

## Turkish – American Relations: S-400 and F-35\*

*Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri: S-400 ve F-35*

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### ABSTRACT

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**Keywords:**

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*In this research, the tensions and conflicting interests between the two allied countries Turkey and the USA sharing liberal values challenge the cooperation frame will be investigated by looking at their approaches during the S-400 and F-35 crisis. The objective of the study is to investigate the sides preferring different approaches for the solution of the issue regarding the S-400 and F-35 crisis between Turkey and the USA caused by the global developments resulting from the national security and interests between the years 2002-2020. In this frame, a qualitative research design with an explanatory/descriptive case study strategy was used. The data were collected through interviews and documents. The study concluded that the USA side chose to approach the problem by embracing sanctions and threatening with sanctions instead of solving the problem by negotiating with a liberal approach during the S-400 and F-35 crisis between two countries.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Rather than being a common problem in Turkish-USA relations after 2002, S-400 crisis emerges as a problem evolving towards a separator of whether the ties between two countries will sever or the relations will continue.

This crisis emerged as a problem causing distrust growing between two close NATO allies. It would be beneficial to look at the background of this incident that is part of the chain of events that caused the relations between two countries to reach the lowest levels on the line from past to present. Turkey's need for air defense systems first took form in 1991, in the I. Gulf War. In this war, Turkey requested Air Defense System from NATO to defend against possible SCUD missile attacks carried out by Saddam. In NATO's extent, USA, Germany and Netherlands replied positively to Turkey's request and Patriot missiles were deployed in Turkey. I. After the Gulf war, Turkey's second event of requesting air defense systems from NATO happened in 2013 as a result of the war in Syria. In this process, Turkey were seen in search for buying air defense systems and producing them.

Turkey's negotiations for acquiring Patriot system from USA reached to a dead end due to concerns of Raytheon about transferring technology and USA's Minister of Defence's concerns about sharing sensitive defence technologies even if they are a NATO ally. Upon this, Turkey went in a search of missile defense systems to acquire, manufacture and sell in the long run and meet its urgent security needs in the short run.

## **2. TURKISH – AMERICAN RELATIONS: S-400 AND F-35 CRISIS**

Turkey showed how determined they were to acquire air defense systems by creating a competitive agenda between European, Russian and Chinese counterparts and get offers with Patriot system during B. Obama administration. (Egeli, 2019: 69-92)

Because of detecting a missile sourced threat, Turkey announced that it started negotiating with China on September 2013 with the intention of acquiring long range air defense systems known as FD-2000's. Turkey's approach caused suspicion and disturbance in USA and NATO about Turkey's intentions. However, Turkey declared that it has the right for national security and interest. Turkey's statement triggered arguments between analysts about Turkey's direction. While the cooperation results of Turkey-China were being discussed, Turkey announced that it dissolved the agreement with China about acquiring air defense systems and it will produce its own air defense system with their own national possibilities in 18 November 2015. It can be thought that defense industry's western architecture features and close cooperation and dependence with NATO, not only in missile defense systems, but also in conventional weapons played a big part in Turkey's decision. This strategic cancellation decision can be seen as a

result of Turkey re-analysing and considering in the frame of the current condition instead of being sentimental. With this decision, Turkey once again stressed its determination for staying in the western bloc.

In August 2015, USA announced that it will withdraw two Patriot batteries stationed in the southeastern part of Turkey due to request of Turkey in 2013 during the Syrian war. The modernization of these batteries was shown as a justification of this withdrawal decision which was the result of the critical negotiations. It was stated that as an assurance to the Turkish side, in case of a critical situation, these two batteries and 250 military personnel using them would be transferred to Turkey within a week. Also it is stated that a warship deployed in the Mediterranean Sea would give air support in case of an attack to Turkey (Schmitt, 2015). Even though there were some promises made to Turkey, it is seen that Turkey faced serious difficulties regarding the defense of its airspace and could not get the support it needed. Between 18 January 2016 and 24 April 2016, 45 rocket shells fell from Syria to Kilis, the border city of Turkey, 16 people lost their lives and 62 people were injured (BBC, 2016). It is seen that the decision to withdraw the Patriot batteries from Turkey caused disappointment with the sensitivity of its allies on Turkey's national security on the Turkish side and causing the acceleration of Turkey's pursuit of acquiring an air defense system. Turkey and Russia's negotiations about the purchase of S-400 was first reported to the public in 2016. On 12 September 2017, Turkey signed an agreement to purchase the S-400 air defense system from Russia, with a cost of approximately 2.5 billion dollars. This agreement included the receipt of two S-400 batteries. (Uawire, 2019).

Upon Turkey signing the agreement about acquiring S-400's, the USA side announced that Turkey's position in mutual producer and part provider on F-35 Consortium would be at risk. F-35 Consortium was founded by nine countries including Turkey, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, UK and USA. Turkey first paid 125 million dollars to improve the F-35 program and made a commitment to buy 100 aircraft, with 30 of them being firm orders. Turkish companies were in the position of only producers of some F-35 parts in this consortium. With S-400 crisis, USA claimed that S-400 computers can save and read all data coming from NATO's joint systems, it is also pointed out that if Turkey buys the F-35's, S-400 radars could easily save the sensitive information regarding F-35 in the high density F-35 traffic happening in the Turkish airspace (Stocker, 2019).

In a speech, America's ministry of defense international security affairs assistant Katie Wheelberger has stated "S-400 is a computer. F-35 is a computer. No one connects their

computer to its rival's computer. In a situation where Turkey buys F-35, that's what we will basically do." in a speech given to Reuters in 21 March 2019. (Ali and Stewart, 2019)

Turkish side responded to allegations of American side that the S-400's and F-35's cannot be used together and it could cause serious drawbacks by offering to form a joint commission. According to the Turkish side, this is an advanced technical issue and only through establishing a joint commission of experts, the issues that are claimed to be problematic can be clarified (Arif, 2019). On June 6 2019, a letter was sent to Hulusi Akar, the Minister of National Defense of the Republic of Turkey, by Patrick Shanahan, the Acting Secretary of Defense of the USA (Liveuamap, 2019). The letter stated that if Turkey buys the S-400, it will be subject to a series of economic and military sanctions, especially being removed from the F-35 program in a rude and threatening language, far from diplomatic courtesy and customs. In the letter, P. Shanahan announced that Turkish pilots training in USA will leave the country until 31 July and there would be no recruitment for new Turkish pilots to train. He also pointed out that the purchase of S-400 would increase Turkey's strategic and economic dependence to Russia, hurt the cooperation between USA and NATO, cause unwanted negativities for Turkish defense industry and economy.

In the announcement made from the NDM (National Defence Ministry) website, it was stated that a letter was written in response to P. Shanahan's letter, in which he expressed his discomfort with the use of a style incompatible with spirit of alliance (Republic of Turkey National Ministry of Defence, 2019). In the response letter, it was stated that the views and approaches of the Turkish side, previously known by the American administration, were once again explained in detail, and the importance of continuing a dialogue based on mutual friendship and respect and continuing to work on solving the problems was emphasized. At the press conference at the G20 summit held in Osaka, Japan on 29 June 2019, USA President Donald Trump stated that unlike the American official authorities, Turkey will not be blamed for the purchase of the S-400, stating that this would be unfair. D. Trump blamed Obama administration for this and claimed that Obama administration responded negatively to Turkey's request about buying Patriot missiles resulting in Turkey negotiating with Russia (The White House, 2019). In July 2019, the transfer of S-400 system elements to Turkey started. USA removed Turkey from the F-35 program and threatened to impose the CAATSA sanctions. It is suggested that the possible implementation of CAATSA sanctions imposed by the acquirement of S-400 could harm the Turkish economy. According to some reports from the American media, there were still some hope for an agreement with Turkey. For sides to negotiate, it is

stated that the USA's side expects the termination of S-400 usage and the acquirement of Patriot air defense systems. It is also stated that Turkey will resume to take part in the F-35 program and CAATSA sanctions will get postponed upon the steps it will take in accordance with USA's demands. USA Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Pompeo, in a speech he has given in 2019's July, has stated that in a scenario where Turkey activates the S-400's could mean triggering the CAATSA sanctions. Some American congress members pressured USA President D. Trump to impose the CAATSA sanctions without delay. (Zanotti and Thomas, 2020).

It can be said that first of the sanctions imposed by USA stating the removal of Turkey from the F-35 program will affect the modernization plans of the Turkish Air Force alongside with defense and aviation sectors negatively. The potentially implementable CAATSA (USA's law of Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) became a law in 2017 (Taylor, 2019). CAATSA act's first targets are Russia's defense and energy industries. The act can be described as a pack or a bag of sanctions targeting not only Russia's, but also Iran's nuclear weapon production activities and North Korea. Especially Russian companies which are actively facilitating in defence industry are the main target of these sanctions. According to this legislation, the countries and companies which are collaborating with the stated companies will be afflicted with these sanctions. Because Rostec, the company which sold the S-400s to Turkey, is in the list of sanctioned companies, collaboration of Turkey and Rostec is an instigator for the implementation of sanctions.

While the disputes were continuing, the news that Lockheed Martin, the manufacturer of F-35s, will exclude Turkey from the manufacture chain after 2020 were reflected in the news on 23th July 2019. The exclusion of Turkey from the manufacture chain means that the components that were originally built in Turkey now will be produced in USA. In the announcement of the CEO of Lockheed Martin, Marillyn Hewson to the related subject, after March 2020, Turkey's exclusion from the manufacture chain has been planned, she stated. Involved in the project, Turkey produces many components ranging from landing gears to cockpit indicators.

Even though the procurement of S-400s has caused frictions between the two country, it can be observed that both sides are aims to prevent complete severance. Both in the letter of Ministry of National Defence of Republic of Turkey to P. Shanahan with its obtrusive demeanour that they do not wish to be the side to lose an ally regardless of all what have transpired, and the visit of Wilbur Ross, minister of Department of Commerce, can be deemed as an act to tranquilize and normalize the relation. It was announced via the social media account of U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Turkey on 7th September that minister of U.S. Department of

Commerce Wilbur Ross and Minister of Trade Ruhsar Pekcan has met in Istanbul. It was proclaimed that at the meeting a consensus has been reached regarding to achieve 100-billion-dollar trade volume via terminating hinderances and providing ease of operation to potent industries.

It can be observed that the procurement of S-400s continues to be the main subject relating to the relations between two countries. Another intriguing development took place in July 2020 regarding to the subject. Turkish people's attention turned to Senate John Thune's proposal that U.S. should buy S-400s from Turkey right at the start of the July. Senate formalized his suggestion by proposing an amendment motion in 2021 National Defence Authorization Act (Euronews, 2020). In the case of acceptance of this attempt, it was presumed that one of the fundamental issue will be overcome and the Turkey's right to get F-35s will be not stymied. Senate's proposal was not for to buy S-400s and use them but rather to inspect them on a technical level.

On 6th July, Pentagon spokeswoman Jessica Maxwell from U.S. Senate's announcement of that Turkey will continue to manufacture 139 components of F-35's until 2022 was expected to create a favourable atmosphere, but the letter of U.S. Senates to U.S. Minister of Defence M. Esper appealing to them to forthwithly halt procurement of F-35 components from Turkey (United States Senate, 2020). Senates provided reasons in their letter as following;

“From human rights violations in Syria to arbitrary arrests of Americans in Ankara to defense cooperation with Russia, Turkey is not behaving like a responsible actor or working collaboratively with the West at the level we expect from a NATO ally. ”

From this letter, it can be perceiving as an example of an achieving result through coercion. When the letter and the proposal of John Thune about buying S-400s compared; J. Thune's suggestion can be interpreted as an example of more collaborative and a liberal approach through diplomacy; meanwhile, the letter The Senates have written represents realism in international relations which results with Turkey being on the economically losing side. In other meaning, this letter aims to harm Turkey through sanctions of power instruments instead of suggesting dialogue and negotiation. The authenticity of allegations in the letter are controversial except for the claims of collaboration with Russia in defence. The allegations in the letter has brought forward multiple times by the U.S. Senate and Administrative incumbents, yet each time, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs and executives refused these allegations and promulgated refusal to public and interlocutors. But no executive of Republic of Turkey has refused there has been collaborations with Russia in national defence.

Another adverse development in Turkish-American relations is the approval of resolution on 22th July at U.S. House of Representatives, prescribing implementation of CAATSA sanctions against Turkey incurred by procurement of S-400s. For resolution to be enacted, it must have approved by Congress and must be signed by D. Trump (Congress, 2020).

Arguments about Turk-American relation and CAATSA sanctions have left its place to how Turk-American relations will fare after Joe Biden's prevail on 3th November 2020 elections. While the arguments were continuing about the Biden period with both Turks and Americans, on 14th December 2020 U.S. Department of State announced that the CAATSA sanctions will be implemented specifically against Turkey (Department of State, 2020). These sanctions targeted Defence Industry and its minister İsmail Demir and three executives.

Regarding to this this decision, in press release of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they announced refusal of unilateral sanction and shared the declaration of objection with public which incurred because of procurement of S-400 air defence systems (Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Defence).

After the sanction decision, in the statement M. Pompeo made on his social media account “Despite our warnings, Turkey moved ahead with its purchase and testing of the S-400 system from Russia. Today’s sanctions on Turkey's SSB demonstrates the U.S. will fully implement CAATSA. We will not tolerate significant transactions with Russia's defense sector.” he expressed (Pompeo, 2020).

And from the Turkish side, the statement on social media account of Communications Director of Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Directorate of Communications expressed “The decision by the United States to sanction Turkey over its purchase of the S-400 air defense system is unreasonable, fruitless, and ultimately incompatible with the spirit of our partnership.” (Altun, 2020).

In the statement of Presidency Spokesman Ibrahim Kalın made on social media on 15th December 2020, he expressed “Sanctions against Turkey and the narrow agenda behind them are counterproductive and will have the reverse effect. They will not change Turkey’s resolve to develop its own defense industry capacities, diversify its sources, decrease dependency and increase self-sufficiency.” (Kalın, 2020).

If we look at the expressions made on USA press, the expressions of Wall Street Journal are also intriguing. Wall Street Journal has shared its opinion that the sanction incurred because of S-400s has deepened the fraction between Ankara and Washington (Günay, 2020). The remarks

that were used in the news of Wall Street Journal are validations to the arguments supporting the idea that the relations between two countries has aggravated more because of the sanctions. Another validation supporting the former stated arguments is the article of Kılıç Buğra Kanat released on dailysabah newspaper on 15th December named “US sanctions only cause more tension with Turkey” (Kanat, 2020).

Following days after the announcement of the sanctions, M. Pompeo has conducted a phone call with M. Çavuşoğlu relating to the subject. On this phone call, M. Pompeo expressed that the target of the CAATSA sanctions are not neither Turkey nor Turkish Army, its aim is to thwart any infiltrations from Russia to American and Turkish defence systems (Youtube, 2020).

***Related to the S-400 and F-35 tension, specialists remarked as following;***

29th Minister of Foreign Affairs Hikmet Çetin (Interview, 18 December 2019)

“Between Turkey and America, there have been many conundrums, disputes, inclines and declines in relations, for they only revolve around one or two issue they were eliminated in a short period of time. But the conundrums we confront now are extremely detrimental and can affect relations in every dimension. If we look back in time now, we can definitely perceive S-400s as the primary problem. We don’t know if any agreement has constructed between Erdoğan and Trump regarding to this conundrum at the summit on 13th of November. It is discussed that committees may provide an agreement but I don’t believe they can create a long lasting one. It is not possible to restore the relations with such temporary agreements about a topic of utmost importance. Because in American public, universities, congresses and in media, it is continuously manifested in various forms that without a solution to S-400s, it is not feasible to restore the relations. And it is incessantly stated that sanctions will be activated if it’s left without a solution.

S-400 conundrum is not only a matter about relations with U.S., for it is a matter of our relations with NATO.”

Ragıp Soylu (Interview, 27 December 2019):

“The main reason for USA's resistance regarding the S-400 is the F-35’s. So there are actually two problems there. Firstly, USA does not want Turkey to buy any weapons outside the western alliance. In fact, they want them to buy weapons from USA. This is a market issue, frankly there is such a side to this event. Secondly, USA does not want F-35’s and S-400’s to come together. The reason why the USA does not want the S-400s is not discussed in detail, but people in this sector of industry know this. There is a risk that the S-400 incident will create a

team within NATO that adhere to the Russians. The purchase of S-400' is an event that will oblige some of our army personnel to be sent to Russia for training purposes. This will in turn create a team within the Turkish army that is open to Russian influence, works with Russians, people that learned Russian and maybe people who married Russians during their commute there. You see this a lot in American army. There are a lot of Americans that married Turkish people while they served in İncirlik.”

Hüseyin Günay (Interview, 20 December 2019):

“Some experts in Washington say the F-35 is not a plane to give up on. They point out that the F-35 is a weapon that will carry the air superiority of any country in the region above the others. They say that this plane is in one of the two countries allied with the US which is Israel, and it should be in Turkey too. They emphasize that if Turkey wants to remain a regional power, this plane should be in Turkey as well. They underline that the equivalents of the S-400s can be bought from Spain or France, but it is not possible to buy the F-35 from France or anywhere else.”

Retired US Ambassador Patrick N. Theros (Interview, 19 June 2020):

“Turkey's purchase of the S-400 has done more damage to the relations between the Turkish and American armies than any negativity experienced since 1947. The impact created by this incident is deep, the damage to relations can only be repaired by returning the S-400s. The US military will of course obey orders from Trump, but it will do so unhappily. Ownership of the S-400 also poses dangers for Turkey in the post-Trump era. Unfortunately, I don't see any light at the end of the tunnel for US-Russia relations and Turkey may have to choose a side.”

Retired U.S Ambassador John Blaney (Interview, 30 June 2020):

“First, overwhelmingly, Turkey's general interests are in its relations with the West, and although this is a limited action, its perception in the West will be negative. Second, Russia's military-industrial complex is very strong and will aggressively seek to expand its arms-trading relationship with Turkey (and worldwide) with the full support of Moscow, especially in times of low oil prices (like now). Third, transparency has always been an issue in such deals.”

Colonel William Downey, retired US national security expert (Interview, July 10, 2020):

“The S-400 and Syria issue should not be seen as separate and independent topics in Turkish-American military and diplomatic relations. It would be a more correct approach to see these issues as a part of Turkey's policies regarding NATO and the region. As always, the context in this discussion is multidimensional.

It should be said that the S-400 issue has three dimensions. First dimension of the subject is related to the military field. S-400 is a Russian designed system to take down not only the F-16's but also the F-35's. Both aircraft are an integral part of NATO air capabilities. In November 2019, it was reported that Turkey tested the S-400 against the F-16. This information was recently confirmed by an article published by the Russian news agency TASS. We can unquestionably say that the results of this test are now in the hands of Russian military intelligence.

The second dimension of the issue is that Turkey was excluded from the F-35 program due to this purchase and the US Department of Defense turned to search for alternative supply sources instead of Turkish companies for parts supply. The other aspect of the event is that since the Russian system was designed with the aim of preventing NATO, this purchase by Turkey is seen as a direct attempt against the interests of the USA and NATO allies.”

Regarding the opinions put forward by the experts regarding the S-400 and F-35 tensions, it is possible to state the following;

When Hikmet Çetin's interview is analyzed, it is seen that he draws attention to the S-400 issue as the most important problem in relations. Another issue that H. Çetin draws attention to is that the temporary solutions to be found between the delegations will not be sufficient to permanently improve the relations. The third point that H. Çetin draws attention to is that the issue is not only the Turkish-American relations dimension, but also affects Turkey's relations with NATO.

Ragıp Soylu put forward three arguments regarding the S-400 topic turning into a problem. The first of these is the risk that the S-400s will create a team within the Turkish army that adhere to the Russian army. The American side does not want this. Secondly, the US does not want Turkey, which is an arms market for itself, to buy weapons from elsewhere, and thirdly, the US side does not want the S-400 and F-35s to come together due to security and many other reasons.

One dimension of the discussions about the F-35 and S-400 was the issue of which of these two military equipment was more important for Turkey. On the subject, NTV Washington representative Hüseyin Günay conveys the opinion that S-400 systems have alternatives within the western bloc, based on what was spoken in Washington.

Regarding the effect of Turkey's decision to purchase the S-400 on Turkish-American relations, retired US Ambassador Patrick N. Theros states that the purchase of the S-400 caused the

biggest crack in Turkish-American relations in the post-1947 period, especially among the military. In addition, P. Theros states that future tensions in the relations between America and Russia will put Turkey in a difficult situation due to the S-400 purchase.

John Blaney stated that Turkey's purchase of the S-400 negatively affected the perception of its relations with the USA and the Western world. He argued that this situation was to some extent a result of Russia's aggressive arms-selling strategy and that there was always a transparency issue in such agreements.

It is seen that the cooperation with Russia has caused uneasiness at all levels on the part of the USA, including those in office and retired national security experts. One of the reasons for this uneasiness was the thought that the secrets regarding the military security of NATO and the USA were in the hands of the Russian military intelligence since November 2019. Regarding Turkish-Russian military cooperation and the S-400s, retired US national security expert Colonel William Downey put forward the argument that the Syrian issue and the S-400s are related and that this is part of Turkey's policies regarding NATO and the region. It is seen that Downey also draws attention to the loss that Turkey will suffer due to its removal from the F-35 project.

*Within the framework of the foreign policy analysis on the subject, it is possible to express the following views on the causes of the S-400 tension;*

**Leader factor:** It can be stated that the approaches of the US leaders regarding Turkey's purchase of Patriots differ. It was stated by Trump at the G-20 summit that the Patriot purchase demands for Turkey's air defense system did not find the necessary response during the Obama era.

The second issue to be examined in the context of individual-centered approaches is President Erdogan's involvement in the negotiations during the Patriot purchase process. Although it is natural and normal for the head of state to be involved in the purchase of such an expensive system, this situation has created discomfort in the US side. In the context of leadership typologies, it is known that leaders exhibit approaches such as being in the process and effectively shaping the process. Based on his approach to this incident, it can be stated that President Erdoğan also exhibited such an approach. A second issue, which can be handled within the framework of rational approaches, is the effort of the leader to obtain the maximum benefit and gain that can be obtained while purchasing such an expensive system. President Erdogan's efforts to achieve all possible gains, including technology transfer, in these purchase negotiations can be explained by his mentality that prioritizes a rational approach.

**Differences in national interests:** As in all tensions between two countries, the reason for the emergence of the S-400 tension can be found in the differences in the national security concerns and interests of the two countries. The interest and expectation of the American side is to sell Patriot systems to Turkey at a high price without technology transfer and to create dependency. When a sale is made in this way, the possibility of Turkey emerging as a commercial competitor in the future will be prevented. The American administration on the other hand, would not be sharing sensitive defense technologies with any other country, even if it is an ally. This situation was seen as the most appropriate option for American national security reservations and interests on the American side.

Turkey's interest is to purchase Patriot systems in a way that includes technology transfer. By acquiring Patriot systems, Turkey had designed to eliminate national security concerns in the short term and to have the opportunity to develop this technology further. From an economic point of view, Turkey and Turkish companies would have been able to gain commercial gains through the development and sale of patriots and similar air defense systems in the long run.

**Differences in foreign policy:** The differences in the Syria policy of the parties have started to be seen more clearly, especially since 2015. It can be stated that the tensions created by the Syrian policies of the parties also affected Turkey's tendency to purchase the S-400. The U.S withdrawal of Patriot batteries deployed for the defense of Turkey at the same time can also be considered as a result of the negative view of Turkey in US foreign policy.

**Russia factor:** Russia's national interests are that Turkey, which is a close neighbor and an active state in the region, is on its side. Russia turned the coldness in Turkey's relations with the West into an opportunity and acted quickly on the S-400 sale to Turkey. It can be stated that Russia's main goals in this sale are to distance Turkey from the Western world and to damage the NATO alliance.

It is seen that the US side perceives Turkey's tendency to purchase the S-400 as a symbol of it shifting towards Russia. U.S diplomats such as Patrick Theros consider this orientation of Turkey as the event that had the most negative impact on Turkish-American relations in the post-1947 period.

**Crisis of confidence in Turkish-American relations:** Although there are many factors affecting Turkey's tendency to purchase the S-400, it can be said that one of the most important factors and the least discussed one is the crisis of trust in relations. After the treacherous coup attempt on July 15, the failure of the U.S administration and European countries to give a quick

and clear response to this event can be considered as a factor damaging the element of trust in Turkey's relations with these countries.

**Economic reasons:** Air defense systems are quite expensive, so the U.S side does not want to lose the Turkish market regarding this issue. A second issue is related to the fact that the USA is the leader of the western alliance. Alliance leaders want the defense products that are sold within the alliance to be theirs. This is as true for Russia as it is for the USA. In a sense, it can be stated that the concerns expressed about security are mostly based on economic concerns.

**System-level factors:** Although NATO, as a non-state actor, did not clearly display a negative attitude towards Turkey's purchase of the S-400 at the beginning of the process, it is seen that it started to exhibit a negative attitude towards Turkey's attempt in the later stages of the process. NATO members, such as the UK, have begun to voice through their diplomatic personnel that Turkey should abandon the purchase of the S-400.

## CONCLUSION

The S-400 issue has gone from being one of the problems between the two countries and has turned into a separator that will determine the continuity or cease of relations between the two countries in the process. It was concluded that Turkey did not see this issue as a problem, while the U.S side described the event as the most critical problem in relations.

Turkey's approach on this issue can be based on the principles of realist international relations theory, which states that it should not be assumed that allies will always be loyal and reliable. The US side's use of sanctions and threats to solve this problem between the parties caused the relations to take on the appearance of a full conflict situation over this issue. It can be foreseen that the conflict of interest can only be reconciled with the resolution of Turkey's security concerns.

In the final analysis, by not selling the Patriots, the USA both negatively affected its bilateral relations with its close ally and suffered an economic loss. The real big loss is that the NATO ally is getting closer to its rival which claims to be a super power.

Turkey, on the other hand, although unwillingly, had to reconsider its bilateral relations with its ally, the United States, particularly the issue of trust, since it could not get Patriots. The purchase of the S-400 caused a tremor in Turkish-US relations. Doubts have increased on the U.S side that Turkey is experiencing an axis shift. It has been concluded that the level of technology transfers from Russia during the S-400 purchase process and to what extent this will meet Turkey's demands and expectations will continue to exist as a matter of discussion.

It is thought that a technology transfer on the Patriots, which the Turkish side can describe as reasonable, will facilitate the solution of the problem.

A second alternative is a solution that brings almost no financial burden to Turkey. As a second option, Turkey can choose neither to buy the Patriot nor the S-400. In the short term, Turkey can meet its air defense needs with Patriots, which it will demand from NATO resources. The events related to the issue have created the ground to prevent NATO members from raising any objections. In the long term, Turkey should try to develop its own national air defense systems. Turkey's human resources are sufficient to achieve this goal. In this regard, Turkey can also implement a project similar to the Manhattan Project carried out by the Americans to develop an atomic bomb. In addition, the option of employing relevant experts from the U.S labor market can be considered.

It can be easily expressed that the decision of USA about F-35 has a negative impact on relations between two countries. This decision also created negative consequences for two countries' interests. Turkish side faced a difficult situation regarding the situation of modernizing the air force due to this decision. Secondly, Turkish companies have invested millions of dollars in order to produce for this project. Turkish companies suffered an economic loss as a result of this decision. It is not clear how these damages will be repaired yet. Thirdly, Turkish companies would improve the production technologies and the infrastructure of Turkey's national combatant aircraft project planned to produce in the future by participating in this project. This decision also removed such an opportunity like this. The first matter that can be considered as a loss for the USA is that Turkey leaned a little more to the Russia's axis with this decision. Secondly, the USA side's hastiness about the F-35 decision weakened its hand in the negotiations with Turkey on the S-400 issue. Thirdly, Turkey's removal from the project will cause setbacks and delays in production. Fourthly, this decision has led to an increase in anti-American sentiment in Turkish public opinion, as can be seen from the news in the media.

It is still questioned in public that the six F-35's, prepaid by Turkey, were not delivered to Turkey.

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