

À LA CARTE GLOBAL ORDER AND REGIONAL ACTORS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TURKISH AND SERBIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE RUSSIAN WAR IN UKRAINE

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Abstract: There is an increasing body of literature on the changes in the global order in the 21st century. There is almost a consensus in the International Relations (IR) literature that the Western-dominated global system has been changing in recent years. Some scholars argue that a multiplex international system is emerging, while others claim that emerging powers are becoming more influential in world affairs. In this shifting international system, it is argued that a more à la carte kind of foreign relations is being preferred, meaning that instead of stable alliances, a more flexible type of partnership is emerging. Turkey and Serbia are important regional powers in their respective neighbourhoods. Both of them have material capabilities, historical roots, and normative power in their regions. As important regional actors, both countries have been pursuing an à la carte kind of foreign policy in their attitude towards the Putin regime's war in Ukraine. On the one hand, they criticise the Russian invasion and state that it was against international law; on the other hand, they kept their dialogue with the Moscow administration and did not join the European Union (EU) sanctions on Russia. This paper aims to understand the foreign policy of both countries towards the Russian war. It will make a comparative analysis and explain the differences and similarities in their approaches. It will also shed light on how the shifting global order and internal dynamics have been influencing the foreign policies of both countries and why both states pursue flexible types of partnerships instead of stable alliances.

Keywords: Turkey, Serbia, Russia, Ukraine, Regional Actors, Global Order, À la Carte Foreign Policy.

Introduction

Since February 24, 2022, the international community has been witnessing an aggressive war by Russia against Ukraine. This conflict has not only created important security challenges in the Black Sea region, but it has also deteriorated global peace and security. What we have been experiencing in Ukraine is a reflection of a proxy war between Russia and Western powers, led by the US and European countries. The resurgence of the possibility of a global war has been an indication of the danger that this war poses to the global system. In addition, the Putin regime's threat of starting a nuclear war has been evidence of how the security of the whole international structure has been endangered.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has led to different responses by the states and international organisations. We can categorise them into three groups. On the one hand, there are those states that fully support the Putin regime's war at the level of discourse as well as practice. Belarus is an example of one of those pro-Russian countries. From the very beginning onward, Belarus has been standing side by side with the Russian administration. The second group of actors consists of those that condemn Russian aggression and put sanctions on Russia to weaken the Russian military and economy. The US and the European Union are the best examples of the second group of countries. The third category consists of states that implement *à la carte* foreign policy, which means a mixed foreign policy approach towards the conflict. On the one hand, they condemn the invasion of Ukraine by the Kremlin administration and state that it is a clear violation of international law. They respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. And their support for Ukrainian territorial integrity did not start a day after the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, but it goes back to the Russian invasion of Crimea on March 21, 2014. These countries did not support the Russian invasion of Crimea either. However, they rejected applying any sanctions against Russia for differing reasons. In addition, they give special importance to maintaining dialogue with both of the conflicting parties. This dialogue does not continue just at the discourse level, but at the level of foreign policy practice as well. There are bilateral official visits to and from Russia. Turkey and Serbia are examples of this third category of states.

This paper aims to analyse the foreign policies of two important regional countries, Turkey and Serbia, towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. It analyses why and how these two countries implement *à la carte* foreign policy by condemning the Russian invasion but, at the same time, do not implement

the EU sanctions against it and keep the dialogue with the Kremlin administration at the highest level. Which historical, internal, and global factors led to this line of foreign policy? What are the similarities and differences in the approaches of Ankara and Belgrade towards the conflict in the Black Sea region? The paper seeks to explore the answers to those questions.

In the next section, the conceptual framework of the article will be introduced. The conceptual perspective will emphasise the debates on shifting global order and the à la carte foreign policy of regional actors. In the third section, the foreign policy of Turkey and Serbia towards the conflict in Ukraine will be analysed from a comparative perspective. The perceptions and policies of both countries towards the Russian-Ukrainian war will be explored. The third section will also shed light on the conceptual explanation of approaches of both countries. The last section will summarise the main findings and arguments of the research.

Conceptual Framework: Ambiguous Global Order and À la Carte Foreign Policy of Regional Actors

There is almost a consensus among International Relations scholars that the global order is in a process of change. The decade of unipolarity in the 1990s, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, is already over. Since the early 2000s, we have been witnessing some new tendencies in the global order. This paper argues that we have been witnessing the emergence of different global orders with regard to economic and political dimensions. The article states that, with regard to the economic dimension, we have been in a transition phase to a multipolar global order. However, with regard to the political dimension, we have been living in an age of non-polarity. In addition, this work tries to understand how this two-tiered global order has an impact on regional actors, as exemplified by the case studies on Turkey and Serbia.

With regard to the economic dimension of the global order, we must emphasise the rising importance of the BRICS¹ countries, especially China, one of the most powerful BRICS members, for the global economic system. The concept of BRICS was developed by an expert working at an investment banking and management firm, Goldman Sachs, in New York back in 2001 to

¹The acronym BRICS refers to the following countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

refer to the rising economies of those four countries and the investment potential in those countries (Cooper, 2016, p. 103). Subsequently, Group of 8 (G8) countries started inviting some countries characterised by rising economies to their summits, like China, India, Brazil, Mexico, and South Africa.

The establishment of the BRICS was very much influenced by the global financial crisis in 2008. The official start of the BRICS was in 2010. These countries wanted to contribute to global economic recovery and reform global economic organisations. Consisting of countries with high growth rates, they want to have their say in the global economic order and to further a multipolar global order. So far, they have created important institutions, as exemplified by the New Development Bank (NDP) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). As the NDP aims to provide financial help to infrastructure projects in the BRICS countries, CRA has the target of helping those countries with financial difficulties. (For a comprehensive account of the history and development of the BRICS, see Cooper 2016).

Although the BRICS countries do not have any common foreign and security policy and do not have any common position with regard to global political order, it has been considered an important symbol of the emergence of multipolar order. The fact that the IMF increased the voting rights of China, India, Brazil, and Russia in an important historical quota and governance reform in 2016. After that reform, these countries became among the top 10 members of the IMF. In the official press release, the IMF stated that “the reforms represent a major step towards better reflecting in the institution’s governance structure and the increasing role of dynamic emerging markets and developing countries” (Press Release: Historic Quota and Governance Reforms become effective, 2016). More than 6 per cent of quota shares were taken from overrepresented countries and given to emerging economies. The IMF stated that this reform process would lead to a more representative institution (Quota Reform, 2016). Hereby, the IMF accepted the changing global economic system, took it into consideration, and realised a historical institutional change.

As a sign of emerging multipolarism, the BRICS decided to enlarge by accepting six countries into its membership. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates became new members in 2024. By getting new members from Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa, the BRICS has become more representative of the change in the global system. How an increasing share of the BRICS countries in the global economic system will be reflected in world politics is to be seen. However, we should notice that the Western-led international order has been showing signs of

change since the early 2000s, as seen in the increase of the share of the BRICS countries and the decline of the Western countries.

As opposed to a transition to a multipolar global economic order, we witness political non-polarity in the international structure. Although the conflictual global system returned with the Russian-Ukrainian war and the Israel-Hamas conflict, global actors and international organisations failed to provide order and peace. If we define the global actors as the ones that set the rules of the game and provide order as well as stability in the international system, we can say that there is no such actor at the moment. Despite all the gross violations of international law and the high number of casualties in Ukraine and Palestine, none of the actors have been doing enough to bring peace. No serious mediation or facilitation attempt has been made by the great powers. The instability of the global system has been accepted as a given, and there is the absence of actors that would provide stability and peace in the global system. Therefore, we can state that the global political order is closer to non-polarity as opposed to the emerging multipolarity in the international economic system.

À la Carte Foreign Policy of Regional Actors

There has been an increasing body of literature on middle powers in this changing global system in recent years, mainly after the establishment of the BRICS. It is stated that the middle powers have a greater manoeuvring space in their foreign policy in the current global system. It is argued that the bipolar systems put pressure on regional powers to ally with one of the great powers. However, multipolar or non-polar systems give greater independence to regional actors.

Meanwhile, the academic literature in the field of International Relations (IR) provided different definitions of middle powers. Briefly, the major characteristics of the middle powers can be defined as follows: First of all, they are more powerful in terms of material elements compared to their neighbours, e.g., military power, economic power, demographic power, and geographic power. Second, they conduct an active regional policy and try to influence their neighbourhood. Third, they use novel issues in their foreign policy (Öniş and Kutlay 2017, 164-183; Parlar Dal, 2016, 1425-1453; and Parlar Dal, 2018, 1-31). Turkey is considered one of the middle powers in the global system.

On the other hand, Serbia can be considered a regional actor. It is one of the key actors in the Balkans when it comes to regional peace, stability, and

security. It has also played an important role in the construction of the region. It has more material interests than its neighbours. The substantial problems in the region, like the political issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the status issue of Kosovo, can only be solved with the help of Serbia.

Therefore, we can state that both Turkey and Kosovo are important regional actors in their region, and they play key roles in their neighbourhood. In addition, they are recognised as such by global actors. The US, the EU, and Russia give importance to taking them into consideration whenever they want to solve regional issues

The European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) and Oxford University's Europe in a *Changing World* research project conducted an important poll in 21 countries and put forward important results. In our contemporary world, many Western leaders perceive foreign policy through a binary lens, stating that countries should make a choice between a Western and an anti-Western orientation. They assume that countries still have a fixed foreign policy approach to interpreting global affairs and implementing their international relations. This Cold War-centred approach seems to still have a substantial impact on US and European decision-makers. However, the results of the opinion poll show that citizens in those countries prefer to have governments implement an à la carte foreign policy approach, which means states choose their partners according to the issue at hand (Ash, Krastev, and Leonard, 2023). This would provide countries with flexible alliances. The poll conducted in some Western and non-Western countries found that Europe and the US are thought to have more soft power, but it does not lead to any tendency on the part of people to have a fixed arrangement. The study concluded that especially people living in the great powers and the middle powers do not prefer any kind of fixed foreign policy attachment.² It states that "... they seem to prefer an à la carte arrangement, in which their governments do not have to align and where they can pragmatically pursue their own national interests with different partners on different issues" (Ash, Krastev, and Leonard, 2023).

This study analyses the cases of Turkish and Serbian foreign policies towards the Russian-Ukrainian war and tries to understand whether their approach can be analysed through the concept of à la carte foreign policy. After explaining the conceptual framework of the paper, the following section defines how the decision-makers in two countries perceive the war.

² Turkey is included in the poll, but Serbia is not included.

Perceptions of the Russian-Ukrainian War Through the Lenses of Ankara and Belgrade

Both Turkish and Serbian leadership has criticised the violation of international law by Russia and supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine from the annexation of Crimea in 2014 onwards. They have never recognised the Russian annexation of the Crimean region. They have criticised the revisionist Russian foreign policy. This line of discourse has been maintained by both actors since the Putin regime started the war against Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

The first official statement of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs after the Russian aggression started was as follows:

“We do not accept the military operation that was started by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and we reject it. This attack not only destroys the Minsk agreements, but it is also a severe violation of international law and a serious threat to our regional and global security. Turkey believes in respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of countries, and it is against the change of borders through arms. We call upon the Russian Federation to end this unfair and unlawful action as soon as possible. Turkish support for the political unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine will continue” (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 24, 2022).

This declaration can be considered an example of Turkey’s attitude towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. On the one hand, the decision-makers of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) expressed their full support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and respect for international law. It should be noted that they just took the Russian labelling of the invasion as a “special operation” as it was at the beginning. They did not question the Russian naming of the “special operation” when the aggression started.

Turkish leadership has expressed “soft criticism” of Russia throughout the war, but in fact, we should note that this soft criticism by the JDP leadership started in 2014 during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Turkey’s ruling political elite, in all its declarations, statements, and speeches, emphasised the violation of international law by the Russian action, but they were always careful about the wording. They never used harsh rhetoric. We know very well how Turkey criticises Israel, for example. In the case of Israel, we hear criticism of state terrorism and genocide towards Israel from the JDP political elite. Turkish decision-makers have never made harsh

criticism of Russia, although political Islamist leaders have claimed to be supporting the victims in global politics.

It is also noteworthy that it took some time for Turkish leadership to label the Russian invasion as “war”. As stated above, the JDP elite bought the Russian labelling of “special operation” at the beginning, as opposed to many Western countries that perceived it as a war from the very beginning. Only after a while did Turkey start using the concept of the war to name the Russian invasion. Accepting the Russian naming of “special operation” at the beginning was further proof of how careful the government in Ankara has been towards the Russian aggression.

On the first and second anniversary of the Ukrainian invasion, the Turkish Foreign Ministry issued declarations that did not include the word “Russia” at all.

On the first anniversary, the following declaration was issued:

“Despite all our attempts, the war, which began in Ukraine one year ago today, still goes on.

Unfortunately, the heavy cost of war is felt not only in the two countries but also throughout the world.

On every platform, we emphasise the need for a just and lasting end to this war as soon as possible through negotiations. We support efforts towards a solution through initiatives such as the Istanbul Grain Deal.

We will keep on extending every support and exerting every effort towards ending this war, which we have denounced since the outset, so as to restore Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty” (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 24, 2023).

On the second anniversary, the Turkish Foreign Ministry made the following declaration:

“As the war in Ukraine leaves its second year behind, the devastating impact of the conflict on Ukraine is growing, and its negative regional and global consequences are deepening.

The conditions conducive to the revitalization of the diplomatic process will eventually emerge. With this understanding, we offer constructive input to both sides.

Turkey’s efforts for a just and lasting solution based on Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity will continue” (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 24, 2024).

Both declarations emphasise the negative consequences of war as well as Turkey's attempts and hopes to reach peace. Both of them underline the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. However, none of them mentions the word Russia. That is evidence of how Turkey has been implementing its balanced policy by not confronting Russia directly. In the second declaration, it is stated that Turkey has been offering constructive input to both conflicting parties. That point has been underlining Turkish contact with both parties.

Turkish President Erdoğan stated that the killings in Buca, Irpin, and Kramatorsk by the Russian army were "negative developments" (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, April 18, 2022). What happened in these Ukrainian cities was called a massacre or ethnic cleansing by many observers around the world. However, Turkey's ruling elite refrained from using any kind of harsh rhetoric against Russia. This is another proof of how the JDP elite did everything to criticise Russia softly and not to damage ties with Moscow.

Another important point is that Turkish leaders have insistently argued that, in fact, the war indicates the failure of the global order. The JDP elite claimed that there are serious problems in the current international structure that resulted in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The main point of the JDP elite is that the global order established after the end of the Second World War has become dysfunctional, and it cannot solve any of the important global problems any more. They argue that the failure of the global order is the fundamental problem. President Erdoğan has repeatedly stated that the world is bigger than five, referring to the structure of the United Nations Security Council (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, September 16, 2022). He criticised the structure of the Security Council, giving the five countries an extraordinary privilege in the governance of the international system. For the Turkish leadership, all the conflicts ranging from Syria to Yemen to Libya to Ukraine and Gaza are just manifestations of how the current global system lost its relevance and became dysfunctional (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, March 1, 2024). The JDP elite thinks that a more fair, more representative, more inclusive, and more effective global order should be established (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, September 16, 2022). It is interesting to note that instead of condemning and criticising Russia directly, the Turkish leadership relocated their criticism to the deficiencies of the current international system.

This approach has two benefits for Turkey: First of all, Turkey could keep its good relations with the Russian leadership. Turkey is dependent

on Russia, especially with regard to energy. Therefore, maintaining good ties with Putin is important for the JDP political elite. Second, this approach allows Turkey's decision-makers to raise their voice with regard to the current international system. Since the JDP rulers want to create an image of Turkey as a rising global star, this discourse has a special meaning.

Similar to the Turkish discourse, Serbian decision-makers are also careful to have moderate criticism of Russia and to refrain from any harsh rhetoric. Whenever Serbian relations with Russia are discussed, historical ties and cultural closeness are emphasised by the Serbian leaders. Russian support for Serbian independence, common religion, and cultural affinity have impacted bilateral relations throughout history. In addition, Russian support for Serbia with regard to the Kosovo issue creates a special bond between the two countries. Meanwhile, the energy issue creates an asymmetrical interdependence between Belgrade and Moscow, as is also the case in Turkey's ties with the Putin administration.

The statement of the National Security Council of Serbia on February 25, 2022, just one day after the start of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, is important in terms of explaining the main parameters of Serbian foreign policy:

“1. The Republic of Serbia most sincerely regrets everything that takes place in the east of Europe. Russia and Ukraine have always been friendly countries to the Republic of Serbia, and Serbian people think of Russians and Ukrainians as fraternal nations. We see the loss of life of each man in Ukraine as a true tragedy.

2. The Republic of Serbia is committed to observing principles of territorial integrity and political independence of the states, as one of the basic principles of international law contained in the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act (1975), which guarantee the right of states to inviolability of borders” (Conclusion of the National Security Council, February 25, 2022).

Similar to Turkey, Serbia does not condemn the Russian aggression either. It also emphasises its friendly relations with both Russia and Ukraine. Serbian respect for international law is also underlined. The military neutrality of Serbia is also being noted. Serbian non-compliance with Western sanctions has been explained by two factors: history and Serbian economic and political interests. Article 8 of the statement is as follows:

“Starting from the fact that its elementary duty is to invest all its efforts in the preservation of peace and the wellbeing of its citizens, while

considering the need to possibly impose restrictive measures or sanctions against any country, including the Russian Federation, the Republic of Serbia will be guided exclusively by the protection of its vital economic and political interests. As a country that experienced sanctions from the West in the recent past and whose compatriots in the Republic of Srpska are suffering from sanctions today, the Republic of Serbia believes that it is not in its vital political and economic interest to impose sanctions against any country at this moment, nor on representatives or business entities of the respective” (Conclusion of the National Security Council, February 25, 2022).

Any discourse on sanctions reminds Serbia of its bitter memories of the 1990s, when Western countries put sanctions on Serbia. This historical background leads the Serbian administration to contest the validity of the sanctions on Russia. In addition, it is also emphasised that any kind of sanctions would harm Serbian political and economic interests as they would disturb the ties between Belgrade and the Putin administration.

Serbian President Vucic claimed that the West and Putin have been using the same rhetoric in their interventions. He stated that Western countries had intervened in Kosovo with the claim of ending a humanitarian tragedy, and Putin is using a similar narrative. He also argued that those countries that supported the attack against Serbia are now supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine (Address by the President of the Republic of Serbia, September 21, 2023). That is why, for the Serbian administration, Ukraine has been another case in which Western hypocrisy can be witnessed.

After analysing the discourses of the Turkish and Serbian political elites, the next section explores the policies of both countries towards the conflict in the Black Sea.

Comparative Analysis of Turkish and Serbian Policies

The multiple identities of Turkey and Serbia have had an impact on the foreign policies of both countries. On the one hand, both countries are EU candidates and carrying out negotiations for accession (in the case of Turkey on paper). On the other hand, they have been furthering their ties with emerging powers, especially Russia and China. We can say that in a shifting global order, both countries have been furthering their multiple identities and using their manoeuvring space in foreign policy.

Serbian President Vucic defined Serbian multilateral foreign policy as follows:

“I stand before you as the representative of a free and independent country, the Republic of Serbia, which is on its EU accession path but which at the same time is not ready to turn its back on traditional friendships it had been building for centuries (Address by the President of the Republic of Serbia, September 21, 2023)”.

Hence, President Vucic underlined the importance of both the EU and traditional allies of Serbia for the country. In the same speech, he also stated “centuries-long traditional friendship with the Russian Federation” (Address by the President of the Republic of Serbia, September 21, 2023). In fact, we can state that the four pillars of Serbian foreign policy declared by then-Serbian President Boris Tadic are still valid: the EU, the US, Russia, and China.

Similarly, the JDP government also focuses on Turkey’s multiple identities. As an example, the current statement defining the main parameters of Turkish foreign policy on the website of the Foreign Ministry is noteworthy:

“As the Easternmost European and the Westernmost Asian country, Turkey aims to **strengthen its strategic relations** and establish new ones. Turkey has a strategic partnership with the United States as a NATO ally and considers the transatlantic link vital for security and prosperity in Europe... Turkey has developed a globally extensive network of cooperation, including High-Level Cooperation Councils with 30 countries, four Intergovernmental Summits, and a host of trilateral or other multilateral regional formations. Turkey continues to further strengthen its close ties with countries in the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa, the Southern Caucasus, and South and Central Asia. Beyond these neighbouring regions, Turkey also deepens its partnership policy in **Africa** and reaches out to countries in **Latin America and the Caribbean** more and more every day. The **Asia Anew** initiative announced in 2019 has given Turkey the opportunity to lay the foundations of a holistic and comprehensive policy towards Asia and the Pacific, home to the rising powers of the 21st century” (“National Foreign Policy in the ‘The Century of Türkiye’”, n.d. Bold in the original text).

By emphasising the newly developed concept of “The Century of Turkey”, it is stated that Turkey will contribute to its neighbourhood and areas beyond it.

These multiple identities of Serbia and Turkey have led to a balanced foreign policy with regard to the crisis in Ukraine. Both countries criticised the Russian aggression, albeit in a soft manner, but at the same time, they refrained from implementing the European Union sanctions. For Turkey,

sanctions would not contribute to the solution of the problems. The Turkish leadership stated that they did not want to add fuel to the fire; therefore, they used a careful foreign policy. For Ankara, it was the failure of the Western-led global order that led to the conflict anyway.

Serbia, on the other hand, remembered its own experiences with Western sanctions in the 1990s. Thinking of its own vital interests, Belgrade refrained from implementing the Western sanctions. The Serbian administration accused the Western world of showing hypocrisy by comparing their attitudes in the 1990s towards Kosovo and now towards Ukraine.

In contrast to the Serbian case, the Turkish political elite tried to become a facilitator between Ukraine and Russia. Foreign ministers of both countries met during the Antalya Diplomatic Forum on March 10, 2022, and Ukrainian and Russian delegations came together in Istanbul on March 29, 2022, although to no avail. However, even the attempt by Turkey to bring parties together showed the proactive dimension of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey's role in the grain deal should be noted as well. Turkey played an important role in the deal to allow the Ukrainian grain to reach global markets.

In sum, both countries have been trying to maintain their good ties with their Western partners on the one hand while maintaining their dialogue with Russia on the other. Although they stressed their friendship with Ukraine, underlined their support for its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and criticised the Russian invasion, they have not used any harsh criticism towards Russia so far. Soft criticism of both countries should be noted. Why did they just use soft criticism? First of all, the energy dependence of both countries on Russia should be noted. Second, Russian support for the Serbian policy towards Kosovo played an important role. Third, Turkey wanted to keep good relations with Russia because of the Russian impact in Turkish neighbourhoods, for example, Syria and Libya. Fourth, historical ties with Russia were always emphasised by the Serbian leadership. Hence, both countries have been implementing *à la carte* foreign policies towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Conclusion

There are certain similarities in the attitudes of Turkey and Serbia towards the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. First of all, both countries criticised the Russian invasion and declared their support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Both of them declared that they wanted to maintain good relations with Russia and Ukraine. In a

similar way, the Turkish and Serbian governments emphasised the importance of international law.

At the same time, they were careful not to use harsh rhetoric towards the Putin regime. It is an important characteristic of the discourses of both countries. They underlined the importance of international law and criticised the Russian invasion; however, the leaders in Ankara and Belgrade were careful not to use any harsh language against the Kremlin.

The case of Turkish and Serbian foreign policies is a good example of how regional actors have been using an à la carte foreign policy in this shifting global order. They refrain from any kind of fixed alliance. On the one hand, they keep their ties with the Western partners, but on the other hand, they do their best to maintain their good relations with Russia as well. This case study shows us the importance of analysing the attitudes of regional powers and regional actors to understand how the shifting power dynamics in the international system has been influencing the manoeuvring space of countries. It is time to go beyond the fixed understandings of classical international relations and dwell further on the flexibility and pragmatism of middle powers and regional actors.

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