



Specificity of Turkey's Security Relations with Neighboring Countries

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Abstract

The article analyzes the historical dynamics of cooperation and differences in conceptual understanding of approaches of Turkey's international security and terrorism cooperation with the European Union and the United States in countermeasures. In the 2000s in spite of successful cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, these disagreements did not allow Turkey to fully unite to the system of international security in the Middle East, which is being built by the West. With the largest army in the Middle East and the second largest in the NATO bloc, a dynamic economy and a significant foreign policy weight (not to mention the ambitious leaders in charge), Turkey is playing an increasing role in regional and world politics. In recent years, Turkey's foreign policy has undergone repeated, sometimes drastic changes, and its relations with a number of countries, from hostility to cooperation and vice versa, have always been the focus of the governments of the Middle East regional countries and NATO allies.

Keywords: NATO; Iran; USA; Middle East; North Africa; The Persian Gulf

Introduction

Today, Turkey, which demands a leading role in regional and world geopolitics and geoeconomy, pays special attention to the formation of external security opportunities. A distinctive feature of Turkey's foreign policy is the existence of a deeply developed conceptual framework. The situation, which ended without a collective dialogue on the foundations of the temporary phase of international relations in Turkey, is considered a "cold war" situation, potentially dangerous. Emphasizing the serious loss of international mechanisms, including the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, Ankara advocates maintaining the main role of the UN, updating the concept of Euro-Atlantic security and new international formats, which includes Russia. (Kuznetsov, 2020)

In recent years, Turkey's foreign policy has been based on two principles of the concept of "strategic depth" – "zero level of problems with neighbors" and "creating a zone of stability and security on the territory of Turkey". In Ankara, the unique priority of diplomacy is seen in coordinating the bloc's responsibility as a member of NATO with an independent line in regional affairs. Such an approach is ensured, among other things, by the fact that Turkey is a multi-ethnic country, which means that the conflicts in the Balkans, the South Caucasus and the Middle East have an internal political content for them. Turkey's relations with its neighbors, including Syria (until 2011), Iraq and Lebanon, have greatly improved over the past decade. Commenting on the results of a sociological survey on Turkey's image in the Middle East, international relations expert Meliha Oltunishik said: "Turkey has managed to change its relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors. Also, Ankara is involved in regional disputes and is perceived as a common factor. In general, Turkey is implementing the concept of stability, peace and prosperity in the region, which has the power to solve problems in our country". (Altunishik, 2010)

At the end of July 2020, President R.T. Erdogan gave a speech at the government meeting and defined the main tasks of Turkey's political and economic strategy for the near future. Later, his lecture was published as a separate monograph. R.T. Erdogan defined Turkey's functions as "defender of oppressed peoples and fighter against neo-colonialism", highlighting countries like Syria, Libya and Myanmar. The Turkish president supported the territorial integrity of Iraq and noted that there are common interests between the two countries. In general, it should be said that the foreign policy of the Turkish state has become more active in recent years. As part of the "Neo-Ottomanism" project, Turkey has defined the zone of its national interests in the Middle East and North Africa, in the countries that used to be part of the Ottoman Empire. Military bases have already appeared in Qatar and Somalia, the Turkish army is actively participating in Libya. Ankara started building a naval base in Sudan, which was formerly part of the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's military installations in Somalia, Qatar and Sudan significantly increase Turkey's influence in the region. Active military operations are also being conducted in foreign countries: in Syria ("Olive Branch" and "Peace Source"), the fight against the PKK armed groups in Iraq. In addition, Turkey began to show unprecedented activity in relations with Iran, the Arab world, the SCO, and achieved the status of a dialogue partner. Without it, what Turkey considers to be the undoubted achievement of its successful development cannot be fully understood. (Nadein-Raevsky, 2013)

On the issue of Iran, Ankara has issued a series of statements opposing new sanctions against Iran, which has angered NATO allies. However, the Turks' willingness to mediate US-Iranian relations was met with a cold reception in Tehran, where they reacted painfully to Iran's de facto disregard for its interests in the Caucasus. Here Turkey began to adjust its foreign policy position by announcing its readiness to join Iran's peacekeeping efforts in the Caucasus too. (Robert W. Pearson & Gregory Kist, 2021)

This change was welcomed in Tehran, and Iranian diplomacy stepped up its efforts in the Caucasus direction, offering its services in the Karabakh headquarters. There were enough reasons to show that Turkey's influence on the regional situation has increased, but in order to realize the role of Turkey as an influential power on a global scale, one more thing was necessary – participation in solving problems of global importance. Such a situation arose for Turkey in February 2010, when the United States began lobbying for new international sanctions against Iran. This time, Ankara joined the process more actively than before. In this situation, the Turkish government he declares that he will do his best to solve the problem between the United States and Iran through diplomatic and peaceful means. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu visited Tehran four times in five months from October 2009 to February 2010. At the same time, Iran did not seek to see Turkey as a mediator in negotiations on issues related to its nuclear program. Thus, on February 16, 2010, at a joint press conference held by his Iranian colleague M. Mottaki with A. Davutoglu, he reiterated his position on the issue of the nuclear program of his country and emphasized the role of Turkey: "Iran produces fuel for himself. We discussed the current situation

with our Turkish friends...”. Although Turkey is not a mediator in the discussions with Iran, this is a very important part of the process. Thus, although Iran has not objected to Turkey’s participation in the negotiation process, it still does not see it as an intermediary in its relations with the United States. This position was related to Tehran’s firm intention to conduct only direct negotiations with the Americans, which is of fundamental importance for itself. This position was related to Tehran’s firm intention to conduct only direct negotiations with the Americans, which is of fundamental importance for itself. After A. Davutoglu returned to his homeland, he communicated with US State Secretary Hillary Clinton by phone. He gave her the details. About discussing the nuclear program with the leadership of Iran. (Altunishik, 2010)

The Turks emphasized that the potential for peace negotiations with Tehran has not yet been exhausted, and that Ankara will use all possibilities to resolve the Iranian problem peacefully. Negotiation process behind all the official statements of the participants, the clear interests of the parties were clearly visible. Turkey’s desire to demonstrate its capabilities as a regional leader was undeniable, which seemed impossible without participation in solving the most pressing problems. Ankara’s participation in solving the Iranian nuclear problem, actively demonstrating its readiness to help the American ally in this regard, will give Washington peace, especially due to the conflict between the Turkish government and the army in the domestic political sphere. forced him to maintain a balance in relations with the United States without refusing to pressure stubborn generals. Iran’s nuclear problem has never left Turkey indifferent, and Turkey has repeatedly taken various initiatives to solve it. Despite close ties with the United States, which is pursuing an anti-Iranian policy under the pretext of nuclear changes in Tehran, Ankara has refrained from taking a tough stance on Iran’s nuclear program. (Kuznetsov, 2020) The Turkish leadership, which recognizes Tehran’s right to develop peaceful nuclear energy, has been opposed to economic pressure on the Iranian regime since the Iranian nuclear file was put on the agenda of the UN Security Council in 2006. The reason for this is the fear of economic damage. Relations with Tehran have increased dramatically under the AKP. This, of course, does not mean that Ankara is not concerned that Iran’s transformation into a nuclear power could strengthen Tehran’s regional positions. However, in terms of security, Turkey feels protected by NATO’s nuclear umbrella. At the same time, the US–Iran conflict allows the Turkish leadership to increase the level of trust with Tehran through a multifaceted tool such as mediation. Since 2006, the two countries have started to discuss the possibility of carrying out part of Iran’s uranium enrichment work in Turkey within the framework of the scheme proposed by the international “six” mediators for uranium enrichment outside Iran. (Ivanova I.I, 2012) In May 2010, Turkey, Iran and Brazil signed a Joint Declaration on the exchange of low-enriched Iranian uranium for highly enriched uranium in Turkey. Ankara welcomed the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, Iran has always considered diplomacy as the only way to solve the nuclear problem. Turkish political scientist B. Sinkaya called Turkey’s reaction “cautious optimism” and noted that at that time, several negative scenarios of changing the balance of the Middle East in favor of Tehran appeared in Turkish expert circles. (Ivanova I.I, 2012) The Turks feared that the nuclear deal would free up Iran’s hands in regional affairs and allow it to pursue a more aggressive offensive policy in the struggle for influence. Another thing that threatens Turkey’s interests is the warming of Iran–American relations, as a result of which both countries’ attention to Turkey as a partner in the Middle East could decrease. Nevertheless, it is clear that Turkey was attracted by prospects such as the growth of trade and investment cooperation with Iran arising from the JCPOA. Today, Ankara has extremely difficult relations with the countries of the region and the regional leaders represented by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. These countries do not welcome the ideology of “neo-Ottomanism” and it is understood as a reference to the Ottoman Empire. Arabs remember the Turkish occupation and oppression. Therefore, the countries of the Arabian Peninsula are worried about the presence of the Turkish navy in the region. These countries do not welcome the ideology of “neo-Ottomanism” and it is understood as a reference to the Ottoman Empire. Arabs remember the Turkish occupation and oppression. Therefore, the countries of the Arabian Peninsula are worried about the presence of the

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Saudi Arabia, which has become Ankara’s main rival in the struggle for leadership in the Islamic world, has proposed the creation of a bloc of Red Sea and Persian Gulf states against Turkey. It is understood that this coalition opposes Turkey’s dominance claims in the region. It is known that in the period before the “Arab Spring” relations between Turkey and most of the neighboring countries developed rapidly. Taking into account the recent changes in the development of the situation around Syria, we must say that the probability of military intervention in Syria has increased to 30 percent. Such an intervention can be carried out by the Free Syrian Army with the most active support of the West and the Persian Gulf countries and with the direct participation of Turkey. In the event of such an intervention, Iran will publicly declare its political support for the regime of Bashar al–Assad, but most likely it helps behind the scenes—through secret military and paramilitary channels (elite units of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps). IRGC), Basij militia, IRGC Quds Special Forces). Given the position of Moscow and Beijing, although the probability of such events is small, it should be taken into account in planning. It is clear that such an intervention will not lead to a decisive victory for either side, and the company itself will drag on for several months. (Altunishik, 2010) Currently, the tendency to involve other countries in the crisis is becoming more and more clear. For example, Lebanese public and political circles will be ready to support Syria. This indicates that the fight against the Assad regime will lead to a multi–faceted conflict in the region. (Kuznetsov, 2020) It is clear that such an intervention will not lead to a decisive victory for either side, and the company itself will drag on for several months. possible, but this may open up additional opportunities for peaceful resolution. After all of Erdogan’s statements and actions regarding Bashar al–Assad, it is unlikely that strong and good relations will be established between post-crisis Syria and Turkey in the short or even medium term, with the current leadership in both countries. President Bashar al–Assad in the 2000s and had done much to improve relations, but one of the main reasons for the deterioration of relations was the emergence of Turkish–backed Syrian opposition groups as jihadists, a situation that drew sharp criticism from the West. European and American politicians openly accused R. Erdogan of cooperating with radical and extremist forces in the Middle East. (Robert W. Pearson & Gregory Kist, 2021)

By now, most of the Arab countries have approved the creation of a new association and “agreed to create a common structure”. The main goals of such cooperation are to strengthen regional security, develop mutually beneficial cooperation and implement joint economic projects. In addition, during 2019–2020. Representatives of the intelligence services of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Israel held a series of secret talks, in which it was decided to support Syrian President Bashar al–Assad against the plans of Turkey. At the same time, Saudi Arabia, as well as Egypt and other countries of the region. it is undoubtedly true that Turkey serves as a deterrent to its regional ambitions. (Avatkov, 2012)

In general, the relations of the Turkish state with neighboring countries in the Middle East and modern Turkey in the region are built under the influence of several hidden mechanisms that shape the approaches of the parties to each other. Each country has a deep historical memory of periods of regional dominance and rivalry. This indicates the inevitability of Turkey’s competition for influence, its cautious attitude towards strengthening the positions of the other side, especially in the neighboring zone. At the same time, despite the change of regimes, the foreign political thinking of the ruling elites of Iran, Syria, Libya and Turkey is characterized by pragmatism, which explains the desire of the parties to maintain the balance of regional power and interests. (Nadein–Raevsky, 2013)

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