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Foreign Policy Issues of the Republic of Turkey and the United States in the Period after the End of the Cold War until the 2020

Zagadnienia polityki zagranicznej Republiki Turcji i Stanów Zjednoczonych w okresie od zakończenia zimnej wojny do chwili obecnej

• **Abstract** •

At the beginning of the 21st century, in 2002, a new political era began with the arrival of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Islam-oriented Justice and Development Party (AKP) at the head of the Republic of Turkey, which was gradually followed by changes in both foreign and domestic policy of the country.

The main ideologist of modern Turkey's foreign policy is one of the founders of the Justice and Development Party and Erdogan's ally, former Foreign Minister and Prime Minister Professor Ahmet Davutoglu, who outlined the strategic priorities of Turkey's foreign policy in his pioneering work *Strategic Depth*. In his doctrine, Ahmet Davutoglu argues that Turkey has "strategic depth" that allows it to pursue an independent foreign policy and claims to be the leading state in the region.

As we know, the Republic of Turkey is located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. According

• **Abstrakt** •

Na początku XXI wieku, w 2002 roku, wraz z dojściem do władzy Recepta Tayyipa Erdogana i islamskiej Partii Sprawiedliwości i Rozwoju (AKP) rozpoczęła się nowa era polityczna Republiki Tureckiej, określana stopniowym wprowadzaniem zmian zarówno w zagranicznej, jak i wewnętrznej polityce kraju.

Głównym ideologiem współczesnej polityki zagranicznej Turcji jest jeden z założycieli Partii Sprawiedliwości i Rozwoju oraz sojusznik Erdogana, były minister spraw zagranicznych i szef rządu, prof. Ahmet Davutoglu, który w swojej pionierskiej pracy *Strategiczna głębia* nakreślił strategiczne priorytety tureckiej polityki zagranicznej. W swojej doktrynie Ahmet Davutoglu przekonuje, że Turcja charakteryzuje się „strategiczną głębią”, która pozwala jej na prowadzenie niezależnej polityki zagranicznej i predestynuje do roli wiodącego państwa w regionie.

to the doctrine, precisely because of its geographical position and historical ties, it has a desire to influence all these regions (the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf, and the Black Sea), what is considered the core of neo-Ottoman ideology.

Neo-Ottomanism implies a shift of the Turkish political vector from West to East. Since the beginning of the 21st century, neo-Ottomanism as an ideology has become a force responsible for the shape of political life of Turkey. According to the ideology of neo-Ottomanism, the Republic of Turkey must get rid of the subordination of the United States, which will allow it to put itself on a par with such states as Britain, France, Russia, and China.

Neo-Ottomanism is the main ideological direction of the new foreign policy of the Republic of Turkey. One of the arguments used by Erdogan and his party in moving from a parliamentary to a presidential model is the fact that the country needs a government that is almost as strong and centralized as the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the president himself and his entourage constantly emphasize that the Turks are the “heirs of the Ottomans” and that the country must return to its former glory and strengthen its political, economic and cultural influence in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire.

Thus, neo-Ottomanism is part of the official ideology of the Justice and Development Party and the basis of the country’s new identity, shaped by the political elite over the years. Although there is no direct indication of Turkish regional hegemony in the “strategic depth”, most analysts, especially in the West, believe that the expansion of spheres of influence mentioned in the doctrine is, in fact, nothing more than the restoration of Turkey’s monopoly hegemony in the region, but this times by means adapted to the modern era, in particular through the use of political, economic and cultural expansion and other “soft power” tools.

Jak wiadomo, Republika Turcji położona jest na styku Europy i Azji. Zgodnie z doktryną – ze względu na swoje położenie geograficzne i powiązania historyczne – pragnie wpływać na wszystkie sąsiadujące regiony (Bliski Wschód, Bałkany, Kaukaz, Azję Środkową, Morze Śródziemne, Zatokę Perską i Morze Czarne). Dążenie to stanowi rdzeń ideologii neosmańskiej.

Neosmanizm zakłada przesunięcie tureckiego wektora politycznego z Zachodu na Wschód. Od początku XXI wieku ideologia neosmanizmu stała się siłą odpowiedzialną za życie polityczne Turcji. Zgodnie z jej założeniami Republika Turcji musi pozbyć się podległości wobec Stanów Zjednoczonych, co pozwoli jej zrównać się z takimi państwami jak: Wielka Brytania, Francja, Rosja czy Chiny.

Neosmanizm jest naczelnym kierunkiem ideowym nowej polityki zagranicznej Republiki Turcji. Jednym z argumentów, jakimi posługiwali się Erdogan i jego partia, uzasadniając przejście z modelu parlamentarnego na prezydencki, było stwierdzenie, że kraj potrzebuje rządu niemal tak silnego i scentralizowanego, jak Imperium Osmańskie. Sam prezydent i jego otoczenie nieustannie podkreślają, że Turcy są „spadkobiercami Osmanów” i że kraj musi powrócić do dawnej świetności, wzmacniając swoje wpływy polityczne, gospodarcze i kulturowe na dawnych terenach Imperium Osmańskiego.

Neosmanizm jest częścią oficjalnej ideologii Partii Sprawiedliwości i Rozwoju oraz podstawą nowej tożsamości kraju, kształtowanej latami przez polityczne elity. Choć w doktrynie „strategicznej głębi” brak jest bezpośrednich przesłanek tureckiej hegemonii regionalnej, większość analityków, zwłaszcza zachodnich, uważa, że wspomniane w niej poszerzenie stref wpływów jest w istocie niczym innym jak przywróceniem monopolistycznej hegemonii Turcji w regionie, tym razem środkami dostosowanymi do czasów współczesnych – w szczególności poprzez wykorzystanie ekspansji politycznej, gospodarczej i kulturowej oraz innych narzędzi *soft power*.

Keywords: Turkey; USA; Armenia; Russia; Israel; Iran; foreign policy

Słowa kluczowe: Turcja; USA; Armenia; Rosja; Izrael; Iran; polityka zagraniczna

Introduction

At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, Turkish-American relations attracted the attention of the international community.

The term ‘Cold War’ referred to the main content of international relations in the second half of the 20th century, from the period after World War II to the 1990s. During the Cold War, the United States was able to become the savior of the Western world, Western civilization and democratic values. At the same time, it became clear that the US was trying to gain economic and political influence throughout the non-Communist world.

Since the end of the Cold War, relations between the Republic of Turkey and the United States have been centered on security. The foreign policy of the two countries had either common or very different goals. At the same time, there were periods of ups and downs in economic relations. It was the goal of achieving security that led to cooperation between the two countries. On the one hand, there was the leader of one of the two poles of the Cold War era – the United States, and on the other – Turkey, a country with significant influence in the region, but greatly dependent on the United States.

The relevance of this research topic is due to the above mentioned factors.

Method

When working on the article, we have used the research methods tested in the modern scientific field, corresponding to the essence and characteristics of the object of study, goals and objectives. The object of research is complex, which necessitated the use of historical, comparative, descriptive and evaluative research methods based on analysis and synthesis. Theoretical and empirical material was also used.

Due to the complexity of the research topic, its versatility, diversity and numerous sources, the research question posed by us was examined as part of the study. Accordingly, books, monographs, other publications, as well as electronic materials on relations between the Republic of Turkey and the United States were processed and analyzed.

In the process of research, we have also used the materials from the Central Library of the Istanbul University of the Republic of Turkey, which present the latest works of Turkish, European and American scientists on relations between the Republic of Turkey and the United States during the Cold War.

Results

Based on the topic of the study, this work provides an opportunity to fully present the relationship between the Republic of Turkey and the United States from the period after the end of the Cold War to 2020. In addition, the dissertation will provide the interested reader with the opportunity, based on recent historical experience, to draw reasonable conclusions to determine the vectors of future relations between the Republic of Turkey and the United States.

The main purpose of this study is to analyze relations between the Republic of Turkey and the United States at a certain stage of the period after the end of the Cold War, and in particular, to study various aspects of their foreign policy relations in regard to the regions of the Middle East and the South Caucasus.

The purpose of the work is also to assess and show the foreign policy views of the authorities of the Republic of Turkey and the United States in the near future on various important issues that are still relevant for both Turkey and the United States. It is especially interesting that Ankara is pursuing a policy independent of the United States in the Middle East and South Caucasus, and it is trying to adapt to the role of the so-called 'independent player'.

Discussion

The change in Turkey's foreign policy in the post-Cold War period is related to the ruling elite's perception of Turkey's international and regional role as distinct from the previous one and therefore a new Turkish identity. However, the deterioration of Turkish-American relations is mainly due to the change in Turkey's foreign policy priorities, and other reasons (disagreements on the Kurdish issue, the consequences of the 2016 coup attempt, authoritarian methods of government introduced by the Turkish ruling party, active re-Islamization of the country, etc.) are only additional secondary factors. The hypothesis that the change in the country's foreign policy is mainly caused by different perceptions of Turkey's role by the political elite is explained by the theory of structuralism, according to which the actions of a state actor are determined by his own ideas and not by objective social reality. A change in these ideas, therefore, will lead to a change in the actions of the state, including foreign policy.

Relations between Turkey and the United States and the Armenian issue

After the end of the Cold War, the issue of recognition of the Armenian Genocide is considered one of the causes of tension between Turkey and the US. On April 24, 1915, mass arrests of representatives of the Armenian intelligentsia began in Constantinople. Their list included people of different political persuasions and professions: writers, actors, singers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, journalists, businessmen, policemen, religious figures. The main factor by which they were related to each other was nationality and social status. Arrests of prominent Armenian figures continued with short breaks until the end of May. According to the estimates of the Armenian side, more than 1.5 million Armenians were killed in 1915–1918. The rest fled to Mesopotamia, Lebanon, and Syria through the desert, many of them died of starvation and disease. More than a million Armenian refugees were scattered around the world.

At one time, the US Congress Committee on Foreign Relations adopted a resolution condemning the Ottoman Armenian Genocide at the beginning of the 20th century, but under the influence of the presidential administration, this resolution was removed from the agenda of the congress. Nevertheless, officials from Ankara reacted sharply to the committee's decision and immediately called its ambassador from the United States for consultations. It is noteworthy that Turkey took a similar step in 2007, when the Congress Committee approved the so-called 'Armenian Resolution' (Manchkhshvili, 2014, p. 367) (attempts to adopt a resolution on the genocide were made in 1974 and 1985, but to no avail). True, shortly after that, the ambassador was returned to Washington, but relations between the two countries cooled significantly, and the US ratings in Turkey fell sharply, which was confirmed by public opinion polls conducted to identify the foreign policy sympathies of the population of this country. In particular, at the end of January 2001, the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* published the results of a poll conducted by Ankara University sociologists, according to which only 9.9% of the respondents believed that rapprochement with the United States should be given priority (Uzgel, 2001, p. 38).

The periodic raising of the issue of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the US was intended to "intimidate" Ankara. In response, the then Turkish Foreign Minister A. Davutoğlu said after a meeting with the First Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg in Munich: "Let no one think that Turkey is afraid to take steps it does not believe in". According to him, the resolution adopted by the Congress Committee did not meet the interests of Turkey, Armenia, or the United States, and instead of progress, it brought only harm (Davutoğlu, 2012, p. 32).

Almost every US president made a pre-election promise to the Armenian lobby to recognize the genocide. However, after becoming president, they took into account Turkey's attitude to this issue and refrained from recognizing it.

Joe Biden's predecessors feared worsening relations with Turkey and avoided openly using the word 'genocide'. As a rule, American leaders used the Armenian term 'Meds Yeghern', which means 'the greatest evil'.

And J. Biden, who had not had a very warm relationship with R.T. Erdogan since he was vice president, broke all previous taboos and took the next step. In the issue of recognition of the genocide, one should also take into account the fact that the US political elite (both Democrats and Republicans) are very concerned about the recent actions of Turkey, which is striving to pursue a foreign policy in the region that is as independent as possible from Washington. It is in this context that the Americans are considering the purchase of the Russian S-400 type air defense systems by Turkey, which, of course, led to the development of relatively light, but psychologically significant American sanctions.

Choosing the right moment to recognize the genocide, Washington probably took into account the fact that Turkey was currently facing serious economic difficulties (socio-economic problems caused by the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the outflow of Western investment from the country, the devaluation of the national currency, rising unemployment, shrinking foreign exchange reserves, etc.) and could not afford to take effective steps against the United States, which would primarily harm Ankara and its economy.

The US recognition of the Armenian Genocide was also support for pro-Western Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, whom Russia has long sought to overthrow. Naturally, the Turkish side strongly protested against such a decision by Washington.

Responding to Washington's recognition of the Armenian Genocide, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that Ankara "condemns this statement based solely on populism". In an official statement, the minister said that the US is "distorting historical facts" and that the recognition of the genocide would never be accepted in the minds of the Turkish people. It also inflicted deep wounds on people whose mutual trust and friendship were undermined. The ministry urged the US to correct "this grave mistake".

The recognition of the events that took place 106 years ago as genocide by the President of the United States was clearly a political step that had its own goals and objectives. This, in turn, caused an ambiguous reaction in the international arena and made Turkey's position in the new realities more interesting. The recognition of the Armenian Genocide by US President Joe Biden showed that Turkey's distancing from

the West has its “price” and that Washington managed to overcome the “political rubicon” in relations with Ankara.

Washington’s example could be followed by its allies of relatively smaller size and importance, what in turn could create additional discomfort for Ankara in the international arena.

With this recognition, Washington supported the pro-Western forces (primarily Pashinyan and his political party) in the upcoming parliamentary elections in Armenia, where the main battle was to unfold between pro-Russian and pro-Western forces.

Turkey-US relations and the Israel problem

At the turn of 21st century, Turkey was in second place in terms of proximity to Israel after the United States. Despite the traditional alliance, relations between the two countries have now cooled considerably.

Recently, Turkish-American relations are experiencing a serious crisis, one of the reasons for which are various aspects of Turkey’s approach to Israel and Iran. It can be said that bilateral relations between the two US allies – Turkey and Israel – were complicated at that time due to the situation of the Palestinians living in Gaza.

The beginning of the deterioration of relations between these parties was the anti-terrorist operation “Cast Lead”, launched by Israel in December 2008 in the Gaza Strip. Turkey sharply criticized this operation, and Erdogan recognized it as a “serious crime against humanity” and severed ties with the Israeli prime minister. The next incident occurred in 2009 at the World Economic Forum in Davos (Switzerland), where Erdogan sharply criticized Israeli President Shimon Peres, calling him a liar and a murderer for an excessively strict military operation in the Gaza Strip. He ended his conversation with Shimon Peres with the following words: “You know perfectly well how to kill people!” (Baskin, 2013, p. 125).

Tensions between Turkey and Israel reached a peak on May 31, 2010, when Israel, citing the need for defense, attacked the Turkish-flagged Mavi Marmara ship carrying humanitarian aid to Palestine (Jentleson, 2015, p. 634).

Tensions with Israel have also affected Turkish-American relations. In 2010, President Obama said that doubting Turkey’s credible strategic partnership would have a negative impact on US-Turkish relations, especially military aid, which included disagreements over the sale of drones.

Every negative step taken by Turkey towards Israel had a direct impact on Turkish-American relations. Increasingly, outrageous speeches were heard in the

US Congress, in the press and some public organizations. The Jewish lobby, which had supported Turkey for many years, could change its attitude. This situation put the US administration in a difficult position.

Thus, the US administration was trying to meaningfully build relations with Ankara and soften relations with Israel. At the same time, the following arguments were given: “Severing relations with Israel will significantly increase tension in the region. This situation does not suit either Turkey or America. We need to soften the relationship”.

Relations between Turkey and the United States and the issue of Iran

The third source of tension between the US and Turkey was the issue of Iran. Washington believed that diplomatic means of deterring Iran had already been exhausted. This did not stop Turkey, which sought to maintain good relations with Iran and resolve all issues peacefully. According to Erdogan, “diplomacy, diplomacy and only diplomacy can solve the Iranian problem” (Nasrashvili. blogspot, 2010).

The US was extremely annoyed even by Turkey’s partial support for Iran’s nuclear program. It can be said that at that moment Ankara became a diplomatic ally of Tehran’s Islamic dictatorship. Turkey and Iran were trying to revive the Obama administration’s 2009 nuclear fuel swap plan.

It is clear that Turkey, being a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, caused outrage in the West with its refusal to impose additional sanctions against Iran in March 2010.

It is noteworthy that during the visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Iran in 2010, where he accused the West of “acting with double standards” and treating Iran unfairly, it was said that “the rumors about Iran’s military nuclear program are unfounded and may not correspond to reality”. It must be said that such a position of Turkey was unexpected for the West.

Turkey was very active in the negotiations with Iran in the 5 + 1 format held on February 26, 2013, in Kazakhstan, which included the US, France, Russia, China, the UK, and Germany. The problem was resolved peacefully and Iran was partially exempted from sanctions.

However, the sanctions against Iran were imposed by the US. According to Iranian media, the so-called ‘blacklist’ included nine companies from South Africa, Hong Kong, and China, as well as three Iranian individuals that the US government accused of “significant transactions” in Iranian petrochemicals.

Against the background of the coronavirus pandemic, China and Russia called on the United States to lift sanctions against Iran (Baramidze, 2020).

Ankara's current course allows Iran to be more resistant to economic pressure and strengthen its influence in the region, which in the future, from a strategic point of view, may become Turkey's most erroneous calculation. However, the rivalry between Sunni Turkey and Shiite Iran, due to the current situation in the Middle East, may become more bitter and open.

Kurdish issue in Turkish-American relations

At the end of the 20th century, the issue of the Kurds repeatedly came into the spotlight of Turkey and the United States.

The revolutionary wave that began in the Arab world in the 2010s (the Arab Spring) also swept Syria in 2011. The regime of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad responded to peaceful public protests with disproportionate force, as his main goal was to maintain power. The protest motive of one part of the Syrian people was that the Sunni majority was under the rule of the Alawite minority. The protesters opposed this and demanded the protection of human rights and the introduction of democratic government in the country. Assad opened fire on them and made it clear to everyone that regime change in Syria would not happen like in other Arab countries. A similar step by the government led to the fact that part of the Syrian army went over to the side of the opposition and announced that it was starting a fight to overthrow the Assad regime. However, the opposition to Assad was unsuccessful and led to the penetration of foreign radical militants into Syria. They declared their support for the opposition and began to fight against the government of the country. Then this radical group split in two and emerged as the so-called Islamic State, while the other part continued to cooperate with al-Qaeda.

The majority of Kurds are Sunnis, who, along with representatives of other ethnic groups and faiths, seek to establish a strictly egalitarian (equal) system of government. Kurdish fighters are considered among the best soldiers, effectively fighting terrorist organizations. They are directly supported by Iraqi, Kurdish combat units, the so-called Peshmerga fighters on the ground and by US aircraft from the air. The Turkish authorities consider the Kurdish People's Defense Units (YPG) to be part of the Syrian terrorist organization Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) operating on its territory (the Turks consider it a terrorist organization), and unofficially fight against it, although in 2018 (January 24–March 24), Turkey launched a large-scale military operation against the Kurds – “Palm Branch”. Despite warming relations

between Syria and Turkey before the start of the civil war, followed by the expulsion of Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan from Syria, Turkey supported Assad's resignation after protests in the country (2011).

The main problem of the direct confrontation between the United States and Turkey in the Syrian conflict was the presence of Kurdish military units, namely the PKK, operating in Syria. For years, the US and Turkey have been members of a Western coalition fighting the regime of Bashar al-Assad and driven by a common goal. The situation has changed significantly in recent times (Khozrevanidze, 2019, p. 56).

The US and Turkey have made fighting and eliminating the Islamic State terrorist organization a priority, rather than seeking to replace the Assad government. This was one of the reasons for the tension in their relationship, which was caused by ideological differences and conflicts of interest between them. Although Turkey was a member of the US coalition against the Islamic State, it has repeatedly criticized Washington for supporting the SDF. At the same time, she tried to prevent the alliance from subjugating the northern border of Syria.

For Turkey, the Kurds and the possible resulting crises were a step towards maintaining a strong state and destabilizing territorial integrity, so it considered US assistance to the Kurds unacceptable. Turkey sought to withdraw the Kurdish People's Defense Units as far as possible from its borders and create a large buffer zone between the Kurds living in Turkey and the separatist Syrian Kurdish rebels, as it considered them a threat to the Turkish state. In addition, 3.5 million Syrian refugees live in the border region of Turkey, some of which Ankara intends to resettle in the area liberated from the Kurds. However, the contribution of Kurdish military formations to the fight against terrorism and the defeat of the Islamic State deserves attention.

The Kurds have become significantly more active and, in addition to politics, they have formed a fairly powerful military force against the Islamic State. It is noteworthy that the Syrian Kurdish Armed Forces, "People's Defense Units", is one of the most organized, trained and motivated organization in the Syrian conflict, which to this day is actively fighting against the Islamic State. During this transitional period, it is also necessary to take into account the rather difficult position of Turkey. On the one hand, Ankara established good bilateral relations with both Russia and Iran, but the growth of their positions and influence in the region did not particularly suit her. On the other hand, the Kurdish issue, which was particularly painful for Turkey, casted a shadow over Ankara's partnership with the United States, as Washington worked closely with the Kurds in both Iraq and Syria. To rectify the situation, the United States decided to take on the role of a mediator and help both sides to reach

a compromise solution. Against the backdrop of a general consensus, a decision was made to create a safe buffer zone in northeastern Syria. The Kurds were supposed to disband military bases and withdraw heavy artillery and weapons from the border zone. A joint coordinating group was to be established to ensure stability and patrol the area (Shavreshiani, 2020, p. 58).

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged the United States not to renew the terms of the agreement in time, otherwise they would take appropriate tough measures and start hostilities against the Kurds. In a rather fragile and tense reality, US President Donald Trump made an unexpected decision for everyone to withdraw American troops from Syria, which, of course, caused discontent both in the US House of Representatives and among partner countries and politicians. In their opinion, the US decision was to make concessions to Turkey. The Kurdish side was very disappointed, and for them, Trump's decision meant a stab in the back, because the Kurds were the main support of the United States in the fight against ISIS and in their defeat; and when the United States had to play the role of an intermediary between them and Turkey, it turned out that they were out of the game. Following the development of a similar scenario and sharp criticism from international experts, Trump issued a statement in which he threatened Turkey if it violated US interests and undermined their authority. However, Turkey was not going to change its policy and continued to act in a way that annoyed the US.

In general, it should be noted that at one time in Turkey, the mention of the Kurds was even forbidden at the official level: first they were called "mountain Turks", and then "Eastern Turks".

On August 3, 2002, the Grand National Assembly (Parliament) of Turkey made a historic decision to soften the ban on teaching in Kurdish and on broadcasting on radio and television, thereby effectively recognizing the existence of the Kurdish language and, therefore, the Kurdish people themselves on Turkish territory.

In 2009, Turkish state television launched a 24-hour TV channel in Kurdish. Since 2010, Kurdish-Turkish marriage certificates have been issued in Kurdish-majority southeastern Anatolia, with settlements and road directions in two languages. This indicated the liberal position of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) at that time, but Ankara would not allow Kurdish territorial autonomy in their country (Gachechiladze, 2018, p. 181).

In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Kurds did not loudly claim territorial autonomy. Their demands did not go beyond the establishment of de facto civil equality and the elimination of ethnic discrimination, and in Syria it was forbidden even to speak the Kurdish language.

Demonstrations by Kurds in support of political empowerment were already on the agenda during the 2011 protests in Syria. Damascus granted citizenship to an estimated 100,000 Kurds, something it had not given them before.

Since 2012, the Kurds have established a *de facto* autonomy in northeastern Syria, known as Rojava, although this has not been recognized by Damascus, which is involved in a civil war.

In the geopolitical calculations of the early 21st century, the issue of the Iraqi Kurds received more attention than other problems. The Kurds have formed a *de facto* autonomous entity in the area. In September 2002, without the permission of Baghdad, even the regional parliament was restored there. The rival Kurdish factions reconciled and demanded formal autonomy, which caused unease in Ankara, where it was well understood that “autonomization” was almost always the first stage of “sovereignization”. Ankara was and still is afraid that the creation of an official Kurdish autonomy in Iraq would become a contagious example for millions of Kurds living in the eastern regions of Turkey. Iran has similar concerns.

At the turn of the 21st century, the US military command considered it necessary to have an internal ally in preparation for the war in Iraq. In this sense, America’s natural ally in the fight against Saddam Hussein’s regime was the Kurdish minority living in northern Iraq, which was constantly harassed by Baghdad and had serious reasons for extremely negative attitude towards the ruling regime and, therefore, it was the most pro-American among ethno-confessional communities. However, the Kurdish alliance with the United States was not as simple as it seemed at first glance. The terms of such an alliance could not be limited to the decision of only two parties. The Republic of Turkey, one of the oldest US allies in the region, for which the “Kurdish problem”, as already mentioned, was a very painful topic, began to take an active part in this issue.

On September 25, 2017, a referendum was held in Iraqi Kurdistan. The bulletin contained only one question: “Do you want Kurdistan and Kurdish areas outside the region to become an independent state?”. About 72% of the population of Kurdistan and adjacent territories controlled by the government took part in the referendum. 86% of the referendum participants supported the creation of an independent state of Kurdistan (Makaradze, 2017, p. 105).

It is also noteworthy that support for independence in a referendum did not mean an automatic declaration of independence – according to the rules of the referendum. This gave the leadership of Iraqi Kurdistan the right to announce the creation of an independent Kurdish state in the future. The leaders of Iraqi Kurdistan also stressed that they do not intend to declare independence at this stage. The fact is that in the future they would consider the results of the referendum as a new

stage in the beginning of negotiations, which should have been followed by the creation of a Kurdish state.

The holding of the referendum also raised a number of issues, such as: the borders of the Kurdish state; the attitude of the neighboring countries of the region towards the creation of a Kurdish state; the position of the West regarding the creation of a Kurdish state; the question of relations between the Kurds and their own religious minorities, etc.

The Iraqi Kurds' desire for independence has a long history. Already in 1946, the Democratic Party of Kurdistan was formed. There was no unity in the party from the very beginning. On the one hand, there was Mullah Mustafa Barzani (father of the current president of the region, Masoud Barzani), who was supported by the tribes, and on the other, there was the left wing of Ibrahim Ahmad and Jalal Talabani (the latter was the President of Iraq from 2005 to 2014), relying mainly on urban layers. Later, Talabani's supporters united in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, which today, together with the Kurdistan Democratic Party, is the main political force in Kurdistan. The confrontation between the two parties for a long time prevented the Kurds from pursuing a unified policy aimed at achieving independence.

Recently, however, these contradictions have been overcome, and the differences between Barzani and Talabani have faded into the background. It is noteworthy that Jalal Talabani died shortly after the referendum (October 3), and Barzani and the Kurdistan Democratic Party honored his merits and memory.

The degree of Kurdish independence increased even more after the international intervention in Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime (2003). Since this period, this region of the Persian Gulf has even acquired some signs of an independent state. Diplomatic missions of various countries were opened in the capital of the region, Erbil, and international relations of the region were strengthened. The leadership of the region soon took control of the surrounding territories (including energy-rich Kirkuk). The Kurds have become unconditional allies of the West. The Kurdish military unit, the Peshmerga, has proven to be one of the most effective forces in the fight against the Islamic State.

In the conditions of such *de facto* independence of the region, it is natural that the central government of Iraq was looking for ways to preserve the unity of the country. This goal was served by the election of Jalal Talabani as president (he was elected the President of Iraq three times). A referendum on independence in Kurdistan was planned repeatedly, but this was prevented by both external and internal factors. After overcoming internal opposition, finally, on September 25, 2017, this referendum took place.

The attitude of both the central government of Iraq and the countries of the region towards the holding of a referendum and the creation of a new state was sharply negative. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi called the referendum illegal and unconstitutional and was also supported by the Iraqi parliament. Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials said the result gave them a mandate to start talks with Baghdad, but Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi demanded an annulment of the referendum results.

Within a month of the referendum, Iraqi government forces occupied the disputed areas settled by the Kurds. The loss of Kirkuk and its oil revenue was the biggest blow to Kurdistan.

Control of Kirkuk, where 10% of Iraq's oil and natural gas resources are concentrated, is of particular importance to the three ethnic groups living there – Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens, but especially to the Kurds who consider it their Jerusalem.

Energy control is critical to Iraqi Kurdistan, but the conflict with the central government cannot be reduced to economics alone.

The only country that unconditionally supports the independence of Kurdistan and officially recognizes the results of the referendum is Israel. Naturally, it is in Israel's interests to create a new problem for the Islamic world that opposes it.

Thus, the creation of an independent state of Kurdistan in any case will require the support of neighboring states. One of its main partners can be considered Israel, which is still silent, although there is no doubt that official Jerusalem will support the creation of an independent state of Kurdistan. A clear expression of this was the statement by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Israeli supports Kurdistan's aspirations to become independent.

Political and economic cooperation with Israel is based not only on goodwill, but also on mutual benefit. Israel, for its part, will receive additional supplies of oil from the Kurds at a fairly favorable price and will have a strong military partner in the event of a possible confrontation with Iran. Kurdistan, on the other hand, is reducing the risk of isolation by allying with Israel and acquiring a strong trade and military partner.

The Islamic Republic of Iran takes a firm position regarding the establishment of an independent state of Kurdistan. Iran supports the territorial integrity of Iraq and seeks to mediate differences between Erbil and Baghdad. The resistance of the Iranian government is mainly due to two factors: firstly, the independence of Kurdistan in Iraq can have a similar effect on the Kurds living in Iran, and secondly, these are geopolitical levers – US-backed Kurdish independence would significantly reduce Iran's influence in the region.

An important obstacle to the independence of Kurdistan may be Turkey, where the Kurds are the largest minority. Since 2003, Turkey has actively sought to reduce Kurdish aspirations for independence in Iraq. Today, Turkey has significant economic ties with Kurdistan. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has a good relationship with Barzani, whose party does not support the PKK. However, the appearance on the territory of Iraq of a new sovereign state greatly increases the chances that this may lead to a split between them.

Kurdistan has no access to the sea, it borders on Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and all of them are against its formation as an independent state. All neighboring states are skeptical about the creation of a calm and stable state in such a hostile environment.

Relations between Turkey and the United States and the problem of Russia

The beginning of the 21st century was characterized by changes in the two leading states: in Russia Vladimir Putin came to power, and in the USA – George Bush. These two leaders, compared with the previous government, clearly advocated a stronger response to terrorism and radical movements and saw them as an international threat.

In the early 2000s, Turkey's domestic politics was not very stable. In the late summer of 2001, Turkey was approaching the peak of its economic and political crisis. The government was forced to implement a series of economic reforms, but as a result, the Turkish lira fell further and depreciated. At the same time, the country's crime rate soared and the ratings of the ruling party plummeted.

It was in this situation that the Islam-oriented Justice and Development Party came to power in Turkey on November 3, 2002; it won a landslide victory in democratic elections and led the country in a new direction in both domestic and foreign policy.

Relations between Turkey and Russia in 2004–2005 can be considered a turning point. In December 2004, Vladimir Putin visited Turkey. At the first stage, the process of rapprochement manifested itself in trade relations between Russia and Turkey. Thanks to the low cost of exports, Turkey was able to gain a foothold in the post-Soviet space, primarily in Russia.

Developed trade relations between the two countries in a short time grew into serious political cooperation. In March 2006, the convergence of Turkish and Russian interests in the Black Sea equator became obvious. Turkey did not allow

the North Atlantic Alliance to conduct anti-terrorist naval maneuvers in the Black Sea as part of Operation Active Measures. Ankara said that the Black Sea Fleet can carry out such activities on its own.

This position of Turkey, as expected, was actively supported by Russia. A little later, in December 2006, Russia officially joined the project initiated by Turkey called “Black Sea Harmony”. This initiative was similar to the Operation Active Measures mentioned above, except that it did not involve NATO member states and their partners as a whole, but only the Black Sea countries, where an important role, as expected, belonged to Turkey and partly Russia. In general, since the 2000s, Russian-Turkish political moves have been outlined in certain contours, where, through a consistent coordinated policy, they have sought to completely exclude and block the intervention of a third powerful force in their zone of interests.

The Russian-Turkish political mood was well manifested during the Georgian-Russian war in August 2008, when we once again witnessed the political closeness of the two countries. Although the Republic of Turkey helped us with both humanitarian and political statements at the beginning of the war, in fact, it was still on the side of Russia. Although it was not in Turkey’s interests to continue this war and, moreover, to further strengthen Russia’s position. However, it tried not to allow a negative attitude towards its policy from Russia.

During the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, Turkish authorities banned two US-made military humanitarian ships from entering the strait, citing the forgotten Montreux Convention of 1936, which stipulated that the size of American ships did not meet the standards established by the agreement. Later, the United States had to send relatively small ships to Georgia. Another interesting step taken by Turkey during the August 2008 war was that Turkey, as one of the strongest political players in the South Caucasus, was naturally interested in resolving conflicts in the region and it actively sought the ways to solve them. That is why, on August 11, 2008, it came up with the idea of the Caucasian Platform regional security project. The initiative was first announced by then Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan during a meeting with President Dmitry Medvedev in Moscow in August 2008. The main goal of Erdogan’s initiative was to ensure stability, security and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs. In this regard, it should be noted that this document by Erdogan was not the first Turkish initiative aimed at strengthening stability and security in the region.

It was preceded by the “Caucasian Stability Pact”, announced by the then President of Turkey Suleyman Demirel in 2000, according to which the “3 + 3 + 2” formula was to include three countries of the South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia,

Azerbaijan), three countries bordering the South Caucasus (Russia, Turkey, and Iran), and the European Union and the USA. However, despite the very promising idea of cooperation, no specific plan of this pact was presented to the leaders of any country, and it was not finally implemented.

However, good relations between Russia and Turkey have changed since 2015. Relations between the two countries reached an impasse after a Turkish fighter jet shot down a Russian Su-24 bomber in Syria on November 24, 2015. Then, Russia introduced a number of trade and economic sanctions against Turkey. As a result, both Turkey and Russia suffered greatly. It should also be noted that economic sanctions and a catastrophic drop in the flow of Russian tourists have caused more damage to the Turkish economy than to Russia. According to various sources, only in the tourism sector, Turkey's economic losses reached 9–12 billion dollars. Turkey's construction and agricultural sectors have also been hit hard by the ban on the import of Turkish agricultural products into Russia and the restrictions placed on Turkish construction companies.

On June 27, 2016, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent a letter to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin expressing regret over the Russian Su-24 bomber shot down by Turkey on November 24, 2015, and also expressed condolences to the family and apologized for the incident. This fact, in the light of tense relations between Russia and Turkey over the past seven months, has become a prerequisite for the resumption of cooperation between the two countries.

As is known, the Russian side demanded an official apology from Turkey. In addition, Moscow's demands included compensation for damages and punishment of those responsible. For now, Ankara has refrained from compensating. The fighter pilot was likely convicted for other reasons as well, including his role in the July 16 military coup attempt.

In addition to its narrow economic interests, Ankara has actively cooperated with Moscow in relations with the West. Erdogan's government, often criticized by the West for gross violations of human rights and ignorance of other democratic principles, considered the possibility of deepening relations with Russia as an alternative development scenario.

Russia's support for the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and its involvement in the ongoing hostilities in Syria have greatly strengthened the regime's position. The Sunni rebels, backed in turn by Turkey, retreated. In addition, there has been a tendency to strengthen the positions of the Syrian Kurds. For Turkey, which, on the one hand, sought to establish Sunni rule in Syria and strengthen its loyalist forces in Ankara, and, on the other hand, to weaken the Kurdish forces as much as possible, Russia's actions posed a direct threat to vital interests. It is for these reasons

that Ankara for some time abandoned the strategy of balancing relations with Russia and set a course for cooperation with the West, primarily, with the United States.

Since Turkey could not independently resist Russian military actions in Syria, Ankara sought to speed up a ground military operation against ISIS in western Syria and Iraq, allowing it to actually control all of central and southern Syria, and thus, Moscow practically could not keep the Assad regime in the long term. However, Ankara's strategy did not work. The United States decided to negotiate with Moscow on Syria, which at that time was not strategically necessary in Washington. Moreover, since the escalation of the Syrian conflict, the United States has sought to increase its influence on the Kurds and actively helped them both militarily and humanitarily. Washington itself even forced Ankara to suspend military operations against the Kurds. In particular, in February 2016, with the support of the Russian Air Force and Assad's government forces, Syrian Kurds attacked the positions of rebel fighters fighting Assad, east of Arfin. In response, the Turkish government opened artillery fire on Kurdish positions. The parties ceased hostilities only after a direct demand from the United States.

We emphasize that for Turkey, the creation of at least a federal unit of Syrian Kurdistan led by the Democratic Union Party (the Syrian wing of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, recognized as a terrorist organization in Turkey) on the southern border would be a serious blow to its interests. In this case, land access to the Sunni Arab world would be blocked for Ankara and, most importantly, a real threat to the territorial integrity of the country would be created, since the majority of Kurds living in Turkey live in close proximity to the Syrian Kurds. In the Kurdish-populated areas of Turkey, a civil war was actually raging, the scale of clashes between the forces of the PKK and units of the Turkish army were growing.

Armed clashes also engulfed Kurdish cities, what was rare until recently.

Erdogan's expectations did not come true in terms of building relations with the West either. An example is the agreement on refugees with the European Union. Under the agreement, Ankara assumed responsibility for stopping the flow of refugees from Turkey to Greece, in exchange, the EU owed Turkey 3 billion US dollars. In addition, the decision to introduce a visa-free regime for Turkish citizens, planned for June 2016, has not been implemented.

Western criticism of Turkey for neglecting democratic values was intensified again after a relative easing and peaked after the failed military coup in Turkey on July 16 after Erdogan announced punitive measures and introduced the death penalty. However, it should also be noted that Western leaders, commenting on the attempted military coup, condemned the idea of forcibly changing the legally elected government and supported Erdogan's government.

It is also noteworthy that the army is considered the main supporter of secularism in Turkey, and at the moment, in the West. Considering the nationalist position of the army, Erdogan's tendency to Islamize the country is unacceptable for it. The threat of Islamization of a NATO member state is quite painfully perceived in the West as well. For their part, the Turkish military is aware that in a region where the wave of Islamization, after the so-called "Arab Spring" and its consequences, has reached its peak, it will be difficult to maintain secularism and nationalist positions. And at the moment, the only real power in the region that can contain this process is Washington. It is the United States that has the largest military-strategic access to the region (compared to Russia, for example). The leading Arab countries of the region are strategic partners of the United States and are most subject to Washington's influence. Stopping the Islamization of a NATO member state is in the direct interests of the West.

As a result, the Erdogan government found itself in a situation where, on the one hand, strained relations with Russia could not bring significant dividends in either direction, and on the other hand, the confrontation with the West also reached its peak.

Although Erdogan's letter to Putin chronologically precedes the date of the military coup attempt, there is still talk of a connection between the two events. As a rule, the preparation of a military coup takes quite a long time, especially in a country like Turkey, where government is accused of monopolizing power, limiting freedom of speech and trying to establish total control; so, organizing a military coup in such a state requires a lot of time and resources. Judging by the rapid pace of the suppression of the uprising itself, it is clear that the authorities had information about the upcoming event. Consequently, the outcome was clear – an inevitable confrontation with the West. Faced with the threat of complete political isolation, Erdogan decided to renew relations with Moscow. The decision of the Turkish government was probably influenced by economic factors. By 2014, the trade turnover between the countries amounted to 40 billion US dollars, and this figure was planned to double by 2020, but at this stage, the trade turnover between the countries was reduced to a minimum (23.4 billion in 2015, 18–19 billion in 2016).

Moscow tried to use Erdogan's strategy to turn Turkey into an energy hub. There were many obstacles in the way of the implementation of the Blue Stream project. In addition to being a technically complex project, it was also costly to implement. Most importantly, Blue Stream allowed Russia to compete for gas supplies to EU-initiated alternative gas pipelines in southeast Europe. Also of interest was the issue

of energy resources in the Caspian Sea, where the interests of Turkey and the West were contrary to the interests of Russia.

Opinions on the development of Russian-Turkish relations are different. Distancing Turkey from its Western partners is Moscow's longtime dream, but analysts believe that any Russian-Turkish alliance will inevitably fall apart, given historical and regional interests, including competition. "Unfortunately, Ankara believes that it can use Russia and America against each other. However, this will not work. [...] The Russians will sooner or later finally clear Idlib, full of thousands of terrorists, and this will be the first and most important moment in the confrontation between Russia and Turkey" (Batiashvili, 2018, p. 3).

As tensions rise between Turkey and the United States over Ankara's purchase of Russian missiles, Ankara will turn to NATO because it believes NATO has a better position on arms purchases.

In conclusion, we can say that Russia has become for Turkey an alternative to the West and the European Union. And only time can tell us what the union of these two historical rivals and their "friendly relations" will bring to the region, and how this will change the situation on the international arena.

Conclusion

At the end of the 20th century and in the first two decades of the 21st century, Turkish-American relations were characterized by ups and downs. Relations with the United States did not develop in accordance with Turkey's expectations. The reason for this was the issues of Armenia, Syria, Israel, Iran, and the Kurds, which were and still are the most important and sensitive problems for Ankara.

In the 1990s, the end of the Cold War and the withdrawal from the political map of Turkey's main threat – the Soviet Union – gave Ankara the opportunity to act independently in the region, which became more active at the beginning of the 21st century.

Changes in cooperation between Turkey and the United States may also be the result of the activities of individuals.

It is safe to say that Recep Tayyip Erdogan's first warning to the United States was a minor incident in 2003, the essence of which was as follows: in 2003, when the United States decided to invade Iraq, Turkey and, in particular, Prime Minister Erdogan did not allow the United States to use the Incirlik Air Base as a springboard.

At that time, this move was seen as a rather harsh response from a strategic partner, but today, 20 years later, when we follow the actions of President Erdogan

on a daily basis, the reason for such actions becomes quite clear. Since then, the Incirlik Air Base has been the subject of controversy on several occasions. In 2014, R.T. Erdogan refused to take part in the attacks against the then-existing terrorist organization ISIS in the United States.

We should also mention the factor that, in our opinion, had the most significant impact on Turkish-American relations: the attempted military coup in Turkey in 2016, which opened a wide arena for action for Recep Tayyip Erdogan. After a rather tough suppression of the military coup attempt, R.T. Erdogan also went on the attack. In particular, his government officials openly accused the US of patronizing alleged rebel leader Fethullah Gülen. The Turkish side asked the US to arrest Gülen and extradite him, but they refused. Because of this, Turkey used propaganda methods to prove the presence of an American footprint in the military coup attempt.

Some researchers explained the growing distrust between Turkey and the United States by the peculiarities of Barack Obama's foreign policy. Obama's bilateral vision was not very popular in the Republic of Turkey because, given his democratic and liberal values, he supported the Kurdish process of self-determination. Therefore, according to some researchers, the current situation is the result of the passive policy of Barack Obama.

It was with these factors in mind that Donald Trump at the time was a savior for both sides. First of all, as a Republican nominee, a conservative man, he made some pretty clear and tough statements from the start. Consequently, the American political elite also hoped that Donald Trump would take a hard line to Turkish issues and, in particular, relations with Erdogan. Scholars wrote extensively that Donald Trump should have begun to take concrete steps to do what Obama failed and act on the principle of restoring the balance of power.

However, as it turned out, Donald Trump was quite loyal to authoritarian leaders, and with his coming to power, the hopes of political scientists did not materialize. Recep Tayyip Erdogan took advantage of this situation and decided to purchase S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems in Russia. This action not only contradicted the standards of NATO membership, but also turned out to be politically and diplomatically unacceptable: being a member of the largest military bloc, NATO, Turkey bought defense weapons from Russia! Of course, all this caused discontent among the US political elite, and the House of Representatives repeatedly tried to start the process of imposing sanctions against Turkey, however, all their attempts were ignored by President Donald Trump.

There were many other actions that had cast a shadow over the relationship between Turkey and the US. These reasons include political issues as well as economic moves and human rights acts, although we believe that the most important of these

is Turkey's growing role in the Middle East region. President Trump's main course of action in recent years has been to pull US troops out of the Middle East and let it develop on its own.

Consequently, we have received data that shows the real possibility that the contingent of tens of thousands of American troops in the region will be significantly reduced. Recep Tayyip Erdogan himself decided to think about filling the gap resulting from these actions. That was the reason why Turkey became especially active in the Middle East. In parallel, it got involved in several conflicts in Syria and Libya. Moreover, in Syria, it reached an agreement with Russia, according to which the two states would carry out joint patrols in the province of Idlib. The latter circumstance further exacerbated the situation between the United States and Turkey.

However, the United States did not ignore such actions of Turkey and, despite Trump's loyal attitude, took retaliatory measures.

It can be said that the rather tough steps of Recep Tayyip Erdogan have become an alarming signal for the US political elite. Given the current situation, America needs to start thinking about alternatives. Of course, no one in the US perceives Turkey as an enemy, although it is clear that the level of trust has decreased significantly. The Western media are increasingly calling for Turkey's exclusion from the Western alliance, again linked to its defense cooperation with the Russian Federation. However, we all know perfectly well that such appeals were more of a political nature and in fact required much more resolute, effective steps.

As already mentioned, Donald Trump's attitude towards Turkey and Erdogan in particular was relatively loyal. Therefore, until the end of his presidency, he refrained from imposing sanctions against Turkey due to cooperation with Russia.

However, some analysts believe that such loyalty will be replaced by more drastic measures under the new administration, and that President Joe Biden will no longer block sanctions. For his part, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has his own opinion on this issue. He says he will leave the decision to purchase defense equipment unchanged, no matter what retaliatory measures may follow. However, the reciprocal steps were not long in coming, and in 2019 the US officially suspended its F-35 fighter program with Turkey, according to which Turkey was to purchase 100 units of fighters from the US. This was a serious blow to the country's defense capability, as these aircraft had great combat potential.

It is impossible not to mention the events that have taken place in recent years, i.e., the normalization of relations between the Arab states and Israel, which can be safely attributed to the administration of Donald Trump. These events have two sides. One side is its content. The Arab states, which have had strained relations with Israel for decades, have begun to think about the future perspectives. However,

it seems to us that the other side of the issue is more important, as beyond it there lies a new vision of security. The growing role of Turkey has given the United States something to think about. The actions of R.T. Erdogan called into question the credibility of Turkey in the long term. He decided to pay attention to Turkey's own political or military power, which in the future could upset the balance of power in the Middle East. The US realized that in the Middle East, along with Saudi Arabia and Iran, a new power could easily emerge in the face of Turkey, which wanted to increase its influence. That is why we believe that one of the reasons for establishing Jewish-Arab relations was to take actions against a new potential threat. We can say that in this way Donald Trump killed two birds with one stone. He began the process of normalizing the situation in this region, which in itself was a great progress and achievement, and at the same time laid the foundation for a new coalition, which in the future could act as a new guarantor of the balance of power.

How can the US-Turkish relations be assessed in the light of the above? Of course, these relationships are vital for both sides. Although there are disagreements between them on some issues, it can be said that Turkey is still a stronghold of the United States in the Middle East region, although it is extremely unstable due to its voluntary or involuntary involvement in various conflicts of neighboring states.

The current state of Turkish-American relations is radically different from what it was during the Cold War period. At a time when the two countries were soon able to find a common language due to the Soviet threat, being under the "umbrella" of Washington was extremely important for the Turkish government. At the present stage, there is no longer such a unifying threat for Turkey, and a leader of a different political type is at the head of the country. Today's policy of Turkey, in contrast to the previous period, is more focused on the interests of the country.

The current leaders of Turkey and the US have very different positions and views on the issue of foreign policy. They differently perceive the place and role of their countries in international relations.

Over the past years, a number of problems have accumulated in US-Turkish relations, the solution of which has been delayed in time.

The aftermath of the crisis has shown that Turkish-American tensions are long-term and should not be expected to end quickly.

Even in the context of sharply aggravated relations, neither the functioning of NATO military bases in Turkey nor Turkey's withdrawal from NATO have been on the agenda, which is a positive development and gives hope that in the future there are still chances of establishing good relations between these countries. However, for the sake of insurance, the US is actively working on a contingency plan; and if, nevertheless, Turkish-American relations reach an impasse, then the American "Plan

No. 2” will be launched, according to which US military bases will be located in Romania, Jordan, and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey has repeatedly threatened to deprive the US of access to the Incirlik Air Base. Unfortunately, what Erdogan used as a negotiating tactic with the United States has now become a national sentiment. Turkey has over a million troops and is the second largest military force in NATO after the United States.

Never before in the history of Turkish-American relations has there been such a tense situation. In the early stages of Erdogan’s rule, Washington did not believe that he would alienate Turkey from the United States, but today there are doubts about this issue. There is also an opinion that Turkey is so important to the US that they are forced to comply with Erdogan’s demands, but there is a growing number of people who believe that if Erdogan gets what he wants, he will simply put forward new demands.

Turkey is a country of national ideology, and its President R.T. Erdogan has no difficulty in uniting the nation in this direction, especially when he controls the entire media environment in the country. He wants to show the United States that their different positions and dependence on foreign affairs are dictated by the Turkish people, thereby strengthening the spirit of a free, independent foreign policy among the Turkish population.

Parallel to the distancing of Ankara from Washington, the degree of Turkey’s dependence on Russia is increasing.

To the question: how beneficial is the tense relationship between Turkey and the United States for Russia? – the answer is obvious: it suits Russia. Putin usually views diplomacy as a zero-sum game. Turkey was a special partner of the US 15 years ago. Today, this is no longer the case, and there is even an active discussion about whether Turkey should be a member of NATO, what, of course, is very appealing to Putin.

In the context of constant confrontation with the West, Turkey believes that in foreign policy it is equal to Putin and has the same weight in the international arena as Russia, but this is not the case and Russia has much more weight and power in the world political arena than Erdogan, besides, it is a much stronger country than Turkey.

At the same time, a confrontation between two NATO member states (Turkey and the United States) is not in Georgia’s interests. Turkey and the US are Georgia’s partner countries. The United States is a strategic partner of Georgia, and Turkey is one of its largest trading partners. Questions arise about how the confrontation between Ankara and Washington will affect Georgia and how our country can cope with the current situation. The answer is this: being at the center of the confrontation

between two strong countries, where Turkey, although relatively small, has become a more aggressive state in relation to other countries with its own demands, Georgia must do what it has done so far with great success: using her close relationship with Washington, it should make it clear to Turkey and Russia that, due to its partnership with the United States, it will not meet some of their demands.

In the future, problems may arise both with NATO's activities in the Black Sea, and with the already complicated and protracted process of Georgia's accession to NATO. Consequently, this contradiction may have a negative impact on Georgia's external security.

To what extent can Georgia play a buffer role for the US in the Black Sea region in light of strained Turkish-American relations, what Turkey has been doing for years? At this stage, it is difficult to determine whether the US Congress is ready to deepen military ties with Georgia and irritate Russia, although the US is expected to increase Georgia's diplomatic involvement, both military and economic. It should also be noted that no country in the South Caucasus has such a reputation and support from the United States as Georgia.

Despite US tensions with Turkey, the US is not expected to do any harm with Georgia.

If tensions between Turkey and the United States continue, new US economic and military sanctions against Turkey are expected.

Turkey, which wants to become a "world-class economy" and a state with a liberal democracy, will inevitably have to strengthen ties with the US, which in part requires it to clearly define and clarify its foreign policy priorities.

Turkey largely controls the Black and Mediterranean Seas and balances Russia in the Caucasus. There are 1.2 million barrels of oil transported through the Bosphorus daily. Turkey's support is significant in light of recent US-Iranian relations.

Turkey has its own interests in relation to the US. For it, the priority is existing projects within the framework of the strategic partnership and NATO. This refers to the strengthening of military units, the presence of US military bases on its own territory, which creates security guarantees, etc. Another important factor is the role of the US as an intermediary with the EU in order to integrate Turkey into this organization.

The Republic of Turkey will never give up its desire to pursue the most independent foreign policy. Therefore, in all likelihood, it will continue to slowly move in this direction.

All this can lead to further tightening of economic sanctions by the United States.

In the 2010s, the dynamics of the development of events shows that these problems and difficulties in Turkish-Western relations will persist for some time.

Despite the misunderstandings in the relationship, it is unlikely that Turkey will completely distance itself from the US anytime soon.

The fact is that Turkey cannot become a strategic ally of Russia, since these two countries have completely different and often opposing long-term interests. A real rapprochement between Russia and Turkey will be possible only if Turkey refuses NATO membership.

Relations between Turkey and the United States are facing a major challenge. It is clear that neither side wants to aggravate the current situation and both seek to defuse tensions. However, it is also clear that more effort is needed to achieve the desired result. It is hard to imagine that the strategic partnership that has developed between them will be broken, and friendship will be replaced by enmity. However, the fact is that the tension does not subside. Both sides consider alternatives and formulate their own agenda. The national interests of the parties and the peculiarities of foreign policy differ from each other on a number of issues, although the pursuit of international security should be the calling of all states. It is interesting to observe the development of events under the new US administration. Both Turkey and the United States have their own strong position in the international system, so these two countries will always be of great importance to each other, and the expression of the interdependence in cooperation is more favorable and beneficial for everyone.

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