**PREFACE**

 This project aims for the comparison of two eras that are politically dominant and potent in the development of two countries that I, personally find intriguing. The 1990s have been a period, in world history, that changed the balance of power in an unprecedented way. As the Cold War came to an end and the world shifted its power orientation from bipolar to multi power, countries experienced remarkable transitions. Today, those transitions are still not completed and Russia is a clear example of that.

 This first part of this project, involved a visit to the heart of the Russian Federation, Moscow. As I collected data from Russian citizens regarding their backgrounds, opinions about the historical development of the country and their outlooks on Today’s Russia; I also had the opportunity to examine the culture and the country for myself. In this preface I would like to share some of my experiences.

 Russia has a vast culture that embraces you with all of its gravity right when stepping off the plane. The people are helpful, yet distant to a point. The younger generations feel more comfortable in expressing themselves to foreigners and in using foreign languages. It is far more easy to obtain data, in English, from young Russians than to obtain it from older generations. Older generations feel more complacent about expressing themselves in their mother-tongue. Also they are hesitant towards speaking openly about political situations. It is very clear that mentally they are still under the pressure of the Party when asked a question regarding their opinions related to the Party and its enforcements. The youth is more optimistic about the political situation and they mostly affirm their belief in the benefits of political opening and Westernization, freely.

 Obtaining conclusive data from Russians has been the most challenging part of this project in regards to the diffidence of the majority of the population. When asked questions regarding politics by a foreigner, there was a clear feeling of reluctance. The data collected from those who chose to participate was directly related to the questions asked and was therefore conclusive.

 The second part of the project involved collecting data concerning Turkey from Turkish citizens. Turkish citizens were more enthusiastic to answer the questionnaire but they were also keen on including their criticism of the questions rather than providing thorough answers. This has increased the margin of error in the data. And the last part of the project, which is this research paper tries to compare and contrast the data collected from these two research participant populations and attempts to shed some more light on the sociocultural effects of political situations by combining the research with former literature published on the subject.

**A Comparison of the Sociocultural Effects of Leadership in Turkey and Russia during the 1990s and the 2010s**

 The Turkish Republic and Russian Federation are countries of dualisms. Both are geographically parts of Europe and Asia at the same time and their cultures cannot be simplified to the mainstream cultures of the continents they are parts of. Russia has, alone in the 20th century, experienced unprecedented, extraordinary events. In 1917, with the collapse of the Tsarist regime, the country underwent a transition into communism. In the 1990s the country, along with a number of neighboring countries, experienced another collapse of an enormous magnitude and transformed into a democracy. Russia has been led by 13 different powerful men in the last 100 years, many of them from surprisingly contradictory backgrounds. This project aims to compare and investigate the effects these leaders have had on public mindsets and cultural phenomena. For this purpose two leaders are chosen from the Russian Federation. Mikhail Gorbachev, the last president of the USSR and Vladimir Putin, the current president of the Russian Federation are chosen as the Russian leaders to be examined in detail for a number of reasons. Both leaders are very aspired to direct the country into somewhat unknown paths with, in their beliefs, potentially incredible outcomes and yet ideologically they are quite separate from each other.

 The Russian leaders are grouped with the contemporary Turkish counterparts; Turgut Özal and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The selected Turkish leaders are ideologically more similar to each other in comparison to the Russian leaders. Putin, who is an ex KGB agent embraces a rather expansionist policy in today’s political arena as it is mostly depicted by the mainstream press. His actions in regards to Crimea and Ukraine support this conviction. His policies regarding economy and the measures he takes in retaliation to recent and previous embargoes of other countries portray him as more of a conservative. This approach is the complete opposite of the policies implemented during the 1990s. The USSR, not being able to maintain self-sustainability, followed an opening with Glasnost and Perestroika under Gorbachev’s presidency. The shift towards a market oriented economy and privatization are the main consequences of the policies pursued during this period. Putin’s statements concerning a self-sustaining Russia in the 21st century and his unofficial ties with the private sector (his relevancy to Gazprom and ability to monopolize the prices and distribution of oil are the most important examples in this sense) are contradictory to all these changes pursued in the 1990s. Putin’s relentless efforts to become a part of the KGB after being rejected several times is alone an indication of his bias towards the Soviet system in his political ideology.

 Turkey is the direct descendant of the Ottoman Empire. An empire that expanded into three continents and rapidly lost territory in the 20th century. Shortly after Russia started its transition into communism the Ottoman Empire which was then being replaced by the Turkish Republic started its transition into democracy. Living under the rule of the Sharia and the Caliph for centuries, the transition into democracy was rather drastic. The public was unaware of such a concept and was still strongly attached to the Caliph and the religious supervision. Two Turkish leaders chosen to be studied for this project are relatively more similar to each other ideology wise, in comparison to the Russian leaders. Both of these leaders, through their period of governing, have publicly made statements that link their ideology to a relatively new concept called Neo-Ottomanism. This concept is explained thoroughly later on. These leaders have closer relations with the Islamic communities within Turkey and base their electorates and their votes primarily on these groups.

 Today’s sociological and historical research methods base their examinations on generalizations related to the common habits and behavior of communities settled within the borders of specific geographical territories. This situation provides us with some benefits such as being able to use bottom-up and top-down procedures when explaining historical progressions and phenomena. Unfortunately these methods approach the international order in a realist perspective and accept states as unitary actors, therefore this system lacks in practice, emphasis towards a leadership level analysis. It takes continual habits as constants and studies through the premise that consequences of historical actions will progress in accordance with the initial statement. This statement may apply to political regimes with the tradition of stability but loses its validity otherwise.

 The hypotheses mainly argued in this research paper can be narrowed down to four main topics. Turkey and Russia, both democracies derived from vast empires, have a tendency towards choosing policies that will reestablish them as world powers in the international arena. This statement is studied from two points of view. The first one is how the foreign media portrays this tendency and foreign policies of these countries in regards to their interactions with former governmental domains. The second one is how the public reacts to these concepts and how they perceive the current status of their respective countries in regards to these formerly possessed territories. The second hypothesis that relates to both of these countries contemporary situations is that from the public eye democracy is not a concept that is developed and therefore it is not fully internalized by the public in its definitional sense. The Turkish and Russian communities’ experience of democracy is different than what is experienced in the western societies and this condition leads to misunderstandings in regards to the normative. The deficit in democracy leads to the manipulation of mainstream media all around the world. The third hypothesis is that even though Turkey and Russia are two countries that are notorious for biased media, the domestic news sources are preferred to the foreign press with the awareness of this biasness. The last main topic and hypothesis is that countries that have gone through long periods of instability which also experience a lack of democracy deficit prefer times of political stability over the quality of policies implemented. This hypothesis is studied through the public opinion. A number of questions from different angles have been presented to research groups in order to reach conclusions concerning these hypotheses and each are discussed in the upcoming paragraphs.

 The most basic definition of political leadership, as can be found in any dictionary, is a person actively participating in party politics. But this definition, in itself, does not provide us with any insight to what a political leader occupies himself with or what factors play a role when it comes to his public image and effect. One of the purposes of this project was to examine this basic term and its entitlements the way it is acknowledged by the public eye. Research regarding the properties and the essence of political leaders is, of course, not a new one. As *Political Leadership as a Causative Phenomenon* by Chong-Do Hah and Frederick C. Bartol suggests this research topic has experienced a shift of focus lately. It is no longer dominantly revolving around ‘who leads for what reasons’ and tends to examine how regular people are turned into political leaders, on deeper levels. Since the 1960s a transformation has been in place in the political sciences arena, a transformation that strongly manifests itself in some scholars work but is yet to be fully completed. Leadership is no longer a simple function of what a leader’s activities are. “Edinger has noted a general reorientation in the definition of political leadership, entailing a move from ‘positional’ to ‘behavioral’ definitions” (Hah and Bartol 101). Using studies by Glenn Paige and James Burns we can look deeper into these two orientations. While “positional” definitions attribute leadership to those in positions of authority, “behavioral” definitions identify leaders as people able to mold the actions of others and therefore is closely intertwined with a person’s capability to evoke admiration and followers.

 ‘What affects how leaders behave, and what aspects of political affair that behavior affects” is the basis for Paige’s study. He works upon the hypothesis that this behavior has an effect and believes leadership is a function, with personality, role, organization, task, values and setting factors in reciprocal interaction as its variables ( Hah and Bartol 105). He also divides leaders into three types: The minimal change (conservative) leadership, the moderate change (reformist) leadership and the maximal change (revolutionary) leadership. These types, respectively have the tendency to maintain, moderately change and fundamentally transform existing institutions and policies. Paige’s definition of leadership is quite vague. It has no attribution to behavior, and is based on acquirement of a formal position. Therefore he can be considered pure advocate for the ‘Positionals’. Burns, on the other hand, approaches the subject from a different point of view. He attempts to unveil the means through which leaders succeed to play a role in social and historical causality and he studies leaders’ interactions with their followers whilst doing that. He draws the conclusion that mobilizing resources successfully and effectively makes leaderships powerful and that leadership is a form of power. This conclusion automatically brings us to the inference that power, to Burns, is an interactive matter. He also defines the function of leadership in a distinctive manner. The motives of the power wielder and the power recipient are the variables of this functions, therefore leadership, as a form of power, can only ensue given the condition that these two groups of motives are congruent. Also Burns believes conflict is essential to leadership, especially transforming leadership in which leaders transform ‘hopes into aspirations, and give followers reason to believe that their needs can be fulfilled’. Then these hopes and aspirations are turned into ‘sanctioned expectations’ that convey more psychological force. Since the followers expressing these needs possess a number of diverse resources the leader can mobilize, the demands are quite powerful. In this matter, conflict is an instrument used to invite followers to action. Burns states that Lenin and Mao were examples of transforming leaders that were successful on the grounds that they successfully incorporated theories of conflict into their revolutionary agendas (Hah and Bartol 112). While Burns’ theory is coherent, it is heavily normative. This is an area that is dominated by personalities and therefore a normative approach acutely limits the coverage of his analysis. He emphasizes moral leadership and uses it as one of his main conditions along with fully conscious, willful and rational followership. He draws a concrete line between leadership and coercive force and even argues that cult of personalities are not a part of his understanding of leadership. All these arguments coming together, though shared by some of his colleagues, create practical problems with his theory and put this theory forth as more of a utopic one than an applicable model.

 One of the hypothesis that gave birth to this project is that in societies with democratic deficiency, autocratic leaderships with stability are preferred to governments that in itself entail unstable conditions, in other words, governments that are formed after periods of radical changes, regardless of the quality of the policies followed by either type of government. Data specifically collected for this project shows that, in general, Putin’s leadership corresponds to what Russians expect from a political leader. When presented with the question “List a few important features of political leadership in your opinion. Do Russian political leaders have these features? Which ones do they have, which ones they don't?” the general approach, though the participants’ answers to what these features are different, is that Putin is a good example of a political leader. 53.1% of the participants who answered the question support Putin’s leadership and believe he possesses the necessary characteristics of a leader whereas 15.6% of the participants believe he is not qualified to be a sufficient political leader. Another 15.6% find the question hard to decide and state both answers are true to an extent. The question was formed in an open-ended manner to attain a variety of answers and to make sure none of the participants were directed towards certain routes through normative concepts that would be present in a multiple choice question. Intelligence has a percentage of 21.9, when all answers taken into account and hence is the most vital characteristic required from a Russian political leader. Honesty and charisma follow intelligence with percentages of 15.6 and intellect follows with the percentage of 12.5. The answers received from Russian participants are compatible to Paige’s definition of political leadership as a function. Paige’s function variables like personality and organizational ability are factors in identifying a good political leader in the Russian public eye. Though the understanding of a political leader has been subjected to a shift towards ‘behavioralism’ in the social sciences area the public firmly holds on to ‘positional’ definitions and related requirements when assessing leadership. Mark MacKinnon’s *The New Cold War: Revolutions, Rigged Elections and Pipeline Politics in the Former Soviet Union* has an explanation as to why Putin is held in such high esteem by the Russians. Before he was elected as president, Russian liberal had faith, seeing Putin work as Sobchak’s assistant, he was a liberal who would be able to carry out the reforms the country was desperately in need of. The nationalists, considering his past as a KGB agent, though he would be able to put a stop to oligarchy and stand up against the United States of America. They also believed he could help Russia reemerge as a world power. The ordinary Russian citizens couldn't exactly tell what Putin stood for but they were in awe of this young and healthy man who was the complete opposite of Yeltsin. Mackinnon states in this book that Marat Gelman, a member of the Putin project who is also the developer of the Temnyki (a system used to help the government oppress the media) defined Putin to him as an answer given to many questions at the same time. To the Russian public it seemed like after all the chaos in the 1990s Putin could deliver the one thing the Russian public was longing for: stabilnost i.e. stability. Another question presented to the participants regarding Putin was economy related. British newspaper, The Economist, has recently published an evaluation concerning the near future of the Russian economy. The international economics journal claimed that Putin, who has been in situations of conflict with the West, has solely two years left as a Russian leader and will not be reelected. According to the journal Russian Economy will face a loss of 110 billion Euros this year due to the sanctions of the West and the rapid decrease in oil prices. Another factor that unsettles Putin’s position is the flight of foreign investment from the country due to the Ukrainian crisis. It is expected that Russia will lose 100 billion Euros worth of foreign investment. The journal also claims the foreign exchange reserves of the country are rapidly declining and that the country has lost a total of 100 billion dollars worth of its foreign exchange reserves in a 6 month period. Given these facts concerning the Russian economy especially after the Ukrainian crisis, the participants were asked if they agreed to Putin’s economy policies. 44% of Russians responded declaring they do not agree with Putin’s economy policies, 32% stated they agree with the policies and 16% of the research population was indecisive. The participants were also asked about their interest in domestic economics. They were given a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “a lot” and 1 being “not very much”, and were asked to choose on which level they believed their knowledge of economy was. 41% chose 8 or higher, 36, 4% chose 5 to 7 and 22, 7% chose 4 and lower. The ratio was, overall, scattered pretty even with representatives of citizens from every level of economical knowledge. Even though majority of the participants don’t necessarily agree with Putin’s economy policies, he is still considered as a major player in world politics and a very efficient leader by this same population of participants. This reinforces the hypothesis that, in the public eye, political leaders’ appeal to the public and the overall stability of the country are more important than the specific policies implemented. The concept of ‘overall stability of the country’ exposes another variable that needs empirical proof before the credibility of this statement can be accepted. Therefore another question was asked to the participants: “Do you think there is more political uncertainty in Russia today or was there more political uncertainty in Russia in the 1990s? Why do you think so? What do you think creates uncertainty?” 42% of the participants stated they believe there was more political uncertainty in the 1990s in comparison to today and 13% stated counter-wise.

 The comparison of political stability in Russia in the 1990s and today is another central issue of the project. Previous research shows Russia has lost its sense of direction due to the collapse of the USSR and has been maintaining itself in a rather uncertain environment (Gratchev, Rogovsky and Rakitski 9). One survey question asked to Russian citizens was whether if they think there is more political uncertainty in Russia today, in comparison to the political uncertainty of the 1990s and, in their opinion, what creates uncertainty. 35.5% percent of the participants stated the political environment was more uncertain in the 1990s. 9.7% stated there is more political uncertainty now and another 9.7% stated there was the same amount of political instability in the 1990s as there is now. 45.1% of the participants chose not to answer the question. The more dominant answers for the second part of the question revolved around the collapse of the USSR for those who claim there was more political uncertainty in the 1990s. Many consequences related to the collapse were expressed such as lack of resource mobility, lack of security and lack of law enforcement. Those who believe there is more political instability today referred to global conflicts to further explain their answers. Removing the 45.1% of the data of the participants who chose not the answer the question it is clear that the number of participants who believe the extent of political uncertainty in the 90s double the number of participants who choose otherwise. The last president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, explains in his book Perestroika that the political opening of the USSR was the unavoidable result of the natural process states encounter. He states several times in this work that change was an urgent necessity that came from the deep developmental process of the USSR’s socialist society. When examining the roots and essence of change in the USSR one needs to keep something in mind. Change is not the caprice of a group of leaders or of some very passionate individuals. According to Gorbachev, the change USSR citizens experienced was not a result of excessive propaganda directed and imposed by the Party. The society was mature enough to handle and to need this period of events and in fact had been anticipating it for a while. Had this change come later, it would have caused domestic problems and consequently, economic, political and social depressions (Gorbachev, 1988). Gorbachev continues on later in the book that there wasn’t enough effort within the Party and the community to efficiently stop those who were only after self interests and positions of authority and the problems in the USSR were growing exponentially. The efforts made by the Party to control the situation were out of date and it was becoming harder everyday to efficiently govern the society. Lenin’s words: “The state does not function as we desired. The car does not obey. A man is at the wheel and he seems to lead it, but the car does not drive in the desired direction. It moves as another force wishes.” relates to the situation of the USSR during this time more closely than any other political thinker’s at the time.

 The same questions posed to Russians were also asked to Turkish participants, this time regarding Turkey and Erdoğan. The Turks’ responses to the question what the important characteristics are for a political leader are quite different from the Russian response. The characteristic trait that stands out the most, which the Turkish citizens expect from a political leader is that the leader needs to put his country and his people above anything else. He needs to willingly make sacrifices for the greater good and take care of the citizens in any necessary way. 19% of the respondents claimed this feature in their responses. This understanding of political leadership comes closer to Burns’ normative approach and his ‘behavioral’ definition. Burns’ concept of ‘sanctioned expectations’ is in fact a part of the Turkish definition of a political leader. In order to dedicate their resources to a leader and his ability of mobilization, the Turks need an assurance that the leader will look after the interests of the people. The rest of the answers were more coherent with Paige’s ‘positional’ definition and the Russian answers. Honesty was in second place with 14% of the participants stating it is another necessity. A sense of complete justice and foresight were two other characteristics that were both mentioned by two groups of 7% within the contributors. Moving on to how the public feels about the current president of the Turkish Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, it is clear that Erdoğan possesses the traits charisma, manipulation and elocution. The fact that he possesses these qualities is stated in the answers but these traits do not match the ones the public is asking for. 34.2% of the respondents believe Erdoğan has the characteristic traits of a good political leader whereas 61% disagree with this statement. The qualities Erdoğan possesses that make him the political leader of the Turkish Republic are not completely aligned with the public’s view of the ideal political leader. The Turkish and Russian attitudes differ quite a lot in the ways they provide these questions with answers. Putin seems to have more support that is detached from personal biases and feelings. The questions are formed to gather rational data that asks the normative definition of a political leader and later on connects that to how much the current leaders’ reflection onto the public coincides with it. Data acquired concerning economy is an area where the Turks provide the research with answers that resemble the Russian data. 70% of the research population state they do not agree with Erdoğan’s economy policies. Economy is one of Erdoğan’s stronger suits during public speeches and arguments with the opposition and yet he has been losing support in this area.

 One major issue of contradiction regarding political leaders is whether if they play a vital role in a country’s growth rate or not. This project aims to take the public opinion into account and tries to understand if the public believes the economy and some major changes in political regimes are influenced by an individual in a position of high authority i.e. a political leader. Benjamin Jones and Benjamin Olken’s article *Do Leaders Matter? National Leadership and Growth Since World War II* argues the possible effects of political leaders in the growth of their respective countries. The literature on this subject provides us with ideas from every aspect. For example the well-known Russian writer Tolstoy firmly denies the effects of leaders whereas Karl Marx accepts this to some degree but believes the leaders’ options are limited to a predetermined set of choices. Tolstoy and Marx, however, agree on one thing: Leaders claim too much power for people with such little impact. Gemmil and Oakley’s study in 1999 takes this disbelief in a leader’s ability to maintain long-term effect even further and explain, psychologically, how the idea of a powerful leader is a myth to fulfill individual psychological needs. It is important to mention one more aspect in this regard before moving onto the findings of Olken and Jones and comparing them to the findings of this project. The so-called ‘Great Man’ view is one studied by a number of scholars. Work predominantly led by Thomas Carlyle and John Keegan displays how history is designated by the ‘causative influences’ of some people. This theory therefore accepts the long-term effects of political leaders but puts it on a chronological timeline through which the effects can only be observed as their causalities are completed.

 The Olken and Jones study focuses on leadership changes only on account of the death of a leader. Leadership changes can occur in many ways and can have many underlying conditions. These unpredictable and multidimensional variables will cause deflection in a theory and its credibility. Therefore taking only random and unplanned leaderships into account will protect the legitimacy of the study. Also, while leaders who die in office are taken into account, assassinations are cleared out from the data set. Countries with more autocratic regimes provide the study with more dramatic results. The example of China is quite informative in the sense of proving this hypothesis. During Mao’s governing the growth per year for China was 1.7%. Agriculture was collectivized and there was an ongoing cultural revolution. During Deng’s period the growth per year increased up to 5.9% and economic policies were a lot more market oriented than it used to be. The study uses two timings: PRE and POST to compare changes in country growth and when the POST timing is shifted a couple of years forward, it proves that the impacts dedicated to these leaders are not due to transition conditions. The study also compares autocratic leaders to democratic leaders with Polity IV, Wald and Rank tests. The latter two reject the hypothesis that political leaders do not matter while the first proves autocratic leaders, on average, have more causative impact on a country’s growth. Also autocratic leaders who can lead in the absence of a legislature, who conceivably have fewer restraints on their authority, are found to be more powerful than those leading with a legislature.

 This project aims to examine the long term effects of political leaders in a slightly different way than Olken and Jones. While it still takes economic factors into account, the main aim is to seek and find sociocultural effects. For this purpose, as mentioned before, two leaders from two countries, Turgut Özal and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan from Turkey and Mikhail Gorbachev and Vladimir Putin from Russia, are chosen. These leaders are grouped and compared as Gorbachev-Özal and Putin-Erdoğan in regards to their period of governances and the period of transition the country is going through. The mainstream media has already played a big role in comparing Erdoğan to Putin but there are still many similarities laying underneath that link their senses of governance even further. These links will be explained in detail later on. Gorbachev was the president during the collapse of the USSR and implemented the Glasnost and Perestroika policies. These policies were vital for openness and the transformation of the USSR. Özal’s presidency wasn’t during a period of fundamental transformations but there were still countless after effects of the 1980 coup d’etat during his governance. His political identity was closely intertwined with the coup d’etat given that he was chosen Prime Minister shortly after the period. But these two leaders relate to each other on a more social level. During Özal’s presidency a movement called Neo-Ottomanism gained momentum which by definition shows similarities to the USSR and the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) with its sense of geographical and historical association. These concepts and relations will again be discussed in detail later. Before thoroughly discussing these concepts it is important to understand the underlying cultural factors and how and if they change in order to correspond to contemporary circumstances.

 Russia has a one of the most diverse cultures in the world. The Russian culture cannot be examined as a subset of neither the European nor the Asian cultures. The first thing that comes to mind when examining contemporary Russian culture is its Collectivist aspect. Collectivism is deeply rooted in the earliest forms of Russian communities. “Historically Russians lived on large open spaces, working together. Being an agrarian country for centuries, with low geographic mobility of peasants within the serf system, Russia was known for its collective (obshina) type of behavior” (Gratchev, Rogovsky and Rakitski 7). The general stereotype for Russians is that they are and have been very collectivistic. Although a closer look into the subject presents us counter-arguments. Economic reforms during the second half of the 19th and early 20th century were in fact implemented to destroy collectivist traditions. But the ‘individual freedom’ that arrived with these implementations was soon substituted by obedience and loyalty to the party and therefore the collectivist culture continued on under this new regime. And even through the period of collapse in the 1990s, collectivism was a part of life under the disguise of ‘mutual support’ during hardships. Today the country is being pushed towards higher levels of individualism primarily by westernization alongside other factors. As a part of this project, Russian citizens from Moscow and Saint-Petersburg were asked the question: Do you believe Russia has a collectivist culture today? Has there been a decrease or an increase in cultural collectivism since the 1990s? The answer to the question varies, although 56.3% of the participants have declared that they cannot decide what their answer to the question should be. They believe individualistic and collective cultures have been dominating Russia one after the other and though collectivism still has a lot of impact within family life and inner circles, individualism prevails in different social situations. Also the participants believe Russia’s collectivism cannot be examined under the same variables that are prepotent for other collectivist cultures such as China, an example provided by the participants. 31.3% of the participants believe Russia has more of an individualistic culture today with no answer to the second part of the question and 12.5% believe they still have a collectivist culture. When we look at the age groups and compare them to the answers we see that most of the participants born after 1991 stated that they couldn’t decide. Participants born in between 1985 and 1991 believed the culture was either fully individualistic or was rapidly moving towards that direction. As for the participants who believe Russia has a collectivist culture, the year of birth had a range from the 1970s to the 1990s.

 Neo-Ottomanism is a political ideology that dates back to the 1970s even though its roots lie in the Ottoman era. The ideology, though never officially accepted by any Turkish government, reverberated in the international arena after the 1974 Cyprus intervention. It aims to politically engage Turkey with areas formerly ruled by the Ottoman Empire. Turkey has been inclined to play an active role in the region and has been criticized for immixion. The ideology is named Neo-Ottomanism because it’s a modified and modernized version of the ‘Ottomanism’ ideology attempted by the Ottoman Empire during the Tanzimat Reform Era. The main purpose of Ottomanism was to keep nations ruled by the Empire under a single roof regardless of the shifting political balances. The main reason as to why this ideology failed can be narrowed down to one fundamental matter: Ottomanism was strongly religion oriented and this caused dissatisfaction within the non-Muslim community. As mentioned before, this movement adapted to modern circumstances and gained momentum during Turgut Özal’s presidency and has been an important but unofficial asset for the AKP government. Though there is no mention of a forthcoming CIS-like official ensemble between the nations involved in Neo-Ottomanism, four political parties in Turkish history have been especially influential in the rise of the movement. As the Islamic bourgeoisie increased its potential within the country, Özal’s Anavatan, Çiller’s Doğru Yol and Erbakan’s Refah parties carried forth the Islamist identity to form a new elite. These parties, in a way, carried the Islamist vision to the political core. Özal, though never official admitted to being a Neo-Ottomanist has stated in one of his speeches: “I believe the strongest identity element of this society to be Islam. It unites the Muslims in Anatolia with those in the Balkans. For this reason Islam is a powerful, valuable integrant that helps different Islamist groups to live as a whole.”

 As a theory Neo-Ottomanism aims to bring nations, which were once governed under the same rule, together. Its implementation so far has been closely intertwined with the foreign policies of the governing parties and therefore the notion itself is quite misunderstood by the public. When asked about their opinion regarding this movement 61.2% percent of the Turkish participants of this project took a negative stance and only 5.9% agreed to have a positive perspective on the subject. There were a number of participants who have never even heard of the concept and many more who have only heard it through the current government’s declarations and therefore believe it is a tool precisely used by this government. An unexpected result from the survey showed that some of the participants were for and against the movement for reasons not entirely relevant to the ideology. These participants, about 5% of the whole group, believed Neo-Ottomanism to be a new course debated to become a part of the curriculum for schools. Many of the negative answers referred to the impracticality of empires in today’s society and positives revolved around the importance of history and embracing our identity. 5.9% of the participants were indecisive towards the subject and 22.4% chose not to answer the question. None of the answers that provided the question with a definition of Neo-Ottomanism were correct. Previous statements show that Neo-Ottomanism has accelerated through Özal’s presidency. When Turkish citizens were presented with this fact and a question that follows, asking if they believe the gain of momentum would have occurred without Özal’s political capital and presence, 41.2% answered stating it wouldn’t have. 27% claimed the movement would increase its political influence either way. The rest of the participants were unsure. The answers of the Turkish citizens show a direct conflict between the public and the governmental approaches to the hypothesis explained in the next paragraph.

 One other hypothesis that inspired this study is that nations that are descendants of great empires are perceived as having the tendency to implement foreign policies with the aim of regaining the glory of their ancestors. One of the many media declarations in this sense is by BBC News and concerns Vladimir Putin. “Since then, he has seized every opportunity history has offered him, from the attacks of 11 September 2001 to the Ukrainian Revolution of 2013, in his bid to secure his aims. He has been tactically astute and ruthlessly opportunistic. At home and abroad, he wants Russia to regain the prestige it held when he was growing up” (Bullough, 2014). Also research done by Yuri Levada in 2004 concludes that Russians are increasingly becoming pro-soviet. Levada’s surveys completed by Russian citizens in 1991, right after the collapse of the USSR showed 50% of the participants held the Soviet system before Gorbachev and his Perestroika in high esteem. It should be kept in mind that this study and its conclusion do have some internal problems. The participants of the study all grew up and were molded within the Soviet system and were still afraid of openly disdaining the Party and its sanctions during the 1990s. But in 2004 the study was reconstructed. Levada was very shocked and disappointed to see that after 13 years, the number of Russians who admire the Soviet Union did not decrease; in fact it went up to 65% (Mackinnon, 31-32). The Russian news agency Pravda has similar claims regarding Turkey and its longing to regain its territorial superiority. “A hundred years after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey is re-emerging on the international arena. Furthermore, it intends to regain the ground lost in the 19th-20th centuries, which is a direct threat to the interests of all the neighboring countries, including Russia” (Balmasov, 2011). The media, in general, plays a big role in examining the underlying motives in foreign policies of former empires and there is a vast amount of news articles concerning how Turkey and Russia are both implementing certain policies and making decisions in order to reestablish their authority. It is already established that the leaders chosen for this research have strong opinions regarding the subject but this project aims to investigate the sociocultural repercussions of such ideologies.

 It has been mentioned before that Neo-Ottomanism as an ideology shows similarities to The USSR and CIS. Participants from both Turkey and Russia were presented with a question asking if they considered any of the now-liberated countries that used to be a part of their respective empires a part of the current countries. Half of the Russian participants were in consensus that none of the former USSR states were a part of the current Russian Federation. The other half stated a number of countries, each varying a little with the exception of Belarus which was mentioned by 50% of the total of the participants. 26.7% of the participants claimed Ukraine to be a part of the Russian Federation. Aside from these two countries, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia were also mentioned by a number of participants as countries that are and should be a part of the Russian Federation. 6.7% of the participants had a more aggressive approach to the question and claimed all the former USSR countries should be a part of today’s Russia. When the question was asked to Turkish participants with necessary adjustments, 64, 7% answered stating they do not see any of the countries established on the former Ottoman Empire territories as a part of the Turkish republic. 9, 4% of the subjects stated Cyprus is fully a part of the Turkish Republic and not in any way should be related to the Greek Government. The Balkan Countries, Turkic countries, Azerbaijan in particular, Mosul and Kirkuk are the other countries that were repeatedly mentioned.

 The Turkish approach towards Neo-Ottomanism is less than desired from the governance’s point of view. Most subjects participating in this research are strongly against the movement and a portion of this population is not thoroughly informed on what this movement really is. Therefore, there is a deficit in the required ratio of the public to act upon policies regarding Neo-Ottomanism. The Islamist aspects of the trend draw reaction from the more liberal fractions of the community. Also the fact that the movement is largely recognized as a tool of the governing party, AKP, provokes negative reactions within the anti-government fractions of the Turkish community. This deficit in support limits the enlargement of the movement. The Turkish government is not able to pursue goals set in this direction whereas the Russian government can openly pursue policies of territorial recuperation. Amongst other factors, such as foreign powers and international agreements, the public opinion holds a great part in the government’s recessiveness regarding following Neo-Ottomanism policies. The Turkish public, though once keen on regaining the Misak-ı Milli boundaries, mostly is not in the pursuit of political unification between itself and other nations in the most realistic sense. This is one important point where nostalgia meets reality and pragmatism and sets the Turkish public apart from the Russians. The hypothesis that countries established in lieu of large empires seek for the glorious days and looks for means to reestablish the status quo of that period is true when only sources related to the media are examined. It is seen in this project that regardless of the governmental disposition, nations go through various natural processes come at different solutions that fit their nationalistic need better on a societal base. The Russians and the Turks who stated some nations are bound to be governed under the respective republics’ governance are also separated in the way they made their country choices. While most of the Russians were likeminded, almost to a unanimous degree, on which countries should be a part of the Russian Federation, the Turks listed over 15 countries and most of the answers were exclusive to one or two of the respondents. It is clear with these facts that political leadership fails to motivate and mobilize the feeling of urgency within the Turkish public to support the retrieval of lost territories.

 Turkey and Russia have had a number of political regimes throughout history and the current regime established in both countries is democracy. Democracy, in the simplest sense, can be defined as a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives. Both Russia and Turkey were turned into democracies quite abruptly. Therefore neither the country nor the people had enough time to fully process what democracy is beforehand. Two very potent questions presented to participants during this project were what their definition of democracy was and if they believed the transition of their country to democracy was fully complete. 26% of the Russian participants declared they have a rather negative approach to democracy. They stated the system helps the majority in expense of the minority and therefore is not seeking for concepts such as equality and freedom for all. The rest of the answers were neutral such as stating it is not the best political system but only is the current one and that the definition of democracy is the rule of the majority. A smaller percentage of the group defined democracy as equality and people’s choice. A 100% of the answers regarding the completion of Russia’s transformation to democracy agreed the process was not completed. The answer to this question was the same for the Turkish participants as well with a minor difference. While declaring Turkey’s transition to a democracy is not completed 6% of the participants also argued that the democratization process has been regressing. 19% of the Turkish participants defined democracy as freedom, with most of them emphasizing the importance of the freedom of speech. 15% stated it was a political system in which the public choose and actively participated in the making of the government. Other answers included justice and equality, pluralism and the order maintain whilst protecting individual rights and liberties. Many of the participants emphasized the importance of protecting and taking notice of the minorities. The date collected from the surveys is corroborative with the hypothesis that these societies have not yet been able to internalize and fully adapt to the political system of democracy. Both countries, as mentioned before, have had a rather abrupt transition into democracy and this transition was directed not by the people but by a group of authority figures. And now, years later, both societies are still struggling with internalizing the concept of democracy and benefiting from it the way they are meant to.

 The last point of focus of this project is the media and news sources. Participants of the project were presented with questions examining their habits in regards to news sources. 65.5% of the Turkish participants declare to read newspapers every day. 16.4% state they rarely or never read newspapers and 18% claim to read them a couple of times a week. Of the same population 59% state they only follow the Turkish press whereas only 4.9% follow solely foreign press. 36% of the participants follow both Turkish and foreign press when tracking the news. A follow-up question was asked to the participants regarding their opinion on how objective they believe the Turkish press is. The results were surprising given a vast majority of the research population only use Turkish media organs to stay up to date. The question presented was: “On a scale of 1-10 (1 being “not objective” and 10 being “fully objective”) how objective do you think Turkish news sources are, generally?” 27.6% of the participants answered with a ‘1’. This means almost 30% of the research population, even though some of them use these mediums as legitimate sources, believes the Turkish news sources are completely biased and subjective. 23.7% of the population gave these news sources an objectivity point of ‘2’ and 18.4% decided on a ‘3’. 17% believe the objectivity level of these news sources are almost average and therefore they answered the question with a ‘4’ and 10.5% believe the objectivity level to be average, a ‘5’. Out of this population only one person thinks Turkish newspapers are fully objective (10) and one person believes the level of objectivity is ‘7’.

 The Russians were presented with similar questions regarding the Russian press. 33% of the participants read newspapers every day. 46.7% of the participants rarely read the newspapers or never do and 20% read them a couple of times a week. The ratio between preferring domestic or foreign news sources is similar to the Turkish ratio within the Russian community. 43.7% of the Russian participants prefer to read only Russian news sources, 12.5% of them prefer foreign press and another 43.7% prefer to follow both domestic and foreign press. The objectivity levels dedicated to Russian news sources are a little higher than the Turkish results. 42.9% believe the news sources have an average objectivity level, a 5 out of 10. 9.5% believe the objectivity to be on a level of 8. and the answers were scattered rather evenly 1 through 4 with a total of another 42.9% of the whole research population.

 The data collected from these two communities proves the hypothesis that even in the absence of a Westernized sense of democracy domestic news sources are preferred to foreign ones. Questions asked in regards to the objectivity of domestic news sources show that participants from both countries are in consensus that these sources are not sufficient i.e. mostly subjective. This proves the hypothesis that societies choose to be informed by domestic news sources at the expense of being subjected to biased and misleading information.

 This study that starts with four main topics for hypothesis comes to prove sociocultural similarities between the two countries. Media research helps prove how the two countries are portrayed as wanting to regain territory and reestablish power. As Russian participants agree with this policy to a degree and even consider some independent countries as a part of the Russian Federation, the Turkish data shows that the public has no interest in expansionist policies. Even the regions within the borders of Misak-ı Milli aren’t considered as regions that will be added to the borders of the republic. This is one case where the Russian nationalism parts from the Turkish. Both research groups agree that the transition of their respective countries into democracy is not completed and the answer received to the question asking what a democracy is shows further proof that the concept isn’t fully internalized and understood. The third hypothesis regarding the media and its objectivity shows another similarity between the countries. Participants from both countries choose to refer to domestic sources rather than international at the expense of obtaining misleading information. The habits concerning following the news and the objectivity levels appointed to these news sources show clear evidence that in this case the hypothesis is true. It is also questioned if countries that go through long periods of instability prefer stability over the quality of policy implementation. In this regard the questions asked are whether if the participants agree with the economy policies of the current leaders and whether if they believe the level of stability today is higher than the level of stability in the 1990s. The Russians, although not disagreeing with his economy policies, believe Putin to be an efficient political leader that fulfills their expectations from a political leader. They also state there is less political uncertainty today than in the 1990s. Therefore they are in complete accordance with the hypothesis presented. The Turks also disagree with Erdoğan’s economy policies but the data acquired from the participants also show that Erdoğan does not fully possess what the public needs as characteristic traits from a political leader. The average answer to the question concerning political instability does not differ much from the Russian answer. But in this case, for the Turkish people the hypothesis cannot be proven given that Erdoğan is not considered to be fully efficient. Overall the research is mostly successful in proving its initial premises and has shown how the sociocultural response to the chosen leaders is. It also shows how the public opinion is different than the political policies and how the countries are portrayed in foreign countries in compliance with these policies. The public opinion concerning the chosen leaders is examined in detail and has been incorporated as supporting information throughout the study alongside necessary information obtained from other resources. The project has been insightful concerning the domestic relation between the public and the leader in the absence of foreign factors. The sociocultural effects of political leaders on the citizens of the selected countries have been examined and argued in depth and presents us with new insights concerning how sociocultural behavior developed throughout the years affects the response given to current leaders.

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