether, Turkey applied a soft power strategy in Tatarstan to increase their influence. The aforementioned Turkish schools were a crucial part of that. In the long term, it had been expected these schools were to effectively educate people that would become entrepreneurs or government officials. In turn, these people would be complementary to the Tatar-Turkish relations and lobby for Turkish interests. By effectively creating a pro-Turkish elite, a strategic Turkish goal would be fulfilled. The NGO ‘Turan’, a research fund of the Turkic world founded in 1980 and located in Turkey, advocated Tatar students to study in Turkey in order to reach that goal. In 1990, the first group of students arrived that were financially supported by this NGO (Suleymanov 2016b, 13-4). In addition, Turan supported the idea of the Latin alphabet among all Turkic people, with Tatarstan as top priority, and spread the ideologic idea that Tatarstan has been “the historically younger brother of great Turkey” (Smagin 2019). Another showcase of soft power had been the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA). It was founded in 1992 by the Turkish government and was aimed at the economic integration and cooperation between all Turkic people. Tatarstan had been an integral part of this notion (Terekhov 2007). Important to note however, is that Moscow did not simply stood by while Tatarstan allowed Turkey’s influence to increase. Tatarstan’s bold move into the Turkic sphere was understood as by the Russians as the Tatar separation from Moscow, and ultimately from Russia. Furthermore. the notion of the Latin alphabet was in itself not necessarily the problem, but rather their search for a new identity. By entering the Turkic world, it would become an important Turkic outpost along with the notion of having their own state. However, from 2000 on, Moscow began to tighten the screws. The use of Cyrillic became mandatory and, as mentioned above, the process of centralization of power began. This would at least partially withhold Tatarstan from entering the Turkic world that held Turkey as a role model (Semyonov 2011, 24-5). Nonetheless, since 1995 Tatarstan has enjoyed relations with Turkey and could be considered part of their national interest. Crucial for these relations have been the presence of a Turkish consulate in Kazan as well as the Tatar representation in Istanbul. Evident is how relations have continued well into the twenty-first century (Predstavitelstvo Turtsii 2020, T. Akulov 2010, 225).

#### 4.2 Contemporary areas of cooperation

Tatarstan has had active paradiplomatic relations with Turkey since the 1990s that consisted of economic, educational and cultural cooperation. In contemporary times, these relations have developed and flourished. In the economic perspective, import and export between Tatarstan to Turkey are important features to Tatarstan's economy (Predstavitelstvo Turtsii 2020). Furthermore, Tatarstan has been an important region for Russia in its relations with Turkey. The important economic active cities are Kazan, Naberezhniye Chelny, Nizhnekamsk, Almetyevsk and Elabuga. Tatarstan is rich in oil and is also the basis of their economy. The production of oil is around thirty million tons, which is equal to the yearly usage in Turkey. Nizhnekamsk is central to the petrochemical factory, which is the second largest in Europe (Khomenko, Khayrutdinov and Aytach 2017). Another important city is Elabuga, which features its Special Economic Zone 'Alabuga' where many Turkish companies are active (Alabuga 2020, Khomenko, Khayrutdinov and Aytach 2017, 78, Uzun 2017, 1798). The other cities feature technological production factories that produce anything from ships, aircrafts and trucks to unmanned aerial vehicles. An example of one well-known company is KAMAZ, situated near Naberezhniye Chelny, that is especially known for its production of trucks. In the perspective of Tatarstan's overall economic relations, Turkey does not occupy the first place in numbers of import and export. On the other hand, the country does occupy a position in the top ten of countries that engage in trade and is a crucial actor in Tatarstan's economic activities. In 2010, trade between Tatarstan and Turkey reached the highest turnover of one and a half billion dollars in comparison to later years. What contributed to that amount was Tatarstan's export. Nonetheless, trade between the two entities have been steady until 2013 and import from Turkey to Tatarstan has been gradually rising. The import from Turkey to Tatarstan consists mainly of car parts, equipment components, metallurgical products, medicine, textiles and furniture. On the contrary, export to Turkey consists mainly of fuels, oil, rubber, wood, plastic and other raw materials. In 2019, trade between the two entities has increased considerably in comparison to the previous years with the exception of 2014, according to official numbers in table 1. Especially between 2018-2019, there had been an increase of over fifty percent trade turnover. What could be concluded in the area of economic cooperation, is that both sides are doing well. Only in 2016 there has been a considerable drop in turnover, export and import, this has been due to the Russia-Turkey crisis. This is what the focus will be in the next subchapter (Khomenko, Khayrutdinov and Aytach 2017, Predstavitelstvo Turtsii 2020, TatCenter 2010).

Table 1. Official numbers on Trade between Tatarstan and Turkey

|                                       | Year        |             |             |             |             |             |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                       | 2014        | 2015        | 2016        | 2017        | 2018        | 2019        |
| Trade Turnover                        | \$508 644,0 | \$356 022,1 | \$215 530,1 | \$303 946,0 | \$313 949,5 | \$481 028,3 |
| Export<br>Tatarstan to<br>Turkey      | \$183 238,7 | \$225 943,6 | \$111 241,2 | \$144 303,7 | \$119 975,1 | \$270 775,3 |
| Import<br>Tatarstan<br>from<br>Turkey | \$325 405,3 | \$130 078,5 | \$104 288,9 | \$159 642,3 | \$193 974,4 | \$210 253,0 |

Source. – Trade and economic cooperation of the Republic of Tatarstan with the Republic of Turkey (Predstavitelstvo Turtsii 2020)

Note. – The amount of dollars in each of the rows is x1000

What contributed considerably to relations between Tatarstan and Turkey, have been Turkish companies active in the region. As mentioned above, Alabuga is one of the main factors that feature important Turkish investments. In 2014 alone, three companies, Sisecam, Hayat Kimya, and Kastamonu Entegre, respectively glass, sanitary paper and wood panel producers, have invested three hundred sixty million dollars into this dedicated economic zone. Yet, Alabuga is not the only aspect of direct foreign investment from Turkey. Altogether, more than two hundred fifty Turkish companies are located on the Territory of Tatarstan have invested an estimated number of around two and half billion dollars into Tatarstan (Uzun 2017, 1798, UCCE 2019). Altogether, cooperation between the two entities are ongoing. Turkish airlines host regular flights between Kazan and Istanbul that either consist of fixed or charter flights. Trade on products such as oil, but also non-oil products are increasing. Tatar companies are developing as a result of their ties with Turkish banks and Turkish companies take part in in projects such as the construction of petrochemical complexes, developing cooperation in the area of electric power, which includes alternative ways of producing equipment used in construction and agriculture, mechanical engineering, glass production, woodworks, and other areas. Furthermore, Tatarstan is working on the attraction of additional Turkish foreign investment. Table 2 shows different Turkish companies

and joint companies that feature Turkey along with the amount of money that was invested in certain projects. Since 2019, these foreign investments altogether amounted to almost forty billion dollars. An additional benefit for Tatarstan has also been the creation of jobs which is good for employment for the local population. Evidently, five out of these eight companies have surpassed the expected investments. Concerning the ‘Koluman Rus’ company, a manufacturer of special equipment for Russian and European trucks, have on two occasions they have invested in projects which includes hundred fifty million rubles in the organization of assembly line for special equipment for trucks in Naberezhniye Chelny, and six million euros in a branch for selling and servicing semi-trailer, construction, ground support, and Utility equipment (Predstavitelstvo Turtsii 2020).

Table 2. Official number of large Turkish investment projects in Tatarstan in 2019

| Companies - Turkish & Joint        | Planned Investment | Actual Investment |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Kastamonu Integrated Wood Industry | ₽19,73m            | ₽21,2bn           |
| Hayat Kimya                        | ₽9,5bn             | ₽11,1bn           |
| Automativ Glass Alyans Rus         | ₽1,83bn            | ₽4bn              |
| Trak'ya Glass Rus                  | ₽6,78bn            | ₽7,2bn            |
| Dizayn Rus                         | ₽1,59bn            | ₽48,15m           |
| Coşkunöz                           | ₽2,3bn             | ₽2,5bn            |
| MMK-Coşkunöz-Alabuga               | ₽349,57m           | ₽180,5m           |
| Koluman Rus                        | N.A.               | N.A.              |

Source. – Large investment projects realized by Turkish companies in the Republic of Tatarstan (Predstavitelstvo Turtsii 2020)

Note. – ‘m’ stands for million, 'bn' stands for billion

An important factor for attracting and maintaining foreign economic relations, is the Kazan Summit which is hosted every year. The first summit was held in between 25-26 June 2009 and brought together a total of representatives from twenty countries including Turkey (Linova-

MEDIA 2009). In 2019, the president of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (UCCE) attended the Kazan Summit to promote the views of Turkish businesses. The UCCE itself is an overarching organization that represent Turkish businesses in different sectors of the economy. First of all, what had been emphasized was the importance of economic Russia-Turkey relations. Second, an expansion on the current relations with Russia would be greatly beneficial to Tatarstan as well. Tatarstan has been an important economic hub for Turkey, whereas out of seventy-three billion dollars of total investments in Russia, two and a half billion dollars have been spent on projects in Tatarstan (UCCE 2019, Garip, Yeşilyurt and İsmayılova 2019). Along with the UCCE's rhetoric, Turkey's minister on Industry and Technology Mustafa Varank emphasized trade turnover between Turkey and Tatarstan could reach up to one billion dollars. While in the past ten years trade between these two entities had seen a far better turnover, there are still many opportunities to be seized for trade to grow significantly (Zengin 2019). Furthermore, Tatarstan has openly shown support for Turkey in their aim at strengthening ties with Russia. Minnikhanov stated relations between Turkey and Tatarstan have had a positive effect and that there are still various areas of cooperation that are promising. What greatly contributed to these relations, has been the presence of the Turkish Consulate General in Kazan (EADaily 2019). It is noteworthy to mention the work of Turhan Dilmaç, Turkey's former Consul General, who started in 2015 and was succeeded by Ahmet Sadyk in 2018. At the time he left, there had been a total of two billion dollars of Turkish investments and the construction of seven new Turkish factories. In an interview he regarded Tatarstan as the first step of entering the Russian economy. He oversaw how Turkish companies were expanding at Alabuga and noted how more projects were going on. His hope for the future was that Turkish investments would increase even more (Kilsinbayev 2018, Badretdin 2017).

Besides economy, there has been educational activity between the two entities. As for Turkish school in Tatarstan, these have been present since the 1990s, but have experienced difficulties due to the nature of their teachings, this will be explained in the case study of chapter four. In 2007, forty-four Turkish teachers had been expelled either due to a lack of educational certificates or illegally staying in Russia while others left on their own occasion (Suleymanov 2015a). Nevertheless, these Turkish schools are still active. It must be said however, that the composition of the schools changed after teachers were prosecuted throughout Russia. In Tatarstan, schools were renamed and most of the staff changed. Even though these schools still have Turkish

characteristics, it arguably is not related to contemporary Turkey nor to its interests (Ivshina 2016). On the other hand, Minnikhanov has actively advocated the need for cooperation between Tatar and Turkish higher education institutions. By organizing exchanges between universities, it is considered to be an important aspect that will bring relations further. These talks were held between Minnikhanov and head of the Kent university in Istanbul (Tatmedia 2019). It must be emphasized however, that student exchanges between Tatarstan and Turkey is not a new phenomenon. It has been stated over a hundred Turkish students have been studying in Tatarstan in 2019. Furthermore, there have been plans to extend these exchanges between Kent University Istanbul and the Kazan State Medical and Federal universities (EADaily 2019). At least one of the earliest mention of student exchanges has been general number of eight-hundred students from eighty foreign countries studying in Kazan, and two thousand Tatar students studying in Turkey in 2005 (Akulov, Savelyev and Nasyrov 2006). Another noteworthy educational project had been the Turkish Study Center, a cooperation between the Yunus Emre institute and Kazan Federal University (KFU). This initiative was aimed at introducing those interested in Turkey. It offered an insight into the Turkish culture, art, history, and organized regular cultural events. Furthermore, a course of Turkish language was given with its starting point in 2013 and scholarships were given out for those interested in Turkish summer courses (KFU 2012). However, activities of the Turkish Study Center initiative had been suspended after the downing of a Russian bomber by the Turkish army in 2015. Moreover, six Turkish students studying at the KFU and one Turkish teacher were forced to return to Turkey in 2016. However, at a later stage and as mentioned above educational cooperation has continued nevertheless (Tatmedia 2019, Shakir 2016, Kommersant 2015).

Another aspect of importance since 1996 besides economic and educational development, has been cultural development (Suleymanov 2016b, 8). Even though there is little information about the beginning stage of cultural events between the two entities, an official press release from the Tatar Ministry of Culture in 2008 stated that Tatarstan and Turkey strengthened their cultural cooperation. The impetus of doing so had been the Year of Turkey Culture in Russia, a festival which had been held in Kazan and other cities. It consisted of cultural events that had been organized related to Russia-Turkey relations with special honor to Tatar-Turkey relations. Moreover, there had been talks of further development of cooperation concerning museums and student exchanges (Ministerstvo kultyury 2008, Tatmedia 2008). Since 2018, under former General Consul Ahmet Ergin, there had been talks on the development of different cultural aspects. Two



of these aspects were the developing courses on the Turkish language and the opening of a Turkish cultural center in Kazan. Both these developments would give Turkey the ability to deepen ties with the local population, although no specific details have been given on actual plans (Gaynanova and Latypov 2018, Inkazan.ru 2018). In the perspective of Tatarstan, it could be assumed that attention to cultural events with Turkey and other countries of the Turkic world is crucial for building relations as noted by the deputy of Tatarstan's Ministry of Culture Damir Natfullin during the Turkic Film Festival in Kazan in 2019 (Ministerstvo kultury 2019). Along with cultural events, tourism is another way of cultural exchange. What has been a factor the Turkish government has been aiming at, is visa-free travel. The year 2019 had become known as the cross year of Culture and Tourism between Turkey and Russia. On country to country scale, it was aimed at strengthening cultural and humanitarian ties. In relation to Tatarstan, there were plans to develop medical tourism aimed at Turkish citizens to enjoy treatment to improve their health. Yet, it is for the future to tell what will become of these plans (Ziatdinova 2019a).

#### 4.3 Tatarstan caught between Russia-Turkey crisis

What could be considered the first real challenge to Tatarstan-Turkey relations, has been the downing of a Russian SU-24 bomber. On 24 November 2015, the Russian Ministry of Defense reported that such a plane had been downed close to the Turkish-Syrian border due to violating Turkish airspace. The plane had been warned several times by the Turkish military before it was shot down. While both pilots managed to eject from the plane, one pilot was eventually killed by Syrian rebels. It was expected the situation would escalate and damage Russian-Turkish relations (Nikolskiy and Raybman 2015). On 28 November 2015, a presidential decree had been drafted by Putin to impose economic sanctions against Turkey. What this included was the prohibition of Russian employers hiring citizens of Turkish origin, the ban or restriction of activities from Turkish organizations, the ban or restriction on the import of certain goods, the suspension of a visa-free regime, strengthened control over Turkish truck drivers transporting goods within the Russian Federation, freezing a number of Turkish investment projects, and a ban on charter flights between Russia and Turkey. Some of these sanctions were applied directly after Putin's presidential decree, while others became active after 1 January 2016 (Belenkaya and Krivosheyev 2015).

In the case of Tatarstan, it brought great uncertainty and risks to its relations with Turkey. What followed merely two days after the incident was an analysis what repercussions it might bear for

Tatar-Turkish business relations. At least one fourth of foreign investment in Tatarstan at that time had been done by Turkish businesses. The Kazan Kremlin was likely worried about these developments as Tatarstan's economy relied on economic relations with Turkey along with its cultural and religious affinity. Moreover, Tatarstan has been fulfilling its role as a reliable platform for Turkish businesses to enter the Russian market. For example, in October 2015, president Minnikhanov visited the Turkish province of Kocaeli to promote its special economic zone Alabuga to Turkish businessmen (Andreyev, et al. 2015). Noteworthy however, is how trade between 2010-2015 has dropped considerably (Khomenko, Khayrutdinov and Aytach 2017, 80). In the light of this crisis, it was expected to drop even further. On the other hand, the total share Turkey contributed to the total trade was around two percent. Nonetheless, since 2014-2015, the three largest investors Kastamonu Integrated Wood Industry, Trak'ya Glass Rus, and Hayat Kimya, also represented in table 2, started their operations of producing goods. Alongside, other investment projects were launched too. These were to be followed by ceremonies that were frozen due to the replacement of the Turkish Minister of Economy. Former Consul General Dilmaç noted that this was not related to the latest events, but did mention new Turkish projects could be subjected to postponement, such as Kastamonu's greenhouse project. Another sector had been Turkish construction companies, who were also likely to face the repercussions of this crisis. As for tourism, it was also expected to suffer as Turkey had been a popular destination, whereas between two hundred to two hundred fifty thousand Tatars a year visit that country. Altogether, it was expected that Tatarstan's authorities could do little to exert influence on the situation and reacted cautiously at the very beginning (Andreyev, et al. 2015).

Less than a month later, the effects of the incident became apparent. Russian sanctions against Turkey not only hit the area of economics, but also culture, education and science. While most of the regions agreed with the Moscow's position on Turkey, only Tatarstan was not completely loyal. Among the population in Tatarstan and elsewhere in the country however, disarray against Turkish organizations, companies and representations broke out. Contrarily, there had been attempts by the pro-Turkish nationalist front in Kazan to stop the anti-Turkish sentiment. Nonetheless, tourism diminished and educational exchange was cancelled. An example is the Turkish Study Center Yunus Emre that needed to close. Another cultural event that had been cancelled was the Turkish equivalent to Eurovision Song festival, 'Turkvision', that was organized in Kazan a year prior (Suleymanov 2015b, Umaraliyev 2015). Lastly, there were plans to erect a

historical figure that was considered a symbolical link between the two entities. This figure was Sadri Maksudi Arsal, a Tatar that fled after the Bolshevik revolution that ultimately became an advisor to the first president of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. It was planned the current Turkish president Recep Erdoğan himself would visit this monument in honor of its opening, but was cancelled due to this crisis (Pereltsvaig 2016).

At a political level, the Tatarstan authorities were careful with expressing their position in favor of Tatar-Turkey relations. Even though pro-Turkish sentiments had certainly been present among Tatarstan's elite, Minnikhanov at first did not dare to publicly declare his dissatisfaction against the decisions made by the federal center. There were only signals given to Turkey by Minnikhanov by declaring he could not openly criticize on the situation, which could be interpreted as Kazan disagreeing (Suleymanov 2015b). This situation brought change on 21 December 2015 when Minnikhanov answered journalists' questions on the Russia-Turkey crisis. He acknowledged that there were disagreements between the two countries and noted that, next to complicated situation, it was also a sensitive issue for Tatarstan. He argued that Tatar and Turks were brotherly people who share the same religion, and whose languages belong to the same family. Furthermore, he emphasized Turkey had invested considerably in Tatarstan over the course of many years and that its role was to safeguard these investments. Furthermore, he noted that Tatarstan would work according to Russian federal law to increase the protection of Turkish investors in the republic. Altogether, his approach to the situation was relatively mild due to the fact he did not oppose, but worked in line with the federal center and stated that eventually relations would stabilize (Pravitelstvo 2019). However, one aspect that had not been mentioned was the importance of religious ties. Turkey has not only been important among Tatarstan's secular elite, but also among its Muslim population. Throughout 2015, there had been a coming and going of religious Turkish people to Tatarstan. Also, there had been a visit from Turkey's representative of Islamic Affairs to the republic in December 2015. Nevertheless, it remained unclear why this was not mentioned by Minnikhanov (Suleymanov 2015b).

In terms of trade between Russia and Turkey, after the sanctions were imposed on Turkey, it began to fall. In 2016, trade turnover had decreased by over thirty-two percent when compared to 2015. In terms of export, this had fallen with twenty-nine percent, and import by forty-seven percent (Tass 2017a). Table 3 demonstrates the sharp fall in the amount of dollars in Russia-Turkey's

turnover. Even though between 2014-2015 another drop in trade can be observed, it was most likely not connected to the sanctions imposed at the end of 2015. The same would be true for Tatarstan whose export to Turkey increased that same year according to Table 3. Also, when Tables 1 and 3 are put side to side, the worsening effects between 2015-2016 can be observed. Most notably is that Tatarstan's export to Turkey dropped more than fifty percent (Ru-Stat 2020, Belenkaya and Krivosheyev 2015, Predstavitelstvo Turtsii 2020). In June 2016, there were some changes in rhetoric between the two countries when Erdogan sent an official apology. This gesture led Putin to rapidly arrange talks on restoring ties (Rainsford 2016). In March 2017, the first agreements were reached on lifting the sanctions. Turkey would be allowed to import certain flowers and vegetables and Turkish construction workers would be able to receive work visas again. On 22 May 2017, a joint statement was signed by Erdogan and Putin that lifted abovementioned sanctions (BBC 2017, RBC 2017). In terms of trade, lifting these sanctions also became visible between Turkey and Russia between 2016-2017 as demonstrated in Table 3. When again Tables 1 and 3 are put side to side again, the trade turnover between Tatarstan and Turkey recovered considerably (Ru-Stat 2020, Predstavitelstvo Turtsii 2020).

Table 3. Trade between the Russia and Turkey

|                           | Year     |          |          |          |          |          |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|                           | 2013     | 2014     | 2015     | 2016     | 2017     | 2018     |
| Trade Turnover            | \$37,7bn | \$31,6bn | \$23,3bn | \$15,5bn | \$22,1bn | \$25,6bn |
| Export Russia to Turkey   | \$25,4bn | \$24,9bn | \$19,3bn | \$13,4bn | \$18,7bn | \$21,4bn |
| Import Russia from Turkey | \$7,27bn | \$6,64bn | \$4,06bn | \$2,12bn | \$3,39bn | \$4,22bn |

Source. – Trade turnover between Russia and Turkey 2013 - 2018 (Ru-Stat 2020)

Note. – 'bn' stands for billion

In 2016, despite the deep crisis between Russia-Turkey, Tatarstan-Turkey relations did manage to go forward. At least one of the largest investors, Kastamonu Integrated Wood Industry as represented in Table 2, continued its operation in Tatarstan and further plans of expansion (MK-Turkey 2016). Furthermore, there were talks in the economic sphere between Tatar president Minnikhanov, the Tatar head of the Investment Development Agency Taliya Minullina and Turkish representatives of the Turkish industrial zone ‘Gebze’. These Turkish representatives expressed a particular interest in the ‘Sviyazhskiy’ Multimodal Logistics Center in Kazan to conduct business there. During this meeting it was emphasized Tatar-Turkey relations were at the first stage of improvement and that this project would be a good prospective for both sides in the future (Agentstvo Investitsionnogo Razvitiya 2016). On 7 December 2016, the Tatar-Turkish Business Forum was held, which is an annual event. There were talks on the improving relations between the two entities and future economic projects. Turkey at that time ranked first in the number of joint ventures on Tatarstan’s territory. Also, it was brought forward by the Turkish Minister of Economy work on lifting the sanctions was conducted and that business would continue to develop (Tretyakov 2016). What could be concluded is that Tatar-Turkey relations continued throughout 2016 despite the hardships. However, another low point was expected with the killing of Russian ambassador to Turkey Andrei Karlov on 19 December 2016. While Kazan was in expectance of sanctions being lifted in order for Tatar-Turkey relations to be normalized, the killing of the ambassador challenged that notion. It was immediately believed by Turkish authorities that it was aimed at destabilizing Russia-Turkey relations and could end up having to abandon multi-billion-dollar projects. On the contrary, the Russian authorities expressed the same idea on the attempt of destabilizing relations (Inkazan.ru 2016, Makarenko, Khimshiashvili and Kholmogorova 2019). On 20 December 2016, a day after the killing, both countries stated that it would not lead to destabilization of ties and emphasized it would even strengthen these. Furthermore, it was condemned as a terrorist attack and Erdogan assured Russia it would conduct a thorough investigation. In general, Karlov himself had been an important figure in Tatarstan-Turkey relations. In 2015 alone, Karlov visited the Tatar- Turkish Business Forum as well as the Tatar-Turkish Economic Forum. Here he highlighted that Tatarstan had been of special importance to the development of Turkey-Russia relations. Also, on 15 December 2016, four days prior to his death, Karlov had accompanied Minnikhanov during official meetings in his delegation to Turkey (Beresnev, Kolebakina-USmanova and Badretdin 2016). As for the Turkish consulate in Tatarstan,

former Consul General Dilmaç recalled the positive contribution Karlov brought to Turkey-Russia-Tatarstan relations. He stated that 2016 had been a difficult year, but was comforted by the fact relations were stabilizing. Moreover, he expressed gladness with how the basis of their relations was maintained and that both entities share brotherly and friendly ties. On that same day, former Turkish prime minister Binali Yıldırım accompanied by seven Turkish ministers visited Kazan. In relation to this visit, it became apparent economic ties would become prosperous again (Dilmaç 2016). However, for Tatarstan there was another issue coming up, the end of their special status in 2017.

#### 4.4 End of Tatarstan's special status & impact Tatar-Turkish relations

While Russian and Tatar authorities agreed on a treaty in 1994 that gave Tatarstan a high degree of autonomy that managed to survive under Putin's centralization of power as well as being safeguarded with an agreement in 2007, their status ultimately became contested (Malik 1994, Albina 2010, 112, Dogovor 1994, Graney 2001, 39-40). What changed was that Tatarstan's constitution would no longer have effect and would therefore not be able to exert power similar to that of a state (Raykhshtat 2017). The legal documents concerning the treaty between Tatarstan and the federal center had been of special importance for the Tatar authorities. It provided a world example of an effective mechanism for federal relations. It was believed if the agreement between Tatarstan and the federal center would not be prolonged, it would be damaging to the federal image of Russia. Furthermore, besides a guarantee of well-being for Russia's multi-ethnic society, Tatarstan as a region had been considered strong and its reputation a model for other regions within the country. Nevertheless, before the agreement was due for expiration, there were serious concerns for its aftermath. It was believed to cut short the idea of federalism and democracy in Russia as well as becoming more like a republic. Tatarstan has never had the intention to segregate itself from Russia, and has fought for unity and preservation through the federation (Fayzrakhmanov 2017). Furthermore, it was believed certain elements would go lost such as the Tatar status in Russian passports, knowledge of the Tatar language among politicians, and the right to jointly solve any problems ranging from economy, ecology to culture. Above all, it could possibly have posed a threat for Tatarstan's ability to forge external relations. Tatarstan announced that if an extension would not be granted, it would be announced at the World Tatar Congress to seek support. This event had been visited by a Tatar diaspora from forty other countries (Avakov 2017, Tass 2017b). On 24 July 2017, after ten years of since the last agreement, it expired.

Nevertheless, the Tatar authorities kept requesting an extension, but the Russian authorities deemed it inappropriate. It became apparent the notion of centralization had become stronger now than it was during the first extension in 2007 (Kashin 2017). On 3 August 2017, the World Congress of Tatars considered to submit a resolution that would describe the positive effects Tatarstan has had on the socio-political developments within the country and expressed support for extension of the expired agreement. The resolution itself, however, would not be a plea for extension, rather, it was more of a description on Tatarstan's positive influence within the Russian Federation (Antonov and Samokhina 2017). Nonetheless, despite all its attempts, it was ultimately decided not to grant an extension by the federal center on 11 August 2017. They held the position a state should not be based on a contractual basis, meaning in practice that no agreement in any region could be concluded. In reaction, Tatarstan stated this would create legal conflicts. In turn, the Kremlin reacted it would not create a commission to address possible issues. Furthermore, it was stated that Tatarstan could deal with those conflicts themselves (Antonov 2017). Another notion that had been important for years, was the title of president. This title will most likely be abolished this year and will furthermore contribute to Tatarstan's contested autonomy (Mubarakzyanov 2018). However, it remains open to debate whether it has affected their ability of pursuing paradiplomatic ties.

Generally, there is no concrete information to be found on the actual effect the expiration of the agreement has had on Tatarstan's paradiplomatic relations. Thus, in order give an assessment, Tatarstan's paradiplomatic ties will be subjected to discussion that will eventually focus on Tatar-Turkey relations since 2017. An interesting starting point is to compare the official website of Tatarstan on external relations between the years 2013 and 2020. What immediately becomes clear is how the content has changed. Even though both variants talk about external relations, the 2020 version mentions that the Republic of Tatarstan coordinates its international and interregional cooperation with the federal authorities within a single foreign policy framework of the Russian Federation while the 2013 version clearly mentions cooperation between the Russian and Tatar Ministries of Foreign Affairs. What this would incline, is that freedom to shape their own foreign relations has shifted to the need to coordinate everything with the federal center. What can further be assumed is that if the federal center does not agree with certain Tatar interests abroad, it could interfere without any difficulties. Furthermore, the 2013 variant mentions that Tatarstan has historically fulfilled the role of a political, economic, and trade center that positioned Tatarstan as

bridge between east and west, an element which is missing from the 2020 variant. Here again the assumption can be made that focus from Tatarstan shifted to the federal center. On the other hand, the 2020 version does mention their economy has been integrated in the world economic system, meaning that they are still capable of pursuing external economic relations (O respublike 2020, O Respublike 2013). Furthermore, Tatarstan's activity in the cultural and political sphere on a world stage has also not disappeared. All of these aspects are discussed below (Keating 1999, 4-5, 11, Yusupova 2019, 33).

First of all, to gain a deeper insight into Tatarstan's contemporary external economic relations, statistics prove the republic is still viable on the world stage. As mentioned in chapter three, Tatarstan has had trade with over hundred countries. What is evident according to these statistics is that there is no evidence of trade collapsing after 2017 (Tatarstanstat 2020). Further evidence of economic foreign activity is Tatarstan's dedicated website that promotes the ability to invest in the republic. Furthermore, it can be accessed in different languages including Turkish, which gives it an international character (Invest Tatarstan 2020). Another aspect is that Tatarstan has been visited one hundred twenty-five times by different foreign delegations in 2019. The Tatar Ministry of Industry and Trade itself conducted thirty delegations to foreign countries including Turkey, some of which were led by the Tatar President Minnikhanov (Vneshneekonomicheskoye sotrudnichestvo 2020). Second, Tatarstan's cultural activity also seems to continue without any apparent interruptions. One prominent example is the World Tatar Congress that promotes cultural ties between the Tatar diaspora that is spread around the world. Furthermore, the Tatar institution responsible for continuing Tatarstan's legacy is the Ministry of Culture that provides integration of its culture onto the world stage (World Tatar Congress 2020, Ministerstvo kultyury 2020b). An addition to cultural events have been Tatarstan's role in hosting big worldly events such as the 2018 World Cup, but also its work on the revival of the old Tatar city of Bulgar which spurs tourism (O respublike 2020). Lastly, Tatarstan is an important asset for Russia within the framework of the Islamic world. The republic has a well-developed Islamic infrastructure that allows Tatarstan to exert greater political power in comparison to other regions within Russia. A brief background is that Tatarstan's importance in the Islamic world began to be recognized by the Russian authorities in the 2000s, who in turn gradually increased Tatarstan's role in developing relations with countries of the Islamic world. An event that plays a central role in this aspect is the Kazan Summit that has been organized annually since 2009. Originally, the event was aimed at



the development of Islamic banking, but eventually shifted to attracting investments. Most notably is that Turkey is named as an important partner. What has become apparent with Russia's recent return to the east, is that Tatarstan's role is indispensable for Russia's greater interests. Altogether, it could be argued that Tatarstan has considerable importance on the world stage and is certainly an important asset for Russia. Therefore, its paradiplomatic ties cannot simply be abolished (Yusupova 2019, UCCE 2019, Linova-MEDIA 2009).

In the perspective of Tatarstan-Turkey relations, paradiplomatic ties between the two entities also seem not to have been interrupted by the end of Tatarstan's special status. Tatarstan is treated by Turkey as an indispensable part of their relations with Russia as it is one of the most economically developed and wealthy regions in Russia (UCCE 2019). In an economic perspective, turnover between 2017-2018 has risen slightly and continued to grow further between 2018-2019 as demonstrated by table 3 (Predstavitelstvo Turtsii 2020). As mentioned in chapter four on contemporary cooperation between the two entities, there are currently more than two hundred fifty Turkish companies active in Tatarstan and have altogether invested more than two and a half billion dollars. In comparison to the official number of total investments on the Invest Tatar website, Turkey has contributed to over fifteen percent of its total (Uzun 2017, 1798, Invest Tatarstan 2020, UCCE 2019). Moreover, Tatarstan's Representation in Turkey reported that investments from Turkey are ongoing. At least one indicator are the investments of eight large Turkish companies, though some of them joint-stock, operating on Tatarstan soil that contributed considerably as demonstrated in Table 2 (Predstavitelstvo Turtsii 2020). During Turkey's presence at the Kazan Summit in 2019, president of the UCCE stated that Turkey wants to increase its volume of trade and investments in Tatarstan. The Turkish Minister of Economy had similar rhetoric stating that there is much potential in the republic for economic development and that trade can reach up to one billion dollars. The current Consul General has pointed out that joint projects between Tatarstan and Turkey have been strengthening relations and will most likely continue to grow (UCCE 2019, Zengin 2019, Ziatdinova 2019b). The same notion has been shared by Tatarstan's president Minnikhanov who stated there are "enough opportunities to expand business" (Canbolat and Gashigullin 2019). On the other hand, an aspect that seriously challenged Tatarstan's ability of pursuing paradiplomatic ties with Turkey, has been the Russia-Turkey crisis of 2015. What can be observed, is Tatarstan's inability to act against the federal center and continue their relations with Turkey regardless of sanctions imposed by the federal center. Moreover, when

sanctions against Turkey were announced, it did not give exclusion to any region within the Russian Federation. Even though at this time the agreement concerning Tatarstan's autonomy was still valid, it did not give Tatar law precedence over Russian Federal law. The republic had to wait for Russian-Turkish relations to normalize again, a process that started in the second half of 2016 (Belenkaya and Krivosheyev 2015, Inkazan.ru 2016, Beresnev, Kolebakina-Usmanova and Badretdin 2016). In numbers of trade, the effect of the crisis was not only visible between Russia and Turkey between 2015-2016 as demonstrated by Table 3, but also had a considerable effect on Tatarstan as demonstrated by Table 1 (Ru-Stat 2020, Predstavitelstvo Turtsii 2020). This crisis was identified as a difficult time by both Tatarstan and Turkey, but did overall not damage their friendly relations (Agentstvo Investitsionnogo Razvitiya 2016). There are however some peculiarities that might could be related to end of Tatarstan's special status. First of all, the current Turkish General Consul Ismet Erikan made a remark in November 2019 on return investments by Tatarstan. While Turkey has invested two and a half billion dollars into Tatarstan, there has not been a reversed effect of Tatar investments into Turkey (Badretdin 2019). The last aspect concerns a meeting between the current Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Minnikhanov between 24-25 August 2018. There were talks on initiating a large project in Tatarstan by the Turkish Industrial Zone Gebze. However, it is stated that this decision is in the hands of the federal center (Alpaut 2018). Hypothetically speaking and according to these aspects, it could mean Tatarstan never had the power to decide on these economic matters, or Tatarstan's power to act alone in its relations with Turkey has diminished after 2017. In turn, both hypotheses can be strengthened by the fact their power has been taken away by the federal center (Raykhshtat 2017).

Secondly, education comes to the forefront in the perspective of Tatar-Turkey paradiplomatic ties. In contemporary times, student exchanges are viable and developing. Some examples are that in 2019 Minnikhanov stated that there were more than hundred students studying in Tatarstan and there have been talks on expanding student exchanges between the Turkish university of Kent and Tatar Kazan State Medical University (EADaily 2019, President Respubliki Tatarstan 2019). Nonetheless, there have been three occasions in which educational ties have been threatened. The first occasion is linked to closing down Turkish schools in the course of the 2000s. On the other hand, considering the Gülenist movement, Turkey is no proponent of that in contemporary times and it is highly likely these have not had an impact on diplomatic ties (Suleymanov 2015c). A second challenge has been student and teacher exchanges that were cancelled due to the 2015

crisis. In this case six students along with one teacher were forced back to Turkey (Shakir 2016). A third challenge, also in the same perspective, had been a halt to the cooperation between the Turkish Yunus Emre Center and the KFU. Even though it was initially reported the Yunus Emre Center would have to temporarily suspend their operations, there has been no sign of continuation in recent times (KFU 2012, Kommersant 2015). On the other hand, there have been hopes from the Turkish side another center will be opened in Tatarstan, but there is no definitive answer to that matter (Badretdin, Farkhutdinov and Islamov 2019). What has become apparent in Tatar-Turkey educational ties nevertheless, is that the end of the treaty has not necessarily become a threat as there are ongoing talks on educational developments. Rather, the 2015 crisis seems to have had the largest impact.

Lastly, the developments in the cultural sphere are to be considered. Also, in this regard, cooperation seems to continue when considering the talks former General Consul Ergin has had with Tatarstan on opening a Turkish Cultural Center and developing courses on the Turkish language to enable deeper ties with the local population (Gaynanova and Latypov 2018, Inkazan.ru 2018). Furthermore, there is active cultural development in different fields according to the Tatar Ministry of Culture whereas one example would be the Turkic film festival, which is of importance building cultural relations with Turkey (Ministerstvo kultyury 2020a, Ministerstvo kultyury 2019). Lastly, tourism is another field that seem to be actively developing, especially in the medical sphere (Ziatdinova 2019a). Again, it seems that the largest impact on cultural development has been the 2015 crisis as well. For example, Tatarstan withdrew from participating in the 2015 Turkvision festival and Erdogan's visit to the opening ceremony of a monument in honor of the advisor to the first president of the Turkish Republic in Tatarstan was cancelled due to the worsening situation (Umaraliyev 2015, Pereltsvaig 2016). On the other hand, Turkey has on different occasions expressed the interest of opening a cultural center in Kazan. This has still not happened until this day and may be linked to expiration of the agreement. Yet, there is no concrete evidence that supports this particular argument (Badretdin 2019).

## 5. Conclusion

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When considering the research question on how Tatarstan has been able to pursue its independent external relations with Turkey after the end of their special status, a short answer would be that the

expiration of the agreement is certainly an interesting case, but has not necessarily had a considerable impact on Tatar-Turkey paradiplomatic relations. Rather, there are different issues at hand that made relations between the two entities difficult. To explain, the start of Tatarstan's high degree of autonomy attained in 1994 should be considered first. What has become apparent is that Tatarstan has not fully gotten what it ultimately aimed for. The argument would be that, even though Tatarstan's aim had been to gain sovereignty and independence, the federal center still had reasonable leverage over Tatarstan despite being considerably weaker in the 1990s. In practice, this meant that Russia managed to preserve a part of its power in Tatarstan. On the other hand, Tatarstan did gain the right to pursue economic external relations apart from the federal center, which is directly connected to the notion of paradiplomacy. In the 1990s, it became evident how Tatarstan used their paradiplomatic ability to pursue relations with Turkey. Especially after the foundation of the Turkish Consulate in Tatarstan's capital of Kazan in 1996, relations in the economic, socio-political, ethno-cultural, and religious spheres started to develop. In the perspective of Turkey, it was in their interest to spread pan-Turkism through soft power. This notion was embraced by Tatarstan because it meant they were internationally recognized, an aspect important for its pursuit of paradiplomacy.

In 2000, Tatarstan's autonomy was subjected to its first difficulties when Putin came to power. Furthermore, Tatarstan's bold move into the Turkic world did not go unnoticed and consequences followed. The presence of Turkish school based on Islamic teachings in Tatarstan were ultimately closed or reorganized due to being considered a threat. In terms of soft power, these schools were important for the spread of Turkish influence in creating a pro-Turkish Tatar elite. Another Turkish influence in Tatarstan had been the notion of changing the alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin. By Russia, this was understood as Tatarstan's search for their own identification and perhaps even secession. As a result, Cyrillic was made mandatory to prevent the republic from moving too far away from Russia.

There is one aspect that did manage to continue without common difficulties, Tatarstan's economic cooperation with Turkey. Despite the power exerted on Tatarstan from the federal center, relations between the two entities have endured through the 1990s and 2000s. This is an aspect that is clearly visible in their contemporary relations. Nowadays Tatarstan features many Turkish companies that operate locally and have invested over two billion dollars altogether. Furthermore, the role of

Tatarstan's president, the political institutions, the Turkish Consul General, official visits from both sides, and annual conferences have certainly contributed to this paradiplomatic aspect. Furthermore, student exchanges and cultural events have certainly added value to these.

The largest challenge to Tatar-Turkey relations followed after the downing of a Russian bomber in 2015. This occurrence was followed by sanctions that had a profound effect on Tatarstan's ability to act as a paradiplomatic entity. Despite the fact that Tatarstan's agreement with Russia was still valid, it should have had the ability to either influence or alter the situation. However, it is evident that decisions made on a federal level took precedence of those of Tatarstan. As a result, trade between Tatarstan and Turkey began to fall, educational exchange was cancelled and cultural cooperation halted. On the other hand, activity did not subside altogether and relations did manage to go forward mainly because its sturdiness that had positively been developing for almost three decades.

Another challenge, albeit this time in respect to Tatarstan alone, had been the end of their special status in 2017. Evidently, the effects have mainly been felt among the Tatar political elite and Tatarstan's population. Even though Tatarstan has been considered by Russia as a model region, it has not been able to retain its status that granted them a high degree of autonomy. In perspective of Tatarstan's paradiplomatic ties, there are some indicators that might be evident the end of their special status made it more difficult to pursue external relations. The indicators identified are, (a) the rhetoric on their official website that shifted from cooperation between the Russian and Tatar Ministries of Foreign affairs to Tatarstan having to coordinate their external relations with the federal center, (b) the remark that Tatarstan has not done any return investments in Turkey, (c) the plan of the Industrial Zone Gebze to initiate a large project on Tatarstan soil that can only be approved by the federal center, and (d) the aspect no Turkish cultural center has re-opened its doors yet. Nonetheless, Tatarstan's paradiplomatic relations with Turkey are still viable in contemporary times and holds a special place in Russia's strategy towards the Islamic world. The only evident occurrence that undoubtedly challenged their relations remains the 2015 Russia-Turkey crisis.

Based on the conclusion above, further research is needed in order to gain a deeper insight into the end of Tatarstan's special status and impact on relations with Turkey. In this case, interviews with people who are affiliated with Tatar politics could have possibly added more value to the discussion. However, due to the spread of coronavirus in the Netherlands and Russia, obtaining

such information has unfortunately not been possible. Therefore, this research has been reduced to using primary and secondary sources only. On the other hand, this research has attempted to fill the gap on Tatarstan's ability to pursue paradiplomatic ties in contemporary times. Even though there is literature available on Tatarstan and paradiplomacy, that certainly has added value to this research, these sources have not been written recently.

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